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THE SANYASI

by

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ABSTRACT

After researching all the data I could find pertinent to the Indian sanyasi, the subject of this thesis, it became apparent that the principal question raised by this research is being posed again in a contemporary form in the conflict between two schools of the "underground" press. On the one hand is the position of the effervescent counter-culture, emphasizing spontaneous personal self-expression and a kind of self-determination that ignores as much as possible its connections with the society from which it is a peripheral offshoot. On the other is the more radical organized stance which argues that the former's position is self-deceiving, summing it up by saying that "personal solutions are no solutions". (see The Grape, vol. II, no. 12). To the latter, sanyasis are anathema, particularly those (the 'gurus') who ask others to adopt their personal solutions to the problem of social freedom as their own.

This thesis accepts the latter's stance and undertakes to demonstrate its validity from a sociological point-of-view. Nonetheless it then goes on to treat sympathetically the relationship between the sanyasi and Indian society, arguing that this relationship allows for personal solutions that are tantamount to redemption for a few individuals. Such solutions are in fact the only ones possible to the problem of freedom from social obligation in India. If renunciation alone makes

such solutions possible, then it may be that freedom from social obligations, together with the implication of being free to be one's self without threat to others, can be available to only a few members of any society. (There cannot be a "society" of renunciates.) By examining the other implications of renunciation, it may be possible to learn how whole cohesive units of people can develop such freedoms and yet remain committed social beings with the desirable implications of that condition.

By conceding the validity of the sanyasi's spiritual redemption and the parallel but compensatory and partial redemption for those who remain within society, it is possible to explore the meaning of the religious system of India. Since it has to do with apparently ultimate questions, the conclusions reached are ultimately unsatisfactory. It is tempting to suppose that a more poetical or experiential approach may lead to more satisfying answers. The sociological approach taken does however allow the questions to be framed in a way that may illuminate how they are tackled or answered in our own society. It is too bad that we have to continue with only the hope that an answer can be found which avoids either the extremes of renunciation, overbearing self-assertion or a state of self-abnegating slavery.

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INTRODUCTION

The principal question that this thesis deals with is the extent to which a person can be himself or herself and yet remain a member of society. The investigation rests on a number of premises: first, that all men and women share a religious impulse for order and redemption; second, that they are born into societies that institutionalize this impulse; third, that the social institutionalization serves to inhibit the perception or experience of states of being and the development of identities which are not in consonance with the order provided on behalf of this impulse; and fourth, that in so doing, a society is never wholly successful: either states of being are experienced that contradict society's "version", or an impulse to know the self apart from the identities society provides outweighs the impulse for order and redemption that creates that social provision of identities. Whichever may be the case, the question dealt with becomes a real social paradox. Different societies find different ways of coping with those who cannot accept the provision made for the impulse for order and redemption and who therefore experience the paradox.

India copes with such people in a striking way, apparently one step short of the radical solution of incarcerating or eliminating them. It is for this reason and because of its very elaborate and articulated way of dealing

with the impulse for order that Indian society is used to assess the degree of freedom possible to resolve the paradox. In India, those people who test this frontier renounce society by taking sannyas vows and becoming sanyasis. This institutionalized renunciation is known as sanyasan. This poses a secondary paradox: how can a person institutionally renounce society? An institution or renunciation must mean continuing complicity with society. Following Dumont, this thesis suggests that no person has a self apart from society and sanyasan provides an opportunity to test this in an ultimate sense. The sanyasi satisfies the conditions for testing the question as formulated.

The sanyasi then is somebody who renounces society but does not really renounce society. Considerable space is given to trying to elucidate this paradox aside from merely qualifying what is meant by renunciation. He could have been considered in terms of his role and its functions. Sanyasan is the fourth prescribed stage of all Brahmins' lives. Since, however, sanyasis come from all varnas including the Brahman varna, it seems more useful to treat sanyasan as a necessary structural complement to Indian society as lived by "men-in-the-world" with whom he is contrasted. Thus the totality of Indian society comprises persons-in-the-world and its renouncers. This also allows a treatment of him as a more universal ideal figure, a seeker after the holy grail as conceptualized in the Indian tradition. For sanyasan

represents a form of millenarianism by which the sanyasi seeks a redemption different from that offered by society, and a transcendence of those problems posed by, and camouflaged by society. This is the ambience of paradox that pervades the question.

The subject is tackled by first considering the world the sanyasi renounces. For analytic purposes it is treated as a knot with three strands. By chapters, the first examines the social order and its economic parameters: how the forms of differentiation are geared to the material survival of the whole, and orchestrated by fixed relationships between its parts which delimit the expression and experience of its members. These relationships and the consciousness of persons-in-the-world are then shown to be expressed and controlled by the symbols and rituals, the material of the second chapter. The third chapter is about the metaphysical aspects of this order, which serve both as rationalizations for it and as institutional channels of grace for those born into it.

The fourth and fifth chapters cover the ground on which the thesis started: a general treatise on the sanyasi as an ideal figure from which the questions emerged that raised the necessity of delineating the social order of the man-in-the-world. Here I argue that the act of renunciation does not of itself mean that the sanyasi has found a social redemption. Following Burridge, I take redemption to mean a state of having discharged all obligations. The sanyasi

is still part of the total society, and therefore, "since existence in community, a moral order, necessarily entails existence within a network of obligations, redemption itself can only be realized at or after that appropriate death which brings to an end an appropriate mode of discharging one's obligations" (Burridge 1969:6). Rather I argue that, whereas the sanyasi has renounced particular attachments to community which constitutes that appropriate social death, his renunciation leads to engagement in another redemptive process that takes account of new knowledge and assumptions about power that are foreign to the consciousness of the man-in-the-world.

These chapters focus on his relationship to men-in-the-world with whom he is contrasted. Unlike the latter who has fixed relationships with a few elements of society, the sanyasi has relations with all of it. The symbolism associated with him is examined to see if and how it reflects a condition different from the man-in-the-world's. His exclusive situation is presumed to give him special aptitudes for questioning society and for making innovations. How innovations are in fact incorporated into authentic tradition to form a dynamic synthesis is illustrated in chapter six. The sanyasi effectively reinforces the condition of the man-in-the-world by saying his only option for change for the better is either to opt out or to do as prescribed while participating in it, and changes for the better will come in other incarnations.

The seventh chapter follows the assumptions of the preceding ones. If the sanyasi's consciousness is no longer controlled, his awareness of the ambivalence and contradictions within society, as well as his different yardstick of integrity, imply an experience that might be construed as insanity. In India, however, such experience was thought of as mystically valid, so I argue. This is contrasted to the orientation in the West towards the phenomena in question. The Indian context allows for the development of unneurotic beings able to transcend the problems of society and perhaps of life and death, a way out for people such as Voltaire's Brahman, presumably a sanyasi-in-the-making: "Sometimes I am ready to fall into despair when I reflect that, after all my researches, I neither know from whence I came, what I am, whither I shall go, or what is to become of me" (Voltaire: The Good Brahmin).

The thesis concludes with an account of how sanyasis can be encountered. It may highlight two curious aspects of the phenomenon. First, how selective data can seem to be and what an extraordinary step is entailed in framing patterns and explanations of the phenomenon in question. And secondly, to try to portray a sense of the universality of the phenomenon despite bizarre and general differences. Encounters such as those described can be had in North America today, from the Be-ins of major cities to pockets of what might prove to be a vanguard of a changing culture, whether they be in the Golden Gate Park of San Francisco or countryside communes.

They arise out of different contexts and yet reveal similarities that indicate, if nothing more, the legitimacy of the assumptions on which this thesis is based. The most satisfying, and for me, the only worthwhile anthropology, is that which tries to get at answers to universal questions about the human condition, or that which tries to pin down the truth about the human condition. Hopefully, this thesis contributes at least minimally to an understanding of how people can be free to grow without fear.

CHAPTER I

Caste: Membership, Excommunication and Renunciation

In order to participate in the body of rights offered by Hindu civilization, membership of a caste, bestowed by virtue of birth, was essential. With the rights went obligations. What rights went with which obligations depended on the particular caste one was born into. By contrast, to be without a caste, to be outcaste, might incur obligation--as, for example, with the harijan caste--but debarred a person from participating in the spiritual rights offered by Hinduism.

In traditional India, excommunication from caste was considered the worst fate that could befall a man. Yet the man who voluntarily renounced caste at a certain stage in life was paid the greatest honour and respect. The latter, the sanyasi, is the subject of this thesis, but before dealing specifically with the phenomenon he represents, it will be necessary to explain this seeming contradiction. The first part of this thesis will therefore attempt to describe the social order that embraces the contradiction, the rituals that express and maintain that order, and the body of ideas, or cosmology, that goes with it.

Excommunication follows from acts which impugn the validity of the moral order, given that 'validity' will depend upon particular social contexts at different times. Amongst the Coorgs, for example, such offences bring defilement to the okka, the extended family to which the

excommunicant belonged. However, "the okka is something very much more than the group of living members in it at any given moment. It is a continuum through time, and the body of living members at any particular moment form only points in it. Coorgs themselves clearly state that the okka has a longer life than its members. They are also aware that an individual lives, in a social sense, as long as his okka" (Srinivas 1952:125). Srinivas does not himself elaborate on what kind of offence leads to excommunication but their nature is clear: they threaten to undermine the integrity and status of the unit to which the Coorg is attached for social existence.

Dubois is more explicit as to the crimes for which Brahmans are expelled from caste. He reports that a Brahman who "openly cohabited" with an untouchable woman will be excommunicated, with the implication that discreet cohabitation will be ignored. The eating of cow's flesh is also unforgivable. In the case of ten Brahmans being accused of eating rice cooked in a washerman's pots, it was the accused who, alone, had refrained from eating, who alone was expelled from caste by the headmen who, "though they were perfectly sure of his innocence, were indignant about his treacherous disclosure" (Dubois 1906:41). It is not so much the specific offence as its potential for harming the status of the unit to which the offender belongs that is culpable. "This expulsion from caste, which follows either an infringement of caste usages or some public offence

calculated if left unpunished to bring dishonour on the whole community, is a kind of social excommunication, which deprives the unhappy person who suffers it of all intercourse with his fellow creatures. It renders him, as it were, dead to the world, and leaves him nothing in common with the rest of society. In losing his caste he loses not only his relations and friends, but often his wife and his children..." (Dubois 1906:38). This is what the sanyasi chooses, except that instead of being met with scorn, he is met with honour.

The morally condemned excommunicant has threatened to undermine a hierarchy of status. There is no freedom of the individual as it is thought of in the West. Instead there is an orientation towards holism. This denies the possibility of living as an individual within society. The man-in-the-world is subordinate to large constituent units. He is a member of society by virtue of the rights and obligations bestowed by his caste. The provision that the system makes for voluntary renunciation suggests that the sanyasi is an individual who does not threaten the order of the whole. There is economic evidence to suggest that this emphasis on group solidarity was a matter of survival. Before presenting that evidence, the order on which group solidarities were founded needs to be described and the principle of hierarchy underlying that order examined.

The Social Order

The largest substantive units in traditional Indian society are the varnas, identified in Brahmanic texts by duties and functions. The hierarchical principle can be most clearly seen in the relationships between them. This principle is "the attribution of a rank to each element in relation to the whole" (Dumont 1970a:91). The highest varna is that of the Brahmins who alone can perform sacrifices. They are therefore separated from Kshatriyas, who together with Vaishyas, can order sacrifices. Vaishyas were separated from Kshatriyas and Brahmins, who have dominion over all creatures, whereas Vaishyas have dominion over animals only. The duties of these three "twice-born" varnas are to study and to sacrifice; to receive gifts if Brahmin, and to make gifts if Kshatriya or Vaishya. Sudras represent the fourth varna who, according to R.S.Sharma, were "assimilated" to the system along with some heretical sects. Their duty is to serve and obey without envy the other three varnas from whom they are separated. They are not supposed to participate in ceremonies of initiation, second birth and the religious life in general. The sects make way for a fifth estate of untouchables, who are not included within the definition of the system (Dumont 1970a:284, footnote 32f). In Homo Hierarchicus Dumont sets out to show that this ordered hierarchical world of traditional Indian society is an essentially religious system. "Dominants and dependants live under the

sway of a system of ideas" (Dumont 1970:107).

Using Bouglé's definition of caste, Dumont posits that each varna and the whole society is divided into hereditary groups separated by endogamous marriage rules, rules about contact between them, and by a division of labour that assigns a traditional profession to each caste (Dumont 1970a:107). The structure that governs the rules of both this separation and interdependence is the opposition of pure and impure. Sudras are impure in relation to the twice-born, Vaishyas impure in relation to Kshatriyas and Brahmins, Kshatriyas impure in relation to Brahmins. Sudra families and castes are ranked according to the rank of the families and castes they serve. Brahmin families and castes are graded pure and impure in relation to one another. A condition of impurity that contravenes this structure destroys the basis of relations between units and the orientation towards the whole. Endogamy is a corollary to the structure of hierarchy. By attributing status by birth, the unity of the whole is facilitated and given stability and permanence. The division of labour might ideally serve the same purpose but is complicated by the fact that not all caste members do follow their designated profession. Nonetheless, specialization assures interdependence even though it entails separation.

Given this relative structuring of the whole, the family, caste or varna only has substantial significance in relation to other families, castes or varnas. There is no differentiation

in the life of a single member of the community. His or her fate is bound to the system which conforms to a religious ideal of order. The basis of that religious ideal is a relative scale of purity and impurity which assigns status independent of secular power. The excommunicated have not threatened secular authority, but rather the overarching and enduring relationships between all the parts of the whole, only one of which properly exercises secular power. The laws of the kingdom were synonymous with Brahmanical laws, and may have worked to the political advantage of those who created and maintained them, but their source was the attempt to satisfy the religious impulse of all as satisfactorily as possible.

The jajmani System

The assertion that in India there is, or was, a religious orientation towards the whole rather than a system based on the secular power of certain classes for their material advantages can be substantiated by examining the economic system of agrarian villages. The economic relations between castes was epitomized by the jajmani system. What follows does not deny the dialectical relationship between ideology and the social conditions in India. In a later chapter Brahmanism will be examined in this light. The present examination shows that the division of labour implicit in hierarchy is a function of systematizing a religious impulse for order and unity and does not necessarily imply the exploitation of one class by another despite making this eventuality possible.

The word jajman comes from the sanskrit Yajmana, meaning he who has a sacrifice performed, or according to the Hindi dictionary, "he who has religious rites performed by Brahmans by giving them fees". Jajmani means the privilege or responsibility of taking part in family ritual. The jajman is anybody "who employs someone in conformity with the system" (Dumont 1970:97,98). In conformity with the system means in conformity with the moral rules regulating relations between castes and the religious functions appropriate to each.

This is an example of circumstantial evidence Dumont uses to substantiate his claim that hierarchical status and power are traditionally distinct. It is central to his thesis concerning the fundamentally religious nature of hierarchy. A sure test would be provided by examining those cases where land has been appropriated from former jajmans. If their status in the community changed the hypothesis would be negated. To support his case he cites the fact that the king has ultimate sovereignty over all the land but he is subject to religious values and submits to the priesthood, the Brahmans (Dumont 1970:158,72). It will not be possible to test this within the scope of this paper. Counter-cases can probably be found subject to complicating factors such as the effects of Western technology or social organization, just as it can be shown that the ethos of

providing for the needs of all in the jajmani system will be given up when opportunities arise in new market situations for individual entrepreneurship. Here the validity of the idealized concept of the jajmani system will be examined. This can be done by seeing whether status determined everybody's needs and that these varied in good years and bad to assure the survival of all. Dumont's contention that status and power were separated will be taken as an assumption for the rest of this thesis.

The system is defined by Beidelman as one "of prescribed, hereditary obligations of payment and of occupational and ceremonial duties between two or more specific families of different castes in the same locality" (Beidelman 1959:6). The operative elements in the system are joint families. Those that receive payments in kind in exchange for fixed tasks of food production or services are landless, either ritual specialists or permanent agricultural labourers, and rank lower than the families whom they serve. The head of the former is known as a kamin; the head of the latter as a jajman. The relationship was expressed in kinship terms and sustained by an ethic of mutual trust. The kamin could count on his jajman for help in debts and disputes even against members of his own caste. Debt enhances the strength of the bond and contributes to the money-borrowing cycle of poverty that writers from Dubois to Myrdal have referred to. Dubois calculated at the beginning of the nineteenth

century that four fifths of the population in the area of South India he was familiar with were poor as a result of loans at usurious rates of interest (Dubois 1906: 80-87). The poverty of debt can however indicate a shared condition of maximal utilization of resources where the gap between the living standard of most kamins and jajmans need not be great, although in practice it often was owing to three factors: sumptuary laws prescribing material perquisites appropriate to each caste, dues levied by single large landlords and by towns with whom many villages had political, commercial and religious relations. In a non-growth economy, debts would be like a constant cycle of payments for non-durable items with labour on a never-never basis. The jajman's debt to the kamin implicates the jajman in paying out extra food and money on demand. Constant low production, static and limited expectations, and the prescribed distribution of windfalls would inhibit extra consumption on his own account. This is the syndrome that frustrates modern economic planners today. Both the kamin's and the jajman's level of living has a ceiling as fixed as the floor is shifting. (Nair 1961:193).

A Test Case

The material security that the system could offer to all would have had to be calculated on a nice reckoning of what would satisfy the needs of all. Scarlett Epstein's findings in Wangala and Dalena provide a test case. In both villages every family received a fixed quota of the total annual output. The payments to a landless kamin from his

jajmans amounted to more in bad years than that left to some landowners after they had made their payments (Epstein 1967: 232,244). Since the size of the share fluctuated with the harvests, the windfall of good years was proportionately distributed and everybody's level of living rose accordingly. She found that everybody could not own land since in order to take advantage of good years, additional labour is needed in the short Ragi harvest season. She calculated the daily subsistence needs of a single household and found that for the whole of Wangala they amounted to 1,113 pallas of Ragi. The average production of a bad year was 1,300 pallas. Distribution was even with the extra going to community ceremonies, which incidentally augmented the owners' statuses. In Wangala the arrangement first changed on account of technological innovation and in Dalena on account of a new market for cash crops. Until then both jajman and kamin had only to gain from their customary relationship. Kamins have even been retained for prestige reasons though they performed no tasks (Beidelman 1959:17).

The stability of the system depended on the isolation of the local network where it was operative from exogenous factors such as new legislation, technology, ideas, education and employment opportunities, and population expansion leading to land fragmentation. These introduced the possibility of achieving status under a different ethos from that which traditionally prevailed. In the ideal model, Indian society appears to have been optimally organized to meet the needs

of all according to their function and status in a relative hierarchy. The kamin had security, while the advantages to jajman included a guaranteed entourage to work his land, to augment his position and to consolidate his prestige, which, unlike the kamin's that stemmed from a fixed adherence to doing what was ascribed to his status, accrued from a more dynamic manifestation of his generosity and by promoting community rituals. The significant difference between a kamin and the son of a man living in a modern market economy is that the option to break away from his obligations and to make his living on his own was not available to the kamin. Furthermore, without mitigating legislation, the advantages of the traditional system to the kamin do not convert into equivalent bargaining power as the advantage to the jajman, when the relationship between them changes into a contractual one. Dumont supports his case with the additional fact that those kamins with the most obviously "religious" specializations had the most stable relations with their jajmans (Dumont 1970:107).

The reckoning of what would satisfy the needs of all on the relative scale of hierarchy could not be made without considering the factor of growth and on the assurance that the product of a bad year was sufficient for the survival of all. This level was found presumably over time and corresponded to the level of the lowest caste. (Untouchables seemed to be the population that acted as the measuring rod of how low that level could sink given several years of unfavourable

climate. They were not recognized in the Brahmanic texts to be part of the total society.) The extra wealth produced in good years was used to adjust the caste living standards again, to pay for ceremonies and prestige pursuits (those things that separated the castes ritually), and as a store against bad years (Epstein 1969:242). Since there was a limited range of what are called luxury goods in modern markets, a qualitative difference between the level of living in a kamin household and that in a jajman household may not have been recognized. What we might consider luxury goods like meat and eggs were consumed in inverse proportion to status.

The economic evidence therefore suggests that in order to assure survival, as well as in response to an essentially religious need for order that will be explored later, Indian society adopted a system implying fixed sets of relations between different units which delimit the ways in which the members of all those units can express and experience relations between each other. This system is elaborately articulated by rigid separation of units which at the same time cements them into a whole.

Separation and Unity

The manner in which a member of Indian society appropriately interacts with others is prescribed by his

birth into one of a number of castes, hierarchically arranged according to the tasks its members traditionally perform. Each caste is also specific by virtue of the religious rules and duties that its members are expected to observe and by the rights they can expect. These vary between castes on a scale of relative purity and determine a family's consumption. Status in this hierarchy and secular power do not correlate. The castes in the two highest varnas, the Kshatriyas and Brahmins, have particular religious duties incurring ceremonial costs which are met by the windfall of good years. Most castes are necessary for the enactment of at least some ceremonies, so that the whole community is involved. The interdependence and coexistence of all are fundamental to the society. The ethos that sustains the orientation towards the whole is founded on ultimate values. It is manifested in a cooperative economic system in which the modern economic presupposition of an individual subject is non-existent (Dumont 1970:107). It sanctions a concentration of political and economic power within a few castes yet at the same time makes it impossible for those castes to capitalize on it at the expense of denying to all the level of living prescribed by the system.

It is in this context that excommunication and renunciation can be understood. Offences are not against particular castes. They are against the total order that exists by virtue of their relationship to each other. That

order assigns values appropriate to each of its elements. The excommunicant is debarred from all castes and scorned by those at the bottom as well as those at the top. This action represents what Douglas calls an aberration in the cultural Gestalt. Such aberrations, anomalies, or ambiguities are reduced, she suggests, in one of five ways. In the case of the Indian excommunicant he is both anathematized and physically controlled. Another way of coping with him might have been to label him dangerous and institutionalize the threat he represents, or to have him treated as a symbol "to draw attention to other levels of existence". Ambiguities can more simply be reduced by "settling for one or other interpretation" (Douglas 1966: 39,40), which might apply when a candidate for excommunication by virtue of an offence is pardoned because the offence has not been given public attention.

If hierarchy was solely a secular matter, moral offences could have been dealt with by the ruthless expedients available to secular authority. Political law as described in the Arthashastra was untempered by moral, humanistic considerations of justice. Religion did not intrude into politics, although politics, in the hands of Kshatriyas was in consonance with the total order. This order represents the sacred. By conforming to that order, everybody has access to the sacred, and so resolves "man's common urge to make a unity of their experience and to overcome separateness and

distinctions in acts of atonement" (Douglas 1966:169). This is the assumption underlying Dumont's analysis of traditional Indian society. In the next chapter the structure of symbols and rituals that deal with atonement and redemption will be examined to see if they express and corroborate the structure of relationships in this hierarchical world.

CHAPTER II

Grid and Group

An assumption shared by Douglas and Dumont can be expressed as follows: reality is a domain of phenomena from which cultures select an ordered, consistent range. The range selected constitutes reality for that particular culture, persisting through generations by the way relationships are ordered, cognitive categories learned and symbols ingested and expressed. It will follow that the more it is threatened the more it will be protected. Thus in India, excommunication is one means of protection. It must also therefore follow that the description of the social system in the preceding chapter does not constitute the whole picture because it does not take account of the Sanyasi, who, although he has renounced that world of relations and its selective reality, has nonetheless a recognized place within the total framework. Before attempting to see what that place is, it will be necessary to examine first, the structure of symbols and rituals, and secondly, the cosmology of this hierarchical world, following Douglas' contention that a culture strives "to achieve consonance at all levels of experience" (Douglas 1966:67).

In the preceding chapter it was shown that each caste is a cohesive social unit, and in relation to the whole, is the basis of economic security and moral control for each of its members. The experience of such closed social groups, Douglas

suggests, is "the most important determinant of ritualism... the man who has that experience associates boundaries with power and danger. The better defined and more significant the social boundaries, the more the bias I would expect to find in favour of ritual" (Douglas 1970:14). The structure of caste and family is strongly articulated by what she calls group, the sense of belonging to a particular social unit such as a caste. It is also articulated by what she calls grid, which is the system of rules governing relations on an ego-centred basis. In India, grid would apply to the appropriate behaviour and experience of members of each caste. Given these conditions Douglas writes, "interpersonal relations are subordinate to the public pattern of roles" and "the society is differentiated and exalted above the self". She would also expect to find "a condensed symbolic system", "ritual differentiation of roles and situations", "magical efficacy attributed to symbolic acts", "symbolic distinctions between inside and outside", and symbols that express a "high value set on control of consciousness" (Douglas 1970: 73,74).

This chapter will focus first on the way in which the body symbolically expresses the patterns of social relationships. Since those relationships are ordered towards the whole, the symbolic order is expected to show the same bias: public ceremonies and rituals will express the experience of living in a social group comprising all the castes. Similarly

the rules of grid can be expected to be symbolically and ritually represented as rules governing the relationships between the components of the whole society, and not just those between members of any particular caste. There will be more symbolic distinction between those-within-society and those without (the sanyasi and the excommunicated), than between castes. Secondly, the way in which ritual and symbol control the consciousness of all those within society will be examined. These hypotheses will be tested by examining a public festival, the meaning of sacrifice in Brahmanic India and some transition rites. This will partially complete the context in which the sanyasi lives and facilitate a later assessment of the extent to which the sanyasi is controlled by that context and yet can free himself from it in order to modify it.

Symbolic Boundaries

Caste boundaries are constantly demarcated by rules of contact according to a relative scale of pure and impure, which Dumont considers the fundamental structure of the system, following the Abbe Dubois: "All that pertains to external and internal defilement, bodily and spiritual, is the very beginning of a Hindu's education, both religious and civil" (Dubois 1906:178). Dubois writes at some length on these

rules and it is from him that most of the following data are taken, though they are subject to regional variation.

Rules apply most obviously to food and its preparation as Douglas' hypothesis anticipates, with greatest danger of pollution in proportion to status: Brahmans guard their boundaries most carefully, drinking only water and refraining from any food that once contained sentient life such as meat, fish and eggs. The doors to Brahman kitchens are kept closed in case the cooking is seen by a member of a caste impure in relation to theirs. Vessels once they have contained water are susceptible to defilement. Wind instruments are abhorred by Brahmans because of the saliva they collect. Even clothes washed by washermen will be placed in water again by some conscientious Brahmans, who will, moreover, wash themselves up to three times a day.

There are some curious anomalies to the rules, such as a ban on eating head-shaped vegetables, like onions and garlic, but brass, copper, silk, fabric made from certain plants and the skins of antelopes and tigers are considered pure under any circumstances. Perhaps they can be explained by attribution of magical qualities arising out of intrinsic properties of these objects as well as historical circumstances. Later I shall say more about the symbol of the cow. Its products purify almost all defilements, while misuse of them ~~is~~ defiling and dangerous.

The sources from which water is drawn in a community

will if possible be particular to each caste, or group of castes with the same status. Similarly there is a graded scale of permissible distances between members of different castes. Untouchables will not go within sixty paces of a Brahman (Dubois 1906:188). These rules underscore the principle of unit solidarity and separation of those units within hierarchy. A caste can validate higher status claims by observing stricter rules. The way in which this separation is overcome by caste cooperation in rituals to make the whole society cohesive is Srinivas' main thesis in his book on the Coorgs. It is hard to disprove but the next two sections of this chapter will illustrate it by looking at one public festival and sacrifice.

Holi

The symbolism so far presented points to the aspects of separation inherent in hierarchy. For expressions of unity it is necessary to turn to examples which indicate another function of symbolism: its use for controlling the way in which reality is perceived and experienced, in distinction to what might constitute actual reality.

The metaphor used even today by Brahmans to illustrate their understanding of hierarchy and caste is that of the human body. Brahmans "take the place of" the head,

so their job is to do the thinking, the educating, the advising and so on. The arms are the Kshatriyas, so they protect the body. Kshatriyas are soldiers and kings. They do the government jobs. The body from the feet to the shoulders are Vaishyas. They look after feeding everybody and are merchants and farmers. The feet represent Sudras who look after the ground they are in contact with, so they sweep streets and do agricultural work.

The inaptness of the metaphor is most apparent now amongst Sudras and Vaishyas. And members of all castes do agricultural work. This model, or rationalization, does not fit the reality. I have expressed it as I have, however, because it is how I recall a Brahman explaining the phenomenon, expressing two things about it that I could not say as succinctly any other way. One is the idealized aspect of interdependence through mutually supportive functions despite distinct gradations of prestige associated with those functions. The other is that symbols and ritual need not express experienced reality but work to remedy the gap between that reality and the idealized order's consonant, stable categories. This is the substance of a hypothesis coined by Douglas and by Lienhardt and it should be possible to test it in the Indian context. Indian revolutionaries would say that if the hypothesis cannot be disproved, it

would show that symbols and rituals help dupe people into accepting an intolerable condition.

An outstanding festival that is at first sight ambivalent takes place annually in honour of the god Krishna. For twenty-four hours during holi, as it is called, two foundations of the everyday order are suspended. Caste and sex differences are not observed. Unlike the other thirteen major festivals in the Hindu calendar which support the "proper structures", this one sanctions the inverse. "The idiom of holi thus differed from that of ordinary life both in giving explicit dramatization to specific sexual relationships that otherwise would not be expressed at all and in reversing the differences of power between husbands and wives" (Marriott 1966:206). Husbands, Brahmans and any unpopular neighbour can be inflicted with treatment ranging from water dousing to physical assault. I would expect acrimonious actions in proportion to the extent the traditional system has changed. However, the suspension of observing rules concerning contact with what is held to be impure for a prescribed length of time indicates that the whole society is at that time in a condition of sacredness, when oppositions are transcended.

The worship of Krishna and its doctrine of bhakti were innovated by Sankara, a sanyasi who founded six cults. The doctrine of bhakti tackled the paradox of

pride and humility (Singer 1966:47). The festival is an example of an innovation provoked by speculation from a perspective outside the daily order that was incorporated into the Brahmanic structure. In Nepal the festival opens with overt expressions of brotherhood between all neighbours, followed by noisy, dancing processions of water bombers, loaded largely with the extremely potent purifier, cow's urine. The bombers are themselves bombed, and the processions end at the communal baths. Marriott entitles his essay on holi, "The Festival of Love". It celebrates a sacred ideal that transcends daily life for twenty-four hours only to reaffirm the profane, experienced reality for the next 364 days. It does not negate that order but acts as a safety-valve for the discrepancies experienced between the abuses that it can give to rise to on an interpersonal level and the sacred vision of a world different from the profane condition. The impact of the ideal of equality anomalous to a hierarchical order is thus reduced.

This brief analysis anticipates much about the sanyasi but also indicates how rituals expressing a different social order, (that of a new egalitarian cult), was harnessed to the service of the hierarchical order. The society recoils from a temporary excursion into apparent anarchy as from culture shock, reconstituting itself by once again observing separation of its parts by the opposition of pure and impure. Boundaries are

crossed but the danger of unleashed powers for disruption is contained by rites of reincorporation into the normal state by purifying baths. "Permanent good intention prevails over temporary aberration" (Douglas 1966:67). The temporary aberration serves as an act of atonement for a division between ideal and reality, a division to which the culture would be permanently committed and by which it would be permanently endangered if not catered for in some way. Strict patterns of pollution rules are either uncomfortable, contradictory, or induce hypocrisy (Douglas 1966:164). Almost any Indian ethnography reveals this dilemma; holi is one ritual that goes towards solving it.

Sacrifice: Some African Examples

In the first chapter it was argued that a social order that prescribed relationships was adopted in India to assure the survival of all. So far in this chapter it has been argued that the symbolic and ritual system of that order both reflects that order and controls the perception and experience of those within it. Both imply sacrifice by its members: on the one hand, the freedom of single members to have relationships apart from those prescribed is surrendered on behalf of the whole; and on the other, consciousness of a reality other than that

mediated by its symbols is surrendered. Both these imply sacrifice of an identity apart from the integrity provided by the system. Sacrifice in India is a primary social ritual which I would expect to compensate for such personal sacrifices of its single members by making sacred the whole, of which its members are parts. Individual integrity would be instituted on its terms. In order to develop this line of reasoning, the meanings imputed to sacrifice in other cultures will first be examined. An analogy from our own culture is the manner in which competition has been sacralized as a principle: great energy and effects are derived from the system it entails, although the benefits of relationships based on cooperation are sacrificed.

Douglas uses the Nuer and the Dinka to test her hypothesis that symbolism of the body matches the social system along a grid-group continuum. Spirit possession and trance are central to the Dinka where there is less articulation in the social structure than amongst the Nuer for whom it is peripheral. Following Douglas' argument, practically none could be expected within castes where the control of members is so strong by grid and group. Sanctioned loss of conscious control within the system outlined in the first chapter would be inconsistent with her hypothesis. There are, however, reports of shamanistic possession particularly amongst Sudras (Harper 1959a:231). It is a more admired

phenomenon in India castes than Brahman castes where it nonetheless also occurs. Such personal experiences with the Divine are predictably accessible to sanyasis.

Douglas' predictions with regard to fixed rituals, particularly sacrifice, in societies with fixed relations holds up better to the Indian test case. She suggests that the more regulated the world is, the greater will be the placular nature of sacrifices. Symbolic acts will be considered magically effective to put right the moral order but it would not be possible to coerce God into changing the natural order on man's behalf.

Raymond Firth suggests that all sacrifices are performed to establish communication with God and to have things put back into a proper order (Firth 1963:16). Three African ethnographers illustrate the sociological significance of this assumption. Evans-Pritchard rejects the communion theory which says that sacrifice is an act of social fellowship mediated by an intrinsically sacred animal. He finds the gift theory false too, which assumes that God is an illusory symbol of society, because the victim already belongs to God. Sacrifices may entail haggling with disease-causing spirits who, unlike God need blood in order to leave a sick man. He stresses that sacrifice is part of religion which "expresses the relationship between man and something which lies right outside his society" (Evans-Pritchard 1954:31). What is significant in the gift theory is the notion that the sacrificer gives up part of himself. He classifies two kinds of sacrifices amongst the

Nuer. The first is confirmatory, marking a change of social status or interaction between social groups. The second is placatory, on behalf of the moral or physical welfare of an individual. The rituals and symbols used are the same for both.

Later, in Nuer Religion, he classifies sacrifices as either personal or collective. The latter are confirmatory, making God and the ghosts witnesses to a change in social status. They bring dangerous but potentially helpful spirit to man, making the profane sacred (Evans-Pritchard 1962:199). The purpose of personal sacrifices is to avert trouble. They are concerned with relations within the social order. The argument in this case appears to be that the sacred has dangerously intruded into the profane world and so expiation must be made to return the world to order. A kind of bargain is made with God to allow this restoration or redemption, even though God's return is a free gift since everything belongs to God anyway. There is a moral equivalence between cattle and men, so the bull's death takes away the danger. There is "substitution of lives of cattle for lives of men" (Evans-Pritchard 1962:230). When dealing with spirits who do not own animals, substitution is blended with propitiation and the expectation of satisfaction in return. Symbols are condensed and indispensable, such as the ashes rubbed on the

animal's back during the dedication of its life which represent the evil in men's hearts and which flow away into the earth with the blood for God, leaving the flesh for men. Phenomena that endanger life and the ideal order come from a sacred realm. Whether invoked or unexpected they are explained and coped with by sacrifices so that the life of the Nuer people and the ideal order continue. The price is in the surrender of part of every man's individuality.

Lugbara reality according to Middleton is a concept of an ideal, unchanging order, consisting, for a lineage, of both living and dead members. All phenomena are either social or asocial, moral or amoral, normal or abnormal. Sacrifice validates and affirms the ideal set of relationships abetted by reformulation of lineage genealogies and the communal feast that follows sacrifice. "By the performance of ghostly sacrifice the living are brought again into a proper relationship with the ancestral, ideal and unchanging order" (Middleton 1960:265). Animals are sacrificed to either ancestors or spirits, not to God, although it is God who, being in control of the whole of nature, can change genealogical structures by bringing death, and ultimately accepts or rejects the animals. Sacrifices are made in response to sickness which is brought by the dead for amoral or asocial offences: "it temporarily destroys the ideal relationship between living and dead kin. By sacrifice the participants

restore this relationship, which is seen as a perfect, ideally unchanging and unchangeable one; after sacrifice order reappears" (Middleton 1960:85). Oracles will reveal whether sickness is brought by sin, curses of living men, bewitching, disease spirits or God. Amongst the Lugbara sacrifices are therefore made either in response to ghostly vengeance or as surety for healing on behalf of a local group whose welfare depends upon the conformity of every member. Unconformity is apparent from sickness. Sacrifice, like a rite of passage, can bring the offender back into the moral community. So long as he is sick, he is outside the sphere of the living and the dead, in a state of sin. Only God can bring about the change back to normal status. The "patient" is "identified with the sacrificial animal by consecration", which is then killed and so enters the realm of the dead and of God, but is then reaccepted back into the lineage by the condensed symbolism of spitting (Middleton 1960:107).

Lienhardt reports that every Dinka bull or ox destined for sacrifice demonstrates "the ordered social relationships of the sacrificing group" (Lienhardt 1961:23). Beasts are sacrificed to malevolent powers or to clan divinities to avert sickness. The sacrificial animal represents "the activity of the Power" and the passivity of Power's human victim (Lienhardt 1961:152). Political and religious leaders (The Masters of the Fishing-Spear) make the

invocation on behalf of the whole community. They also carry the people's "life", more than enough to sustain them alone, the supreme gift of powers and divinity. Through the twitching of the sacrificed bull, "life" is made available to all (Lienhardt 1961:208). The Dinka lose themselves in the communal act of sacrifice which is an act of freedom and dependence, supplication and control. "The sacrificial rite is first and foremost an act of victimization. A strong and active beast is rendered weak and passive so that the burden of human passiones may be transferred to it. It suffers vicariously for those for whom sacrifice is made, and men, thus symbolically freed from the agents which image their suffering, and corporately associated with each other and with the agents which image their strength, proclaim themselves the creatures whose deliberate action prevailed over the first master of the fishing-spear and received his gift of life" (Lienhardt 1961:251). Lienhardt concludes that such symbolic acts change Dinka experience of events, if not the events themselves.

Brahmanic Sacrifice

I have not attempted to spell out the cultural variations between these three African tribes. Their social

systems and cosmologies vary as do the meanings attributed to their rituals by their ethnographers. Nonetheless, the concepts they have used to elucidate those meanings are helpful to illuminate the meaning of sacrifice in India. Dumont criticizes Hocart where he writes that the caste system itself is a sacrificial organization (Dumont 1959:45). Sacrifices are organized by the king to maintain the life of the people according to Hocart. Despite his questionable use of ideological texts to substantiate his views on caste and sacrifice, this conception does point to a theme common to so many commentaries on sacrifice: that the consciousness of an individualized self apart from the prescribed order of hierarchy is sacrificed to that order. Firth wrote that "sacrifice is ultimately a personal act, a giving of the self or a part of the self. The self is represented or symbolized by various types of material objects. Such a material object must have a social significance or value, or the implication will be that the self is trivial or worthless" (Firth 1963:22).

Dumont suggests that sacrifice "integrates society in relation to its absolute values". The kings, or Kshatriyas, hold temporal power and organize the sacrifices on behalf of all. They can only be performed by Brahmins. The king's power is transformed into spiritual merit, symbolized, as in a rite of passage, by the king being identified with Brahma, one of the three supreme deities,

during the ritual and reintegrated back into his profane status at the end of it. His profane status is not however legitimized in any way by his religious role, despite an exchange of spiritual goods, inaccessible except to Brahmans according to hierarchical principles, for material goods (Dumont 1970b: 64-67). Effectively then, though only Brahmans perform sacrifices, the benefits to be derived from them diffuse down through the graded scale of status. The purest, the Brahmans, receive expiation from sins by sacrificing, and each other rank that participates takes a step nearer God. The ideas that reinforce this religious organization, put into effect socially by divorcing political power from the principle of hierarchy and thus preventing it from upsetting status and the road to salvation, are the concepts of dharma and karma.

Dharma is symbolized by the calf, representing righteousness. The cow stands for the earth, the body politic and the obligations of dharma. Tagore described dharma as "the law of moral health". Sukraniti wrote that "through fear of punishment meted out by the king, each man gets into the habit of following his own Dharma and duty", and Santiparvan said that "The Lord created Dharma for the advancement and growth of all creatures."

It is then the religious duty of all men, tempered secondarily by political force, to do what is fitting for their status because the proper order signifies that only

the purest can be saved. Failure to follow dharma in past lives builds up karma which is like an accumulated record of impurity, the consequence of actions that condemn men to rebirth instead of salvation. Purity is gained in proportion to the loss of karma, which is eradicated by following dharma. The path to salvation is one but only those born Brahmins have the potential to reach the end of it. Thus Dumont upholds that the unity of Indian society is not found in the political realm but in the "social regime of castes" (Dumont 1970b:78), and the symbolism of sacrifice works towards the realization of everybody's "ultimate purpose". "The drawing of symbolic lines and boundaries is a way of bringing order into experience. Such non-verbal symbols are capable of creating a structure of meanings in which individuals can relate to one another and realize their own ultimate purposes" (Dumont 1966:50,51).

Every member of society abnegates himself to this institutionalized channel of grace, even though the ultimately realizeable reward for following dharma does not come to most people during their present lifetime. Salvation is defined by Sanyasis as the extinction of individualized consciousness: to accomplish this, a man must paradoxically become an individual. The Brahmanic order ascribes a fourth stage in a Brahmin's life when he can apply himself to this goal. There is a parallel

graded structure of purity between castes and stages of life. It is reflected in the divine pantheon and buttressed by mythology where there is no linear end to personal existence. Every god was conceived by another god so many yugas, so many kalpas, so many mayayugas in the long ago, impossible-to-conceive dimensions of time and space. "India thinks of time and of herself... in biological terms, terms of the species, not of the ephemeral ego" (Zimmer 1946:21). Only Siva is outside the sacrificial hierarchy. He is the model of the renouncer: only the sanyasi is outside the sacrificial hierarchy in India. And according to Dubois the sects that worship Siva do not have Brahman priests (Dubois 1906:127).

From what has been said it would be consistent if only Brahmans perform personal sacrifices, although the magical efficacy of the sacrament is recognized by all. Dubois reports that in South India every Brahman makes at least one daily sacrifice to fire at a ceremony called homam (Dubois 1906:175). Fire is one condensed symbol with particular significance for the sanyasi when he renounces the social world and its rituals, to which I shall return. It is considered the purest of the gods. Puja is also performed daily during which other offerings are made. Success attends correct performance, and punishment for failure to perform at all. Other

sacraments can obtain the remission of all sins. Homam and special sacrifices are made at transition ceremonies, which are the subject of the next section.

The aspect of sacrifice that seems most apparent in India is piacular. Expiation is seen as different things according to status, but for sacramental efficacy, sacrifice demands the suppression of individualistic, linear self-interest for all. The symbolic system is condensed and symbolic acts are magically efficacious. It rests on a symbolic distinction of inside and outside, pure and impure, and on the control of consciousness. To conclude this section, I quote A.K.Coomaraswamy from a footnote to Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, which raises other, perhaps theological, problems: "The dismemberment of Vritra, by which the one was made into many, at the first sacrifice which was also the act of creation, is Indra's and the gods' original sin (Kilbisa), because of which the Regnum has ever since been excluded from the drinking of "what the Brahmans mean by soma, of which none tastes on earth", otherwise than by the transubstantiation of an analogous drought; and for which an expiation must be made by an ultimate reintegration of the many into one. Both processes, of evolution and involution, are perpetually reenacted in the sacrifice, whether as ritually and visibly celebrated or as mentally performed throughout one's life" (Zimmer 1946:189,190). The overriding goal

of the sanyasi is the reintegration of the many into one by personal, concrete experience. Most doctrines that provide the techniques for this purpose deny that it is original sin but ignorance that inhibits this experience. For the man-in-the-world, sacrifice provides a partial or vicarious sense of that reintegration by its orientation towards the whole. Sacrifice atones for the multiplicity of the whole by regulating and modifying the universe on everybody's behalf.

Rites of Passage

So long as a member of an Indian caste has good moral standing in his community, he does not stray from that consciousness of the world which is the limited, arbitrary order symbolized by ritual and speech. This entails a suppression of individual self-awareness and acceptance of a persona in relation to all he meets that is predetermined by the social organization and culture. Thus a man is son in relation to father, husband to wife, father to son, impure Kshatriya to pure Brahman, pure Kshatriya to impure Vaishya and so on. This raises two problems. First, such a mechanistic existence must be fraught with contradictions and exceptions, so how can such a fragmented element as a single person be sustained?

Secondly, new relationships must signify the attribution of new personae and different states of consciousness as each caste member progresses through life. How does the culture ensure that each new relationship and each new state of consciousness is kept consonant with that prescribed by the social organization and its symbolic order?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that each persona and each state of consciousness need only be called upon at any one moment since each exists by virtue of a relationship. Consciousness may be controlled so that some contradictions are not recognized as such and others may be catered for symbolically. The taboo against incest can be seen as a taboo against the impossible-to-regulate contradiction of being, for instance, both uncle and father to somebody. Incest would shatter the right order. Part of the answer lies in the rituals associated with transition. The state of sanyasan, where there are no more transition rites, provides a limited test case for the problem of tautology in this line of argument, which amounts to saying that for social order and unity, social consciousness must be controlled and this is partially but effectively achieved by transition rites.

In discussing the meaning of sacrifice in India, it was apparent that the known order was associated with life and health. Transgression of that order was associated with sickness, death and danger, at least to social

status. Dumont states that impurity itself is not considered dangerous but this can be attributed to the relative scale in which it applies. Through this relative scale the sacred is also accessible to all (Dumont:1970a:72). The sacred is therefore conceived of as a state of purity or impurity inappropriate to status. A menstruating woman is in such a state. She is segregated for four days during which she is she is subject to restrictions such as no bathing or weeping. Only after thorough purificatory ceremonies is she incorporated back into the profane world and permitted to look at people without endangering them (Dubois 1906: 155). It is only for sanyasis that the sacred has a different meaning.

Since transition rites marking a change from one secular state to another are performed with the greatest elaboration and attention amongst Brahmans, who are most susceptible to being polluted, it would follow that Brahmans have closest access to the sacred and most to fear from disorder, as indeed they do if the social system were to break down. The predominance of Brahmanic transition rites correlates with the unusually cohesive and tightly bonded nature by grid and group of the Brahman castes. Brahmans recognize four stages of life, emphasizing them more elaborately than the other castes with ceremonies of initiation into each. Every Brahman is expected to go through the first two, as well as having his first consumption of solid food for instance demarcated by ritual. These stages are not observed by other

castes, although ceremonies in them are performed by Brahmins at birth, marriage and death, with diminishing emphasis as status diminishes. To this extent there is the parallelism Dumont observes between "the ceremonies of the ages of life, and even the main actions of everyday life, and caste ranking" (Dumont 1970a:55). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace this parallelism all the way into daily behaviour, so I shall concentrate here on the ceremonies marking the first two stages and death. These have striking differences from those inaugurating the second two stages, that of the hermit and of the sanyasi, which will be treated later.

Between the ages of five and nine years old, a Brahmin boy is inducted into the state of Brahmachari which grants him the right to study. The ceremony is called upanayama which means "introduction to knowledge". The change is symbolized by the investiture of a triple cord, the sacred thread worn around the neck and the right shoulder. The ritual is organized by the father, conducted by the family priest, attended by other caste members and lasts four days. On the first day, the initiate is adorned as for the ceremony that marked the first time his hair was cut. Together with sacred songs and sacrifices this is equivalent to an act of separation from the state of childhood, though I can find no indication that he is now temporarily free to break rules, as van Gennep hypothesises

is the case for those outside society (van Gennep 1960:114). As in many Brahmanic ceremonies, puja is made to Ganesha, the god of obstacles and luck who can be dangerous if not worshipped. On the second day the investiture takes place immediately after homam. The fire is kept lighted throughout the rest of the ritual. Following a hair-cut, and a purifying bath, he obtains remission of all sins committed in youthful ignorance by virtue of songs sung by the priest. This indicates that he is now expected to be conscious of what constitutes sin. The investiture is accompanied by a cacophany of noise set up by all present, indicating the actual period of transition. Rodney Needham conjectures that the cacophany is a source of comfort for the initiate during this potentially frightening time of being in a limbo of transition since it approximates the noise that an experiment in New York revealed is the one heard by a foetus in the womb. He then receives religious instruction and eats a ~~fest~~ with other Brahmacharis, with whom he now shares status. As on the first two days the third and fourth days are occupied by offerings, singing and feasting. On the fourth day the initiate performs homam for the first time which he is now entitled to do. The gods that were invoked are asked to leave, as are divine essences contained in symbolic objects. A bracelet fastened to the boy at the beginning of the ceremony is removed and placed in milk. Finally he prostrates himself

before each principal guest after a feast, and gifts are distributed (Dubois 1906:161-168). The prostration is probably the first time that the Brahmachari overtly gives roles the honour due and can no longer expect that failure to do so would be taken lightly, just as the guests would expect the gifts for the time they had given.

The social significance of upanayama is the moral status accorded to the Brahmachari. It is annually commemorated at the ~~Fest~~ of the Annual Atonement at which Brahmacharis can obtain remission of sins committed in the preceding year. The rights and knowledge to which he now has access by studying the four books of the Vedas are moral doctrines teaching the obligations of dharma, and religious lore chiefly on the sacraments that lead to salvation. They do not entertain self-consciousness or a reality save that which demarcates the next obligatory stage of development, that of the Grahastha.

Grahastha means householder. Marriages are arranged and constitute the most important event of a Brahman's life. Only a man with a son has discharged his great debt to his ancestors. The date of a marriage is decided by astrological auguries and lasts nine days. The first three days are preparatory, comprising purification rites, sacrifices to household gods and to fire which is consecrated, distribution of gifts, feasting and the honouring of the betrothed couple. The fourth day is the most

significant. Home and guests are purified, all the gods and ancestors are invoked, sacrifices are made to the principal deities, particularly fire, symbolically pure objects are consecrated. The bridegroom makes atonement for all his sins committed since his upanayama ceremony and then leaves the village dressed as a pilgrim. Van Gennep wrote that Buddhist and Moslem pilgrims were "outside ordinary life and in a transitional state" (van Gennep 1960:185). I shall later try to show that this is the condition of the sanyasi who is in a permanent state of pilgrimage.

The groom returns after his father-in-law has stopped him to offer him his daughter. Following a wedding procession, sacrifices and purifications, the groom fastens the tali bracelet worn by all married women onto his bride's arm to the accompaniment of a cacophany of noise set up by the guests as at his incorporation into student status.

Homage is paid to fire and an oathsworn by it that is deemed the most binding that can be made. Gifts, more ablutions and feasting complete the day, accented by the groom and bride eating together out of the same dish for the first and last time. The next four days are similar in essentials. On the ninth day invoked deities and ancestors are dismissed (Dubois 1906:216-230). Marriage ceremonies amongst Kshatriyas and Sudras are reported to be similar by Dumont, but with less elaboration and some

differences of symbolic objects. Unlike members of other castes, the Brahman Grahashta is now bound to daily observances, noticeably performance of the Sandhya ceremony three times a day. The Sandhya comprises prayers and sacraments for salvation and is not available to other castes. It represents "the quintessence of the Vedas" according to one of the Vedic authors (Dubois 1906:266). The Grahashta is furthermore subject to the most detailed rules governing the conduct of his life, prescribing the manner in which he should clean his teeth, and eating and elimination habits.

Since there are sacraments that can obtain the remission of all sins for a Grahashta, it is not necessary for him to become either a Vanaprastha or a sanyasi. I shall argue later the institutionalization of these latter stages was a means to accommodate the development of a consciousness that was no longer in conformity with the state of Grahashta or that of a member of a lower caste. A Grahashta who recovers at a critical stage of his funeral ceremony, after the rites of separation from the social world of the living, is outcaste into a state similar to that of a sanyasi. A difference in moral and spiritual state is thus symbolically recognized.

A dying man is first laid on cow dung, dharba grass and a new cloth, three symbolically pure articles. The ceremony of perfect expiation is performed over him and he drinks a concoction of five ritually pure substances

to purify his body, reciting mantrams to purify his soul. As he dies he holds the tail of a cow which will guide him to paradise. Coins are distributed to those present, a symbolic termination of earthly obligations perhaps, who proceed to mourn noisily. The corpse is then washed and adorned. The funeral procession stops three times in case he should recover. In some parts of India the dying man is placed with his feet in a river. If he should recover after these stages he can no longer participate in the activities of a Grahastha.

The funeral pyre is consecrated and sacrifice made to fire, while the body is completely purified by sealing every orifice. For ten days ceremonies consisting mostly of sacrifices and offerings are conducted with rigid attention to detail in order to speed him on his way to paradise and to keep him from hunger and thirst. This period of transition ends when a pot and three stones representing the dead man are thrown into a river. He has now reached the paradise of Indra. The mourners wash, sacrifice, receive gifts and feast. On the eleventh day the chief mourner, attended by nineteen Brahmins, sacrifices to fire, supplicating the gods that the deceased will find a place in Swarga by dedicating a bull to a temple. On the twelfth day, attended by eight Brahmins, he makes the same supplication on behalf of the dead man for a place amongst the ancestors. This is repeated on specific

days during the next year and on anniversaries of the death.

The dead would appear to continue to have a moral and social existence, only in a different realm from the living. The rituals ensure that the good order of the world of the living is protected from any encroachment by another order. In Northern India, Carstairs found that though death is not final there can be untimely deaths such as suicide: "Untimely death is associated with an earth-bound ghostly after-life, whereas timely death enhances the reputation of a man's family, because they are felt to have harboured a soul which has advanced appreciably towards the most timely death of all, which is not death at all but a final release from the imperfect state of being born as a separate self. In practical, as distinct from theological terms, death in India is regarded not as a solitary act, but as part of the series of domestic rites and ceremonies in which not single individuals but whole families are required to play their several parts" (Carstairs 1955:41).

In this chapter we have seen that rituals and symbols consolidate the orientation towards the whole of Indian society (group), and confirm the fixed relations within and between its parts (grid). This entails control of the limits of permissible consciousness of men-in-the-world, appropriate consciousness being transmitted during rites of passage, social rituals such as sacrifices and the observance of symbolic boundaries. Our contention is that

only the sanyasi can be free of this control. To what extent, and the kind of consciousness to which he has access, are questions that will be explored later. The metaphysical component of the Indian social order will be examined next to complete the context from which the sanyasi can free himself, or within which he can find maximal freedom.

CHAPTER III

The Religious Impulse

In German Ideology, Marx wrote that "the more these conscious illusions of the ruling classes are shown to be false and the less they satisfy common sense, the more dogmatically they are asserted and the more deceitful, moralizing and spiritual becomes the language of established society". It is tempting to make a Marxist analysis of Indian society and to assert that the twice-born castes represent a bourgeoisie and the Sudras a proletariat. Had the man-in-the-world felt that he was being taken advantage of economically, as some began to with the introduction of an economy of growth, or had his religious impulse for unity and order not been met, such an analysis may have been apposite. He lived, however, in a system to which, no matter what his caste, he sacrificed self-consciousness and his labour on behalf of the whole. He did not make this sacrifice on behalf of part of it or himself, although the possibility of capitalizing on political power was invested in one part, and of immanent salvation in another. A member of any caste was undoubtedly more cognizant of being at the mercy of impersonal forces such as the weather than he felt himself at the mercy of personal tyrants. In terms of consumption he was not exploited, and ritual distinctions between "capitalist" Vaishyas and the Brahman intelligentsia for example were

as pronounced as those between the Sudras and the other varnas. In return for his sacrifice he got material and spiritual security, even though they were of a limited and illusory nature from a perspective that was not available to him.

Such a perspective was available to the sanyasi who, like Marx, did point out that the ideology was not simply part of the illusions of any ruling class, but of all mankind. Complete freedom of doctrine was permitted in India, so the sanyasi cannot be explained as an ideologue of established society and his existence rationalized on those grounds. However, since he has ostensibly renounced the social, ritual and symbolic aspects of society but must still use to a large extent pre-existing categories, any affect or contribution he makes to those-left-in-the-world is likely to be most apparent in the ideological component.

The sanyasi's language becomes if anything more spiritual, if less moralizing, than that of the Indian priesthood. In light of this and of Hinduism's syncretic largesse it is possible to suppose with Marx that spiritual is necessarily synonymous with deceitful. Spiritual systems and doctrines innovated by sanyasis will be examined later. In anticipation it can be said first, that most do not evangelistically assault the principle of hierarchy and the social order, although many reject caste and inequality from a moral vantage point different from the

man-in-the-world's; and secondly, many Brahman ideologues have eclectically revised or embraced new perspectives to provide an ongoing, open-ended ideology in consonance with the social, and ritual order. This has been known as Brahmanism, Hinduism and Vedanta at different stages in history. In the last 2500 years Gandhi is the only sanyasi to have seriously affected all three areas of the whole. To what extent those changes are attributable to him is debateable. His historical role was shaped as a reaction to foreign rule when ritual and ideology were not in consonance with a new or foreign economic system, and after his own education in a country which confuses the Indian categories: British "Kshatriyas", "Vaishyas" and "Sudras" could find salvation through Christ as well as a priest, "even at this very moment" as Billy Graham would say. That priest might be a legislator too. Hierarchy and power are not divorced in the social theory of the West.

The course suggested by Marx has a striking implication: any endeavour to examine the self to find an authentic identity which is not artificially shaped by society, to find a universal ethic neither limited by nor deceived by moral codes within society, and finally to seek solutions to the paradoxes of existence apart from society, all of which might variously be described as the

religious impulses of sanyasis, ~~is~~ self-deceiving. By institutionalizing these impulses India might have been saying the same thing: if a man must deceive himself, leave us who are in society to lie in our own bed of deceit which is quite satisfying to us and promises us when we do have pangs of your kind of impulse that salvation will come one day if we do our duty now.

From the perspective of the man-in-the-world the sanyasi nonetheless epitomizes someone who has realized Absolute Truth. This social identification contradicts the assertion that deceit and spirituality need be synonymous. This is not to deny the dialectical relationship between ideology and the social order in India. It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace political and economic changes in India but the prevailing social structure and its rituals have been both shaped and legitimized by ideology. It remains to point out some features of the web woven over and by Indian consciousness during the last two and a half millennia, with the proviso already indicated that it has been weaved with a consciousness of its own ephemeral and artificial nature, unchampioned by arms yet extraordinarily hardy. We shall therefore proceed on the assumption that the social order has a necessarily spiritual component in order to meet satisfactorily the religious impulse for order. Change in one entails change in the other. The impulse for

consonance between them does not in itself imply exploitation or deception.

Sin and Duty

It has been impossible to present the social and ritual context without making use of a number of Sanskrit terms which comprise the system of ideas interpenetrating the total context. As has been suggested the ideas of the man-in-the-world are similarly interpenetrated by the thoughts of the renouncer. Beliefs concerning sin and duty are two aspects of society which the sanyasi has renounced and yet which he has not altered.

Any act that threatens the social order constitutes sin. The most specific are those that transgress the structure of pure and impure. Sanctions are mostly religious except for extreme cases dealt with by excommunication. Misdeeds are punished by rebirth into relatively impure status which implies relative misfortune. Virtue consists in conforming to status and honouring and respecting those roles that are higher or purer, such as father or guru. This follows the pattern predicted by Douglas in societies with strong grid and strong group. The fate of humans is geared to the working of a complex cosmos whose universal ordering is mirrored by a religious

ordering of society. "There is no transcendant sanction: only the notion of this very order, conformity with which takes on the value of duty, dharma" (Dumont 1970b:42).

Zimmer sums up the implications of dharma for the man-in-the-world this way: "In India everybody wears the tokens of the department of life to which he belongs. He is recognizable at first glance by his dress and ornaments and the marks of his caste and trade class. Every man has the symbol of his tutelary deity painted on his forehead, by which sign he is placed and kept under the god's protection. Maiden, married woman, widow: each wears a distinctive costume. And to each pertains a clear-cut set of standards and taboos, meticulously defined and scrupulously followed. What to eat and what not to eat, what to approach and what to shun, with whom to converse, share meals and intermarry: such personal affairs are minutely regulated, with severe and exacting penalties for accidental as well as for intentional infringement. The idea is to preserve without pollution-by-contact the specific spiritual force on which one's efficacy as a member of a particular social society depends... For in so far as the individual is a functioning component of the complex social organism, his concern must be to become identified with the tasks and interests of his social role, and even to shape to this his public and private character...the individual is compelled to become

anonymous" (Zimmer 1956:151).

When the spiritual value derived from allegiance to this system, which is a kind of sacrifice, is no longer experienced and truth is sought in more personal, immediate terms, the man-in-the-world has recourse to becoming a sanyasi. "Knowledge of the absolute presupposes not only the renunciation of the world but rejection of social forms" (Dumont 1970b:12). Unlike the man-in-the-world and Western man, he negates the world, at least initially. The man-in-the-world's affirmation leads to an experienced state of sin. His activity is either that of expressive actions that give pleasure (kama), or instrumental actions contingent on desire, suffering and possessions (artha). These actions may be commensurate with the third sphere of activity (dharma), but are contradicted by biological inclination freed of structural conditioning and by the system's premise of a state of perfection transcending relative and transient caste duties. They produce what is called karma which binds men to their condition within the world. Weber asserts that the combination of caste legitimacy with the karma doctrine cannot be the product of any "economic" conditions but of rational ethical thought. He concludes: "The caste system and karma doctrine place the individual within a clear circle of duties and offer him a well-rounded, metaphysically satisfying conception of the world. However certain and

unambiguous this world order might present itself, the individual, once he raised the question of the 'meaning' of his life in this compensatory mechanism, could experience it as dreadful" (Weber 1958:132).

Redemption and Alienation

The individual may be provoked to this experience of life by awareness of his own self-alienation and the failure of compensatory mechanisms to resolve paradoxes. The world negation that this led to in India, (which I shall attempt to show later was only a preliminary step), would be described as metaphysical romanticism by those who take world affirmation to one logical conclusion: for example, the view of materialists that the concepts of God and spirit are part of a miasmatic illusion whether propounded by world affirmatists or negativists; that power is vested in institutions and suffering is a function of our alienated experience for which man and woman must take personal and collective responsibility. Such views of the materialists in India shortly before our era were soon swallowed up by the power of the institutionalization of their ideas although the power of the ideas still exists. One reason for the temporary loss may be their possible failure to have provided a methodology for becoming whole

again such as other systems provided, which I propose to take as the purpose of a religion and the meaning of redemption.

Analytically, there are three kinds of redemption in India, although redemption itself is indiscriminately called moksa, signifying release. Available to all is an eventual certitudo salutis of having fulfilled religious obligations by living in conformity with the social order. This is the first kind of redemption. But only the elect, the Brahmins, symbolized by their relative purity, are eligible for imminent redemption. Only they can perform the fixed rituals that are sacraments of redemption. Even for them, however, redemption is limited in nature. Only Swarga, the fourth paradise in terms of absolute bliss is available by virtue of sacraments, as can be anticipated in a relative world of ever receding dimensions. Nonetheless, this represents the second kind of redemption offered by the system: available only to Brahmins.

The apparent relativization of redemption and the possibility of purer status in another existence for the man-in-the-world is displayed by the Hindu pantheon. Deities are portrayed as allegorical figures in human forms. There are over thirty million of them representing natural and psychological phenomena, who can be worshipped and propitiated but not controlled. They are personalized but inhuman processes whose purposes are

obscure. Some are benign and some are malevolent but each is a manifestation of another more comprehensive deity, culminating in three, allegorical of cosmic energies, each with a paradise more splendid than Swarga, the paradise of Indra, who is but a manifestation of Vishnu. For Brahmans, Brahma represents the ultimate, unchanging power of the universe with whom union can be found in sacrifice. It is an impersonal, divine essence and the ultimate goal of all that exists. For non-Brahmans, the pantheon of gods emphasizes, bolsters and legitimizes the first kind of redemption: deferred and vague in ultimate terms but immediate and satisfying on a relative scale.

Douglas points out that if hierarchy is divorced from power, "India would communicate in a restricted code of alienation". She would expect spirit to be divorced from matter and the system "to clothe the top ranks of the hierarchy in the most ethereal, non-physical symbols compatible with material comfort. Hence the austerities of the sects, which renounce the world by monastic withdrawal, would naturally provide the symbols of status for worldly and unworldly Brahmans, whose rank is defined by their opposition to the ruling caste..." (Douglas 1970: 163,4). She cites vegetarianism as one such status symbol. What she says of sects is also true of sanyasis, who alienate themselves not only from temporal power but

also religious hierarchy in the world, seeking a personal salvation more absolute than that offered by Brahmanic sacraments. This recourse, taken by the sanyasi, is the third kind of redemption. It is the way that Kshatriyas in particular can be expected to take, sharing as they do the ideals and assumptions of the Brahmins and yet denied the rewards promised by the system (Burridge 1969:88). (This prediction is mitigated by a denial of ultimate rewards to the Brahmins too, unless they become sanyasis.)

Douglas' phrase, "a restricted code of alienation" needs elaboration. All castes are united by ultimate values leading to moksa. This is the framework of a restricted code of communication. Social units were recognizable by territorial boundaries, but within these groupings, other units, bonded by kinship and occupational specialization, were strictly alienated from each other. The religious orientation towards the whole suppressed self-consciousness, so every man-in-the-world was alienated from his self. But by providing a spiritual unity of the whole, the code also compensated for this, and provided each person with a way for finding integrity.

Douglas expected the dialectical process between a restricted code of language and cultural symbols and a society strongly controlled by grid and group to lead to a passive idea of the self as an undifferentiated element

in a structural environment: "Since individual motivation is irrelevant to the demand for performance, we would expect to find little reflection on the notion of the self; the individual is hardly concerned as a complex agent" (Douglas 1970:28). This is substantiated by the Indian context and allows for the deferred kind of redemption. Dumont takes the logic of Douglas' prediction a step further: "To say that the world of caste is a world of relations is to say that the particular caste, the particular man have no substance: they exist empirically but they have no reality in thought, no Being...on the level of life in the world the individual is not" (Dumont 1970:42). If a man-in-the-world realized this, his recourse was to leave the world and reject its code until he found one that satisfied him. This is the redemption sought by the sanyasis, the third kind that Indian society made available to those who were not satisfied with the deferred kind and divorced by definition from the second.

Transmigration

In another context Dumont argues that the fundamental unreality of the particular being is illustrated by the concept of transmigration: "The particular being acquires a reality only by epitomizing in succession the sum of

particularities found in the world; a chain of existences is the equivalent of a single, individual, existence in the West. Yet there is a short-cut, there is, that is, an exception, a momentous exception to Indian holism. It appears from the faculty--classically reserved to Brahmans or the twice-born, but actually enjoyed by all--a man has of leaving the world proper and becoming a renouncer (a Hindu sanyasi or his equivalent)" (Dumont 1965:91). Transmigration ties the social order, prescribed integrity and consciousness, and deferred redemption into one cohesive bundle, each of which is renounced by the sanyasi.

The idea of transmigration complements the notion of maya, which denotes, according to Zimmer, not that the external world and the ego have no reality but that "the observed and manipulated world, as well as of the mind itself in the conscious and even subconscious stratifications and powers of the personality" are unsubstantial and ephemeral in nature (Zimmer 1956:19). Together they complement the notion of karma which holds that deviation from dharma in one existence is paid for by misfortune in the next. All four are analytic concepts. They comprise a tautological package which could only have been created by a self-conscious individual, perhaps to explain the condition of man-in-the-world, and which were then adopted by Brahman ideologues to explain, legitimize, prescribe and compensate for life in traditional India. This may

display not so much ideological chicanery as the way in which the temporal was relegated to the spiritual and was therefore founded on the absolute order that embraces both the renouncer and the man-in-the-world. Indian religion conceded that spiritual access to Absolute Truth was possible for the individual but that it could only manifest itself in a diluted form in the finite, temporal world of social relations. Thus from the idealized perspective of the sanyasi, symbols and social forms do not contain an intrinsic absolute truth but are to be measured by something extraneous to them. This perception is expressed by Cassirer in this way: "For all mental processes fail to grasp reality itself, and in order to represent it, to hold it at all, they are driven to the use of symbols. But all symbolism harbors the curse of mediacy; it is bound to obscure what it seeks to reveal" (Cassirer 1946:7). But for the man-in-the-world, social forms and symbols are vital organs of reality, revealing processes of thought, if not of being.

CHAPTER IV

The preceding chapters have delineated the social order of India, focusing on the way it is articulated to meet a religious impulse for order and consonance, and on the price that the man-in-the-world pays for the solution to his impulse. The system portrayed has limited parallels with portraits of animal species, which are geared to maximize the survival of the whole. The primary difference between the two is, I contend, a human propensity to experience individuation, and spiritual concerns which may follow this propensity. As we have seen, such "deviant" individuation in Indian society is dealt with in ways short of killing off the deviant, which is the expedient adopted by animal species, unless the innovation is a mutation that enhances the chances of survival for the whole species. Individuation and innovation can be inimical to the survival of fixed and arbitrary orders. In this chapter this individuating and innovating propensity will be discussed in the Indian context. It is socially catered for to satisfy the impulse for order without threat to the survival of the whole, rather than randomly allowed to flourish or die by virtue of solely biological usefulness.

Survival and Innovation

This chapter considers the relationship of the sanyasi

to Indian society. As we shall see, most writers who deal at all with the sanyasi approach the subject from the point of view of the function they see he may perform, as though to answer the question how can a society as poor as India tolerate the existence of a significant number of apparent parasites, who are not expected to do any utilitarian work.

The only data that I have found concerning the proportion they represent of the total population is an estimate of eight million in 1961 out of about 430 million (Yale 1961: 211). The approach taken here, following Dumont, will be to suggest that the institution of sanyasan complements a hierarchical society, so that its function is secondary to its structural necessity as a way of coping with the human propensity to innovate and to seek God in new ways. The primary derivative function is to provide a dynamic to a culture which is threatened on the one hand by stultification and on the other, by collapse, if no provision is made for innovations and innovators. A later chapter will examine the kinds of innovations introduced by sanyasis.

That this is a question of particularly human propensities is attested to by the findings of ethologists. As in the somewhat mechanical portrait of Indian society in the preceding chapters, the significant feature of relations within and between animal species is symbiosis: one level does not work against another but for their

mutual benefit. A small unit of one species can exist for thousands of years without change or "new blood". Life is maximized for the unit, and unlike humans, animals will take the most drastic step suggested by Douglas of dealing with deviant members, that of killing them off. The cost, as it were, of humans behaving in such a way, would be the prohibition, or denial, of self-conscious experience and of channels for personal development. The transcendent would be crushed by a static, secular system based on ownership of the land and an unassailable ideology of contradictions. The ideology would eventually become redundant as each budding critical faculty was annihilated. The sanyasi therefore represents a "safety-valve for the Brahmanic order, which gives a permanent place to the transcendent, while remaining out of the range of its attacks" (Dumont 1970b:51).

The Brahmanic order was absolute in the sense of imposing its rules on everyone within it: law and religion were one (as manifested by dharma), and the individual did not exist. The recourse for those who did not conform was to leave it. Such a person, the sanyasi, exchanged the authority of society for his own. In place of the difficulties of a productive member of society contingent on attachments, obligations and the necessity of work, he exchanged the existential suffering contingent on making personal ethical choices, unconstrained by the busy activity of the householder. Being dependent on the

householder, he did not contradict the householder's experience although he negated it. The values and relationships that fix and sustain the householder are rejected along with transmigration. For these, the sanyasi substitutes a quest for the attainment of eternal life. He strives to liberate himself from the human condition, seeking what, in Western eschatological terms, has been referred to as "the coming of man to himself" ("to his authenticity and primordality") (Moltmann 1967:46). He is now beset, in popular stereotypic terms, by the human paradoxes of personal self-discovery and cosmic self-surrender, social isolation and alienation and transcendent integration. The next three chapters investigate what application they may have, if any, in the Indian context. For example, social isolation is a sanctioned stage, that of the hermit, in his endeavour to be transcendently integrated with Brahma, the source of being. Furthermore, since this is part of the total order, it may be that the connotations of social alienation are not pertinent to the sanyasi. To Westerners unfamiliar with metaphysical concepts of freedom, ~~and~~ the idea of a "liberated man" in a context where it seems like another role that can be chosen conditional on renouncing society is paradoxical and even fraudulent. This view is further sustained by the small provision made for "liberated women".

If sanyasan was a stylized way of coping with innovative

non-conformists, then it represents a cultural adaptation safeguarding the survival of India's social order. If women could have been more innovative, then there would have been more female sanyasis. This line of argument can be clarified by considering the present situation of the world. It is currently being said that in order to guarantee the survival of the human species, men and women must see themselves as belonging to a global community in which free market forces can no longer operate to allow individuals to maximize partial interests without endangering the survival of all: resources would be exhausted and conditions for plant and animal life destroyed. Whatever the advocacy of global salvation, solutions are of two kinds: either individuals can become conscious of their own participation in the process and regulate themselves by, for example, determining personal consumption and waste utilization patterns; or, legislation can be imposed. For the latter to work, however, it would need to be based on internalized moral attitudes and values, which would themselves be the product of objective production and consumption patterns mediated by a structure of accepted beliefs concerning pollution. Rules of ingestion and excretion might not in that case be very different from the opposition of pure and impure adopted in traditional India. If such beliefs were adopted globally, the morality sustaining it might approach a

universal ethic. The challenge that the Indian example poses however, is the creation of a society of self-conscious, self-regulating members, neither alienated from themselves by adopting a hierarchy, nor from participation in it by having to leave it in order to discover the self. This is effectively to ask for the creation of a society of individuals. The concept "individual", applicable to sanyasis, will now be examined with the proviso that after its examination, this section can only be concluded by confessing that the challenge of global salvation can only be met by a temporary, compromise job.

Individuation

Dumont suggests that the category "individual" can be thought of in two ways. First there is the physical phenomenon, an empirical agent; and secondly there is the mental construct of the individual, who is a rational being and the normative subject of institutions. In this latter sense the individual is a configuration of values who believes that his destiny is in his own hands and who "incarnates the whole of mankind". He is replaced in India as the bearer of values by Dharma, the universal order. Those that live under its sway cannot deviate from the patterns that work for the well-being of the

whole. The smallest elementary unit where order is present is the subject of Indian social institutions (Dumont 1970a: 5-10; 1970b:141). By renouncing caste, the sanyasi "becomes to himself his own end" as the individual lives in the social theory of the west.

Dumont modifies this view of the sanyasi in two ways. First there can be no such thing as a totally individualistic world because every individual must use socially learnt categories of thought, and secondly, living very often by alms and by preaching, the sanyasi still has relations with society and cannot be said to have really left it. Although he has forsaken social roles, he now adopts a role which, transcending man and society, is both universal and personal and therefore "is rightly included in the definition of the system" (Dumont 1958:17).

Evidence that he nonetheless acquires an individuated outlook is furnished by the founding of sects. These are open to all, and therefore, like the sanyasi, transcend caste and serve as a means of proseletyzing to the man-in-the-world. Dumont attributes all "inventions" to the renouncer, which arise from his unique position of being able to question the system and its beliefs. Together they may "relativize" past values, but when new doctrines clashed with them a clear line was drawn between spiritual truth and normative codes: "the denial of impurity and social hierarchy is quite natural for the renouncer because

he transcends...the social world. Therefore it is enough to suppose that the renouncers taught the men-in-the-world their own truth as the absolute truth, without having intended to do away with the other aspects of caste, being content to degrade it in this way from a religious fact to a purely social fact" (Dumont 1970a:190). This is borne out by Fuchs in his book of Indian messianic movements, Rebellious Prophets. New truths with implications of change in the social order are introduced in tribal areas where the Brahmanic Order can be presumed to be weak, or where social or ethical confusion existed as a result of new technology and western, individualistic thought.

Other evidence of the individuation cited by Dumont is that of the creation of the bhakti cults where the devotee strives to identify himself with a personal God. To hold a belief in a personal god, the believer must be able to see himself as an individual. The aggregation of such cults into the main stream of Vaishnavite Hinduism illustrates the complementarity of the sanyasi's religion of choice and that of the religion of the group.

The individualism of the sanyasi is nonetheless of a different kind to that of the economic individuation of the west. All the sanyasi's efforts tend towards the extinction or transcendence of an uncomfortable individuality maintained by the exercise of will (Dumont 1970b:45).

They have no need to present a partial or false self to others and in fact, all four yogic disciplines stress the control of unconscious drives so that the theoretical concept of a total being can emerge, very different from the individual of western society. "Engaged in a quite different order of reality, unconcerned about a self which they regard with suspicion, yet socially absolutely safe because of the role they have taken up, sadhus seem to suffer from no self-alienation" (Brent 1972:304). It appears that the sanyasi is both nobody and everybody.

The Buddha gave ontological significance to the essential nonentity of a person and as far as his relations with society are concerned he is nobody, (unless he adopts a particular function such as teaching). Others can make what they will with him. By virtue of this he is anyone, and, perhaps in honour to the great respect accorded his role, usually a virtuous ideal. He is said moreover to be one with Brahma, the ultimate All. "A yogin sees himself in all things and all things in himself" (Bhandarkar 1965:16). Some found Ramakrishna to be God the Father, others the baby Krishna, others master (to their servant) and others Father and Mother combined: "All found something different in the Master, and each discovered there some attractive personification of the Divine that elevated his mind" (Yale 1961:51). Swami Shyam Sunderdass, head of an ashram in Hardwar asserts: "And as for the

disciple, it is as if the Guru represented the whole world, the whole universe" (Brent 1972:72). The ambivalence of such assertions doubtless provokes the frustrated and sublimated sexuality hypotheses to account for the phenomenon of the guru and his sanyasi disciples. These will be examined later, but first the phenomenon itself will be discussed in terms of whether or not the apparent adoption of such a role as guru is compatible with what has been said so far about the sanyasi.

Gurus

Dubois wrote that "Gurus, as a rule, rank first in society. They often receive tokens of respect, or rather of adoration, that are not offered to the gods themselves" (Dubois 1906:129,130). They are then, in Hindu metaphysical theory, those sanyasis who, to use a metaphor of Western slang, have made it, which raises the spectre of glorified teachers doing violence to the experience of a young sanyasi entering an uncharted world and trying to free himself from the conditioning of the old one. The guru, however, is not a teacher but a guide, a sheet anchor in a potentially dangerous voyage, who can introduce a new sanyasi to some time-tested techniques of deconditioning and self-realization. They may or may not have "made it" themselves. Most insist they have done no such

thing, maintaining that the goal may be indescribable but nonetheless attainable: the way to it can be found by a disciplined passage through different states of consciousness. Because the guru has been through some of them himself he can point out when the disciple is getting stuck in one of them. He can help inhibit in his disciples those elementary human inclinations which are inimical to the goal of deconditioning.

Disciples joined gurus in order to gain a transference of knowledge. Association with an exemplary guru was considered sufficient learning experience if the student (adhikarin) felt trust and reverence, and was sufficiently eager to learn. Formal instruction was unnecessary, or had been learnt as a student. The power of the guru was augmented by orthodox institutionalization at the same time as it was checked by it. This place for the role of the guru within the total system embraced by Brahmanism would have moderated the tension that must have prevailed between the Brahman priesthood and holy men offering salvation ex opere operato.

Not all gurus are necessarily sanyasis. Brahman householders can become gurus for other householders, a tradition most evident in the Suddh Advaita doctrine founded by Vallabhacharya in the early sixteenth century. His descendants are householder gurus for bhakti devotees. According to one of them, Sri Dixitji Maharaj, they say

that "emotionally renouncing everything to God,...we are the servants of God" (Brent: 1972:189). The motif of surrender coupled with that of service is significantly associated with devotees still within society. But the concept of surrender, about which more will be said in a later chapter, is found in other forms. Professor Jain says of his guru, Swami Muktananda, whose forceful personality presides over a thriving ashram: "if you are really able to give yourself and to accept his will in every matter, to bring yourself completely in harmony with his will, then you find yourself in the process... And giving yourself to him doesn't mean losing your individuality; on the contrary your individuality becomes stronger" (Brent 1972:269). Here again the quest is for "your supreme divine personality".

For any precise understanding of the nature of the guru-disciple relationship, each guru and each sect needs to be treated separately, with close attention to the translation of terms such as individuality and personality. Unfortunately there is very little information at all on sanyasis and most of Western investigation has concentrated on the sanyasi as guru. Quotations such as the two above lend themselves to two explanatory models proposed by Brent. He suggests that renunciation is the one area for achieving status and developing talent in a too tightly organized society but that, while serving as a safety-valve, the

guru-disciple relationship is simply a parallel authoritarian structure, though an alternative one.

Brent contrasts the role of the guru to the role of the psychoanalyst in Western society. The former is a teacher concerned with transcendence over that section of the mind which makes us aware of the self, whereas the latter is a doctor who uses that same part of the mind to "reconstruct the ego-sense". The former is a model for spiritual aspirants to emulate so that 'oneness' may be found with the absolute. The latter is a neutral analyst dealing with the psychologically maimed, who must dismiss spiritual aims as unrealistic or outside his competence (Brent 1972:295-299). He also suggests that the guru-shishya relationship is an ideal father-son relationship. The guru represents an avenue of rescue from the rigidities of relations in society. By becoming a guru's disciple, the "son" seems to choose his "father" but lives in potentially deluded, happy slavery, despite being provided with a focus for his spiritual drive.

The former contention may be true of that "daemonic" type of guru categorized by Emmett. This type "has not achieved their sense of freedom from a sense of personal importance" and yields to a Fuhrer-Prinzip (Emmett 1956:22). It does not describe other sanyasis or gurus. The other argument is also presented by Carstairs, who like Brent, presents psychological arguments to explain the phenomenon,

which will be discussed in another chapter. He also refers to the guru as a father, unambivalent and disinterested, but points out too his role as mediator and "moral adviser", representing as he does a desirable ideal (Carstairs 1957: 45-47). The ability to resolve moral conflicts would appear to be reserved to people who have transcended certain paradoxical situations of social life. The sanyasi is somebody who has renounced attachments that lead to many such conflicts, which makes him amenable to this derivative function of his role.

The Sanyasi and Society

What is undeniable about the sanyasi is his power, which is not derived from secular authority, though given unbounded secular deference. Indians traditionally believed that all power comes from God, a God that embraces good and evil. Sanyasis are exceptional individuals with that kind of emotional or spiritual power Weber called charisma. This kind of extra legitimate authority can either be ethical so that the bearer becomes a preacher of new moral demands, or exemplary, so that the bearer exemplifies a new way of life. In her articles on prophets, Emmett criticizes this designation because it is too general. This criticism is valid when applied

to sanyasis. While many can be described in Weber's terms, there are many who do not have followers owing them personal allegiance which is a condition of ascription for this type.

Emmett also criticizes Durkheim's functional analysis of prophets, which might be applied to sanyasis as to criminals. Sanyasis may prevent rigidity in moral codes but are not socially condemned deviants as Durkheim implies. They also prepare the way for new sentiments of collective conscience but these changes only occur when other conditions in society have prepared it for them.

Like the prophet, the sanyasi is a holy man, separate from the ordinary social system. Unlike prophets in some societies, he has a socially recognized framework of expression. They may be lonely spiritual pioneers but they also have a recognized role in relation to Indian ritual and liturgy, an opposition Emmett makes in regard to prophets. They were not however revolutionary free lancers, though they may have appealed "against contemporary abuses to what are presented as ancient and purer traditions". Granted spiritual progress towards the realization of becoming a total being is what the life of the sanyasi is dedicated to, there are four traditional ways for doing this. It may be that each of these ways correspond to one of the castes and the disposition attributed to them. There is also a parallel between sanyasis following these ways and Emmett's typology of prophets. She points out that

these types may overlap and it may not be exhaustive of all kinds of sanyasis. The way of jnana yogis is through discrimination and knowledge. Like moral and intellectual leaders they may be founders and innovators and may work within the social order. Raja yogis seek God by mediation and contemplation with the intent of rousing the kundalini. This is possibly the oldest way of building on pre-Vedic shamanistic technique and can take visionary or orgiastic forms as in tantrism. Bhakti yoga is the way of progress through love of God. As in karma yoga, the way of devotion and service is stressed. What Emmett says of the vocational person who "learns to live as a servant of some work which is greater than his own purposes" can be said of the followers of these last two ways. The paradox of suspending personal ambitions while apparently striving for a state with implications to one's personal state of living is reflected by the numbers of followers of these ways who display Weber's charisma and by the existence here of the daemonic type. It may be that sanyasis in sects guided by these disciplines do not necessarily take the vows of renunciation as is the case of the Vallabhacharya sect.

The sanyasi displays an unobliging unreadiness to fit into the categories provided by Douglas, despite being the product of a society strongly articulated by grid and group. Despite striving for what she calls a romantic ideal of purity and believing in pure spirit, they do not

reject society, which after all is not working to their loss. Similarly they do not reject the body, nor hold it to be evil. They do try to master its autonomous working. Furthermore, despite their entry into "inaccessible regions (beyond the confines of society)", where they gain power "not available to those who have stayed in control of themselves and of society", they do not constitute a millennialist threat to Indian society. The contrast she makes between ritualists and anti-ritualists does not apply to men-in-the-world and sanyasis, except to the extent that sanyasis internalize religious experience and may adopt humanistic philosophies. The sanyasi does not reject external forms since he owes his being and identity to them. He illustrates a difference between transcending social values and being alienated from them.

Although he adopts an elaborated and personal code of communication, his general cosmological ideas are not like those of the Western individual characterized by store set on personal success, doing good to humanity, and of feeling himself alone experiencing generalized guilt. His religion may be personal but his relationship to God is a feeling of oneness so that theological discriminations and cults are theoretically redundant. He lives in a world uncontrolled by grid or group, but it is qualified by his association with and role in a world opposite in character. Far from qualifying the cosmological ideas Douglas

associates with such a world, this relationship seems to render them inappropriate or redundant. This can only be explained by the possibility that the sanyasi can acquire a totality of being which transcends the artificial opposition posed between the two types of society, as well as the opposition between matter and spirit, between external form and extreme value on personal consciousness. Douglas wrote that the "final paradox of the search for purity is that it is an attempt to force experience into logical categories of non-contradiction. But experience is not amenable and those who make the attempt find themselves led into contradiction" (Douglas 1966:162). Abetted by a prescribed stage of hermitage, by vows of silence, and yogic techniques, when learnt logical categories are forsaken, sanyasis have discovered ways towards a transcendent experience beyond the distinctions of analytic logic.

However that may be experientially, the sanyasi's apparent holiness does draw attention to other levels of existence. By institutionalization and sacralization of his role outside society, society reduces the anomaly he would be within society. Sanyasan is like "a cult of the paradox of the ultimate unity of life and death" (Douglas: 1966:176). Owing no group allegiance, the sanyasi takes responsibility for the division between ideal and reality by incarnating an ideal. Divorced from the bonds of society he can do this without others having to take the strain of him falling short or

failing. A saint may not recognize the kinds of bonds, obligations and demands that lubricate family life. To spare the members the sort of non-participation that holiness implies, the saint renounces the family. Renunciation became a conjunct to society for its members' as well as the renouncer's purposes and benefit. In India the choice was either the pursuit of spiritual absolutes and a process of individuation at the cost of social bonds and their comfort, or a social and religious conformity at the cost of individuation. The sanyasi chose the former and so was freed of the leavening of compromise and moral relativism contingent to civil existence.

CHAPTER V

Peripheries and Language

Douglas suggests that a society such as India's, strongly controlled by grid and group, may have a periphery whose symbolic mode and general beliefs will be similar to those of a social system with weak control by grid and group. A peripheral class she defines as "one which feels less the constraints of grid and group than other classes of people within its social ambit, and expresses this freedom in the predicted way, by shaggier, more bizarre appearances" (Douglas 1970:84). In Chapter II it was shown that the associations Douglas predicted between social structure and symbolic systems held true for Indian society. For the periphery of such a society she predicts that moral judgement will lack clear definition and its symbolic mode will be spontaneous as for a weakly articulated society. She asserts moreover that its spiritual resources will be peripheral in origin and its attitude to trance states ambivalent and manipulated to secure advantages in the society to which it is peripheral.

Having argued that sanyasis are both separated from society and yet can be included in a definition of the whole system and in light of some of their manifestly bizarre appearance, they might be classified as just such a periphery. However, this chapter will attempt to show that they do not strictly follow the pattern

predicted of a periphery. Sanyasis are not, for instance, interested in securing advantages in the society they have renounced. The symbols, rituals and cosmological ideas associated with them are anticipated to be a more accommodating mixture of those patterns described in Chapter II and of effervescent diversity. If this is the case it will substantiate the claim that the sanyasis, as individuals, are not alienated from and opposite to the collective world he renounces. This hypothesis will be tested by investigating a diffuse range of symbols and rituals as well as some of the assertions made towards the end of the last chapter.

The most obvious symbolic form is language, with which Douglas makes an extensive analogy to ritual (Douglas 1970: 22-24). She focuses on the work of Bernstein who attempts to show that the choice of speech forms determines the perception or grasp of reality (that infinite and possibly disordered realm of phenomena). Social determinants control the form of speech that is chosen. Thus in situations of ascribed role categories, (ascribed by the criteria of sex, relative age and status), such as the Indian extended family or caste, a restricted code is learnt which conveys information but also reinforces the social situation. Quoting Bernstein, she writes that it "helps sustain solidarity with the group at the cost of verbal signalling of the unique differences of its members". The actors

share the same assumptions and their values "are learnt in terms of the given structure".

An elaborated code, however, can also arise in highly differentiated situations "where the speakers do not accept or necessarily know one another's fundamental assumptions". Since its function is to discover or examine differences in the perception of reality and to cope with new discoveries, where it has the function "of making explicit unique individual perceptions, and bridging different initial assumptions", it has no given structure to express, except that which it creates by virtue of expressing it. What ~~it~~ expresses will of course be a recombination of what exists, new "capta" from the realm of phenomena. Such an elaborated code one would expect to be used by sanyasis in India for Bernstein's thesis to hold true. It would take a linguist to test for restricted codes in Indian families but, as it turns out, the greater part of post-Vedic philosophic speculation, which must fall into the category of an elaborated code by definition, is ascribable to sanyasis, who, freed of restricted social units, can lead as differentiated existences as they please. Nothing and anything is available to them. The Upanishads comprise the most remarkable of this literature whose greatest achievement, according to the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics was "to have established the firm belief in a transcendent cause of the world, an impersonal and unmoral God mysteriously

identical with one's self". Indian society as a whole is so differentiated that the task of finding symbolic expression for the whole of it is performed by men who have denied allegiance to any single part of it and so can draw on the full range of reality of which each part expresses a portion.

Douglas makes no prediction about the kinds of language she would expect a peripheral group to use. Nonetheless, for consistency it would probably develop a restricted code of its own. Its members would probably be capable of switching to the society's code when it was convenient for them. It might also contain its own esoteric forms, such as ecstatic poetry. Some writings by sanyasis were of this nature, particularly in the bhakti cults, but the mainstream of sanyasis developed codes that complemented and developed society's. The symbolism associated with them can therefore be expected to express this separate yet complementary relation with society. In order to elucidate it better, the methodology used in Chapter II will be inverted to see what the symbols and rituals of sanyasan can reveal about the sanyasi's place in that social order which includes him.

Civil Death and Transition

The manner in which transition rites work to control experience of a reality different from that commensurate to status, and the manner in which they curtail self-consciousness has already been described. The stage of transition between separation from one state and incorporation into another was marked by rituals safeguarding the initiate from the dangers inherent to that state. Danger is comprised in part of the power accruing from exposure to an unregulated perception of reality, which can be socially disruptive. Other powers of a spiritual nature may also attend this period, whose use could be ambivalent depending on the fitness of those who acquire them. When the sanyasi renounces society according to social usage, it can be expected that there will be a ritual of separation but none of reincorporation. This is in fact the case. A sanyasi can only re-enter society with the status of an untouchable, which is effectively no status at all. The untouchable is as much a non-person as the sanyasi. The sanyasi therefore enters a permanent condition of transition (until his theoretical incorporation with Brahma, which the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics describes as the Supreme Soul which is an impersonal, all-embracing divine Essence and the original source and ultimate goal of all that exists. No secular ritual could presumably mark such an incorporation.)

Despite the diversity of sannyas rites which mark renunciation, all have salient features with implications of this kind. Some of them and their features will be described.

Dubois records the rites as performed by Brahmins who must have acquitted their debt to their ancestors by having been a grahastha and raised children (Dubois 1906: 523-527. After announcing his intention to other Brahmins, he bathes and provides himself with four saffron-yellow* cloths for himself and six as presents for others, a bamboo staff with seven knots, small silver and copper coins, flowers, coloured rice, sandalwood and panchagavia. The officiating guru performs homam and puja and whispers mantrams to him that are meditational guides suitable to his new state. He puts on one saffron robe, breaks his sacred thread and shaves off his tuft of hair. After drinking the panchagavia (and in some areas the ashes of his sacred thread that will have been burnt), he distributes the coins and cloths to the attendant Brahmins.

His bonds with society are now severed for ever. Taking up a staff, a gourd for water and an antelope skin, he is a sanyasi. He is now subject to rules of conduct of which Dubois ascertained fourteen, applying

*In a footnote to Zimmer, A.K.Coomaraswamy reports that saffron robes were originally worn by criminals condemned to death and by rajput warriors riding to certain death (Zimmer 1956:162).

to the orthodox, post-Brahman sanyasi. These rules have the immediate effect of setting him apart from men-in-the-world, as well as forcing him into a world where ordinary rules do not apply. No longer may he even look at women. He should cover himself with ashes after bathing. He may only live by alms but these he should not ask for. Chewing betel is prohibited and his one meal a day must be eaten standing. He may only carry the three possessions already mentioned and only wear wooden shoes. He may not stay in an inhabited area when travelling and, if he settles, his hut should be built beside a river or tank. All men are to be regarded as equals and equanimity towards all events must be fostered. Finally, "his one object in life must be to acquire that measure of wisdom and degree of spirituality which shall finally reunite him to the Supreme Divinity, from which we are separated by our passions and material surroundings. To achieve this end he must keep his senses under perfect control, and entirely subdue any tendency to anger, envy, avarice, sensuality: in fact to any unholy impulses" (Dubois 1906:525-527). To these rules may be added a prohibition to light a fire, (a powerful inducement to develop tapas). The sacred fire is now said to be interiorized.

The sixth book of the Laws of Manu, the volumes of post-Vedic Brahmanic lore, has this to say about the sanyasi:

"Let him remain without fire, without habitation; let him resort once a day to the town for food, regardless of hardship, resolute, maintaining a vow of silence, fixing his mind in meditation.

"With hair, nails and beard well-clipped, carrying a bowl, a staff and a pitcher, let him wander about continually, intent on meditation and avoiding injury to any being.

"In this manner, having little by little abandoned all worldly attachments, and freed himself from all concerns about pairs of opposites, he obtains absorption into the universal Spirit."

Needless to say, he has no rights such as rights to inheritance. But, as Brahmanism could not contain what it would take to be a precocious religious impulse amongst members of other castes, so the form of sanyasan deviated from the articulated pattern and took on more of the diffuse characteristics of an uncontrolled peripheral group.

Whether Brahman or Sudra in origin, the sanyasi has nonetheless crossed what van Gennep calls a magico-religious boundary. Political, blood and occupational boundaries have no more meaning. Boundaries are now determined by ultimate values. Seeking a transcendent morality implies self-consciousness, and knowledge must follow. This implies knowledge of what social rituals conceal: contradictions, anomalies, "good" and "evil". A transcendent ethic must follow this too.

Sectarian Variations

Ghurye reports some details of the variations but suggests that the essence of all ordination ceremonies for sanyasis is that of "symbolizing his civil death" (Ghurye 1953:223). This is the case even when the rite has stages according to seniority in a sect which indicates that some sanyasis form into genuine peripheral groups with monastic orders of their own. These sects appear to be articulated by grid and group with a mahant, the spiritual leader, presiding over its very secular affairs as well. Some abbots even serve as local bankers (Ghurye 1953:185). Such "sanyasis" are not the subject of this thesis.

All sanyasis of the ten orthodox Dasanami sects founded by Sankara wear tilak marks and rudraksha or tulasi beads. Each of their centres has a different tutelary deity, manifestations of Shiva, and prescribes different ways of getting food, based on different cosmological orientations. At initiation they bathe waist deep to "wash away worldly impurities". The shraddha offering made at social funeral rites is also made on this occasion amidst feasting and prayers to the sun for intellectual clarity. As with other orders, the initiate is given a new name. Initiation may take three stages: first, Vastradhavi when ascetic clothes are put on; second, Tangatoda, which has castration implications;

and third, Digambara, when he may renounce all clothing and become sky clad. They may not remain anywhere for more than three days except in the rainy season. After the initial hair-cut, hair is allowed to grow (Ghurye 1953:90-94.)

Sanyasis who take their renunciation vows through established sects can generally be classified as Shaivites or Vaishnavites, depending on whether they conceive of Shiva or Vishnu as their tutelary deity.* The Vaishnavite sects are more recent (from the sixteenth century), more reformist and bhakti oriented. Service to the guru is seen as a way to salvation. Their sanyasis wear white and three tilak marks on the forehead. At initiation they adopt such definitive marks as well as the bow and arrow mudra of Rama (a meditational posture peculiar to a manifestation of Vishnu). At the same time, a new name, a necklace of 108 tulasi beads and a mantram is bestowed on them. They are not clean shaven. There are other small sectarian differences, particularly amongst idiosyncratic Shaivites who in general are not noted for observing rules.

Shiva is par excellence the deity most closely associated with the sanyasi, being without possessions, having

*Shiva and Vishnu have ambivalent, self-contradictory, enigmatical characters, and are "fit to represent in personalized form the paradoxical, all-embracing nature of the Absolute" (Zimmer 1946:124).

matted hair, his body covered in ashes and frequenting cremation grounds, who destroys life when it becomes too sinful to be redeemed. Moreover, the Shiva Lingum, symbol of singularity or perhaps "the fertilizing power of God" (Leach 1958:158,159), is devoutly worshipped throughout the Hindu world and is the central icon in all the great pilgrimage spots visited by sanyasis. There appears to be some correspondence within Hinduism between sexual identity conflicts arising from the adoption of celibacy and the development of an identity which can transcend the cycle of birth and rebirth. The Shiva Lingum is a symbol through which the sanyasi can vicariously transform and resynthesize his psychosexual identity. The process is given potency by the internalization of the sacrificial fire. He has renounced participation in the social ritual of sacrifice and their effects of reconfirming the continuance of the gift of life, even if it is, according to Hindu doctrine, a two-edged gift. For the sanyasi, the gift sought is a personal immortality, a transcendence of life and death.

The Symbolism of Fire

In The Psychoanalysis of Fire, Bachelard attempts to explain the primitive sexualization of fire, how the conquest of fire is originally a sexual conquest (a theme

expounded by J.G.Frazer in Myths of the Origin of Fire).

"That fire is the principle of all seed appears so true to a prescientific mind that the slightest appearance is enough to prove it" (Bachelard 1964:50). Fire is produced by rubbing; it reproduces its own kind; red embers can die or grow and correspond to waning and ardent life; fireside reveries make the false equation between spark and seed or semen, small causes producing great effects; fire is the formal principle of individuality; and fire is the masculine principle pertaining to the centre, "at the very heart of the essential being", as opposed to the feminine principle which pertains to surface.

Furthermore, fire was the first phenomenon on which the human mind reflected (only those changes caused by fire are striking), and awakened the desire for knowledge. The Prometheus complex, the will to know more than the father, is the Oedipal complex of the intellect. Bachelard then goes on to say that while fire as the principle of life is in general convincing, there can be no particular objective proof of this subjective equivalence. What can be done is to show the subjective coherence of these correlations, which will defy objective analysis because they have no objective reality. "All metaphors indicate that we are not dealing with objective properties but psychological values" (Bachelard 1964:76). I will try to indicate here that within sanyasan, fire is the metaphor of

a transforming quality, representing a will to change. Later I will attempt to make this correspondence clearer by analysing the structure of symbolism in yogic practices, particularly those employing the concepts of "chakras" and the "kundalini", the serpent of fire, which through austerities can rise to the pineal gland of the subtle body, where the flame is "dematerialized; it loses its reality; it becomes pure spirit" (Bachelard 1964:104). Pure spirit sweeps away all institutional forms.

A sanyasi who has reached the ultimate goal is known as paramahansa, which means supreme discriminator (Ghurye 1953:73). The word "hansa" has three meanings. It can mean goose, which is the vehicle of Brahma, the Supreme deity. "Ham" means "I am" and "sa" means "this", approximating the sound of in-breathing and out-breathing respectively. It therefore acts as a potent mantram* in pranayama yogic exercises, which will lead the initiate, according to Zimmer, to discover the secret of maya which

* Denn da wo die Begriffe fehlen

Stellt ein Wort zur rechten Zeit sich ein. (Goethe)

Rather than a word, a mantram is a composite of sound and ether, the fifth primary substance of Hinduism. Sound is the vehicle of speech, conveyer of revelation, tradition, incantation, magic and divine truth. Associated with ether, it is "the primary and most subtly pervasive manifestation of the Divine Substance" and together "they signify the first, truth-pregnant moment of creation, the productive energy of the Absolute, in its pristine, cosmogenetic strength" (Zimmer 1946:152). Quantum physicists now say that the substance of atoms can be thought of as both discreet entities and insubstantial vibrations or processes.

is the identity of opposites, (For example, subject "ham" and object "sa") (Zimmer 1946:46-50). Its third meaning is purity. The sanskrit roots or the usual words for pure and impure mean cultured and boorish, signifying the eruption of the biological into social life (Dumont 1970a: 61). Those-in-the-world must breed and are always susceptible to becoming impure but the hierarchy of caste, as has been argued, is ordered around the absolute value of pure and impure. In its subjective association to sexuality, fire has a quality of impurity. The struggle against sexuality is symbolized in raja yoga by the struggle against and with the serpent of fire. Since the sanyasi is concerned with absolutes, he must of course master sexuality, if for no other reason than because it is such a powerful inducement to return to the world. The struggle is framed in India as a problem of overcoming the opposition of spirit and matter, which is why fire, a dialectical symbol, is used instead of water, which only purifies and cannot defile.

As Bachelard points out, however, there are objective roots to the principle that fire purifies: it deodorizes and it separates substances, destroying mineral impurities (Bachelard 1964:102). This dialectical sublimation arising from the struggle against passion, symbolized by the transformation of fire into pure light, is the principle of transcendence (Bachelard 1964:106). If this possibility

was adopted by all men and women in India, Indian society would lose its integration by caste, and its continuity. "But for the man who spiritualizes his emotions, the resulting purification is of a strange sweetness, and the consciousness of purity pours forth a strange light. Purification alone can permit us to examine dialectically the fidelity of a great love without destroying it. Although it discards a heavy mass of substance and fire, purification contains more possibilities, and not less, than the natural impulse. Only a purified love permits a deepening of the affections. It individualizes them. The charm of novelty yields progressively to the knowledge of character" (Bachelard 1964:101).

Eliade claims that " 'mastery of fire' and 'inner heat' are always connected with reaching a particular ecstatic state or, on other cultural levels, with reaching an unconditioned state, a state of perfect spiritual freedom" (Eliade 1969:332).^{*} The purpose of the meditation on fire is to experience the physiochemical process of

* Eliade also makes the claim that the yogi whose aim is to transcend to the human condition is different from the Brahmanic sanyasi who seeks Vedic 'immortality'. He bases this claim on the pre-Vedic, shamanic origins of yoga and a difference he posits between the former's interiorization and stress on personal experience as against the latter's ascent up a sacrificial ladder. This is to presuppose that no sanyasi adopts yogic techniques. The second distinction is a false opposition. Structurally, in relation to society, the yogi and the sanyasi are equivalent and are occupied by the same purpose.

combustion which is the same in the human body as in coals; to identify fire on earth and the fire of the sun; to unify the contents of all fires and to see existence and substance as fire. To master inner fire is to penetrate the cosmic process at all levels and to get to the essence of the real (Eliade 1969:72,73).

The Symbolism of Hair

That sexual energy, when isolated from conventional expression, is still active and must either find an outlet or be transformed in culturally prescribed ways is a current theme. It was said of Gaudi, who wilfully renounced civil life in the latter part of his life, that he "repressed his sensuality in the depths of his subconscious only to have it rise, transformed, into visionary creations..." (Cirlot 1967:2). It may go part way to explaining how sanyasis came to be innovators in Indian history. In line with this approach, Leach suggests that the abstract and sacred concepts incorporated in the idea of sexuality (by which he may mean the ideology of birth and rebirth sustained by the profane facts of sociality and sexual desire) are materially represented by hair style; that there is an inherent equivalence between ~~head~~ hair and male genitals: "For the Brahman the

tonsured tuft "means" sexual restraint, the shaven head "means" celibacy and the matted head "means" total detachment from sexual passions because hair behaviour and sex behaviour are consciously associated from the start" (Leach 1958:156).

Zimmer comes close to Leach's point of view. Interpreting a stone fresco sculpted three centuries before our era, he writes that even the Asparasas of Indra's paradise, singers and dancers who give divine sensual love to those who have made it to Swarga, rejoice at the Buddha's decision to cut his hair-tuft and his impending Buddhahood, even though the decision "is to negate and annihilate their own very power and existence". For they too "are so many projections, mirages, externalizations, of our own vegetative, animalistic, emotional-intellectual propensities". That is to say, part of maya. (Zimmer 1946: 164). If sanyasis were consulted they might say, like one questioned by Gervis, that it is so they will be recognized as genuine seekers after God: "So that...they may know that I have for many years studied the scriptures and meditated upon God. So that they will know that I am no humbug who has suddenly decided that this is an easy way to live" (Gervis 1970:187). 'They' refers to men-in-the-world, so long hair is also a sign of separation.

C.R.Hallpike points out that hair has "great manipulative potential" and there are a "multiplicity of uses

for hair in ritual contexts" (Hallpike 1969:257). The symbolism of hair is about the "world" rather than about the subconscious. On this premise he argues "long hair is associated with being outside society and that the cutting of hair symbolizes reentering society, or living under a particular regime within society", and long hair is indicative of "being less amenable to social control than the average citizen" (Hallpike 1969:260,261). This last point and his conclusion that growing long hair equals separation from society to God is substantiated by the example of the sanyasi. There is the variation already mentioned and the Jains go so far as to tug out each hair one by one every year (Stevenson 1970:186), but this can be imputed to the discipline demanded of allegiance to a particular authority still separate from society's.

When applied to the sanyasi, Leach's and Hallpike's analyses may not be as divergent as they seem. In relation to social organization, the structure of symbolism represented by hair substantiates Hallpike's view: the sanyasi is separated from society, is dedicated to God and wears his hair long; the man-in-the-world is comparatively more controlled, is still occupied by secular, social pursuits and cuts his hair. In relation to Hindu cosmology and values, Leach's analysis has validity: the sanyasi is dedicated to God, to an end to desire and the generative processes of life and death, in pursuit of

which goal he transcends his sexuality; the man-in-the-world is still begetting children, putting off the attainment of ultimate goals but retaining his sexuality, while according that the renunciation of all contaminating associations with the secular world is the highest spiritual action.

The Internal Sacrifice

This symbolic variety, of which only an indication has been supplied, with focus on the possible meanings of some of the more general characteristics, indicates a world with few limitations imposed on experience by social structures, rituals and symbols. Personal goals are sacro-sanct and self-consciousness a precondition of their realization. For symbolic consonance, a structured system such as the body should be downgraded or frankly rejected. This, however, is not the case. Some sanyasis do inflict themselves with terrible ordeals and some beliefs discount any ontological reality to the body. But probably the majority favour mastery of man's physical nature rather than rejection. The very formation of sects favours this different orientation while some embellishments of raja yoga, such as tantrism, claim that the human body is a model of the cosmos. There is no

evidence to test this hypothesis but I would expect to find that those sanyasis who indulge in the more extreme ascetic practices come from lower castes. Sanyasan for the twice-born permits metaphysical endeavour without the necessity of rejecting society. Attitudes to sacrifice may clarify this projected difference between sanyasi as renouncer and sanyasi as rejecter, alienated man and anti-ritualist.

The evidence and interpretations of some commentators appears to negate the hypothesis. Ghurye claims that sanyasan was added to the other three asramas to accommodate dissenters who had lost faith in sacrifice, believing that it was inadequate for spiritual benefit (Ghurye 1953:25). Fuchs records that the Sudra Vaishnavite who led a millenarian movement in Assam in the middle ages, preached that sacrifice was useless without sincere devotion to God but that its benefits were to be had by all devotees, not just the twice-born (Fuchs 1965:130). Commenting on Jainism and Buddhism, Rapson says that their followers "deny the authority of the Vedas and of the whole system of sacrifice and ceremonial which was founded on the Vedas... (and) place themselves outside the pale of Brahman orthodoxy" (Rapson 1914:34). Both the Gautama Buddha and the founder of Jainism were Kshatriyas.

Stevenson, in her book on Jainism, suggests that it flourished because of Kshatriya resentment at being shut out from sacrifice. Later she argues that the "physical

world is governed by the law of sacrifice: that all existence is maintained through the death of others, and that every living organism is built up through the silent and invisible work of the minute bacteria of decay, which release from the dead the material needed by the living. It is the same law of sacrifice of life through another's death, which governs also the spiritual world" (Stevenson 1915:295). The Jain sanyasi breaks away from social reciprocity and from this transformation process, adopting the principle of ahimsa, which is the absence of the desire to kill. (The principle of Jainism is ahimsa dharma.)

Van Gennep suggested that transition rites are periods of recuperation between rites of death and rebirth, provoked when biological and social activities have run out of energy (van Gennep 1960:182). This paper argues that upon renunciation the sanyasi enters such a stage of transition, and so transcends spiritually the profane meaning of the act of sacrifice. Rejection of the ceremonies because their meaning and benefits are felt to be lost is not a necessary motivation for becoming a sanyasi.

There is other evidence to corroborate this fundamentally untestable point of view. Amongst the sayings of a Tamil ascetic of Sudra origin whose sayings comprise the Tirukkural translated by Pope is one that asserts, "The advantages which might flow from destroying life in sacrifice, is dishonourable to the wish (who renounced the

world), even although it should be said to be productive of a great good" (Pope 1970:88). Dumont contends that ahimsa and the four divine qualities are "the reward of the internal sacrifice which tends to replace Vedic sacrifice for those thinkers who are at that moment renouncers-in-the-making" (Dumont 1970a:148). Dasgupta suggests that there was a post-Vedic development towards intellectualizing material sacrifice. Either an animal or a Siva Lingum was substituted, symbolic of the cosmos, and meditated upon. Mystical power was thought to derive from forms of meditation, not from external performance (Dasgupta 1927 :18-20). What was most commonly internalized was fire. Agni, the god of fire, was central to all Vedic sacrifice. The material sacrifice was poured into his mouth. As messenger of the gods he carried it up to the heavens to feed the celestial beings. He was the son of wood (rubbing) and the grandchild of water and his existence in the body traced to the digestive bile. He was therefore the principal manifestation of the macro-cosmic fire in the microcosm (Zimmer 1956:339-340). Ascetic practices of the Brahman before sacrifice procure the relative purity necessary for making a sacrifice. The sanyasi strives for an absolute purity to make sacrifice unnecessary.

This would be the goal of the sanyasi according to Eliade but his information is contradictory. He argues

that since only sacrificial acts do not procure karma, the ascetic tries to transmute all profane acts into sacrifice by renouncing the fruits of action (Eliade 1969:158).

Yogis have used the symbolism of Brahmanism to justify the interiorization of sacrifice. Pranayama, the breathing exercises already mentioned is homologized with the concrete sacrifice of homam but transformed into an experiential interiorization. "Thus asceticism becomes equivalent to ritual, to Vedic sacrifice" (Eliade 1969:112,113). Instead of social good resulting, however, tapas is generated, as by old shamanistic techniques, which is the intense inner heat that rouses the kundalini and changes the psychic, spiritual nature of the practitioner. In an unpublished paper, Beck has pointed out that blood sacrifice is the marker of transition in India. The intense, internal flame provoked by the interiorization of sacrifice is the equivalent symbol for the sanyasi. What changes is a profane state of differentiation to a sacred experience of oneness.

Life and Death

At death the person-within-the-world is cremated. From what has been said about the symbolism of transformation in fire and the suspension of the sanyasi from secular

incorporation, it can be expected that the death of a sanyasi will be attended by very different ceremonies. If he has become one with Brahma, he will have transcended all possible contaminations and the necessity for more transformations. He would be complete in and of himself beyond the magical efficacy of fire to transform. "When the fire devours itself, when the power turns against itself, it seems as if the whole being is made complete at the instant of its final ruin and that the intensity of its final destruction is the supreme proof, the clearest proof, of its existence. This contradiction, at the very root of the intuition of being, favours endless transformations of value" (Bachelard 1964:79). Such may be the spiritual consequence of cremation, but is it also the consequence of internalized sacrificial fires and tapas?

As it turns out, the sanyasi is either buried or thrown into a river. Dubois provides the details (Dubois 1906:538-40). If it is to be buried the body is bathed, wrapped in two saffron cloths and rubbed with ashes. Rudraksha beads, (representing the tears of Shiva), are put on him and he is placed with legs crossed on a stretcher as Brahmans play bronze castinets. The grave is circular and near a river. Salt is poured into the bottom and up to his neck. The skull is then shattered with coconuts and covered with salt. A lingam is erected on top and worshipped with offerings of lighted lamps,

flowers, incense, bananas, a dish of rice, coconut and sugar. Hymns are sung in honour of Vishnu. For ten more days and on anniversaries more offerings are made. There is no cutting of hair in mourning, feasting or present-giving, except for distribution of pieces of the skull-shattering coconuts for luck.

There will undoubtedly be regional or ordination variations but the outstanding feature is that the worshippers do not feel they need a purification bath. Even though the corpse is washed, it is treated as an incarnate icon of Vishnu or Shiva. There have been in India many accounts of the sanyasi forecasting or choosing the time of his death. This phenomenon is similar to the deaths of Dinka spear masters who are buried alive with the object of showing people that some individuals close to the Divinity can choose, as it were, their death. The objective situation of aging and death is controlled, the experience modified by a ritual whose symbolic meaning is "a social triumph over death" (Douglas 1966:68). When it comes to a final renunciation of society, the sanyasi reaffirms its ultimate values. His death symbolically sustains those condemned to the wheel of life within society, and justifies his special relationship to society.

CHAPTER VI

History and Doctrine

In the preceding chapters, the sanyasi has been considered as an ideal figure extrapolated from the many forms he has taken in Indian society. These forms have varied with the doctrines (darsanas) upon which sanyasis have hung their pursuit of redemption. In light of the highly individualist pursuit they are engaged in, it could be expected that there are as many doctrines as sanyasis. Nonetheless, the literature categorizes six orthodox and at least two identifiably heterodox doctrines. In The Religion of India, Weber traces some of the political and economic changes that accompany doctrinal innovations. He shows that political conquests, for instance, when shared assumptions can be presumed to be lost, have led to orgiastic trends followed by more ascetic trends. Ascription to either kind of doctrine is correlated with the economic system and attitudes of the advocates. It is beyond the scope of this paper to demonstrate the consonance between the emergence of these doctrines and historical conditions. A portrait of the sanyasi however, would not be complete without some reference to their systems of thought.

In conditions of little or no articulation by grid and group such as those in which sanyasis live, Douglas predicts a premium set on internal experience and contempt for external forms. This would be based on the alienation

she anticipates from social values. This alienation is however qualified in the case of the sanyasi, as was argued earlier, so that although social forms are rejected, they are not disvalued. Her initial prediction can be amply illustrated as can her expectation that their condition would lead to humanistic stances. The transitional nature of sanyasan, but not its instability, follows her prediction, but only in an ultimate sense since only death ends it. The spontaneity of cults does not apply here since they are forsaken along with social forms. Most, though not all, sanyasis in fact set a premium on discipline. The adoption of personal gods is also variable amongst sanyasis in inverse proportion to the degree of institutionalization of doctrines and thus negates her prediction in this respect. Finally, the wrong actions that constitute sins within society are rejected in favour of cultivating right attitudes such as were seen in the qualifications of becoming a guru's disciple.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to explain the discrepancies between Douglas' predictions and the actual state of affairs. What follows is meant rather to illustrate them, as well as the historical process of innovations "out of the jungle", and their legitimization and institutionalization. It is Dumont's contention that the collective life within the village was ahistorical. According to Zimmer, St. Augustine was the first man in the Greco-Roman tradition to introduce a linear, individualistic

concept of time (Zimmer 1946:20). This is the concept adopted by the forest-dweller (vanaprastha) preliminary to complete renunciation (sanyasan). In the Indian tradition, the Hindu renouncer was preceded by the Vedic philosopher (Dumont 1970:186,195). It may be that the systems that will be reviewed here are in fact attributable to the forest-dweller whose historical, individual perspective was antithetical to that of the man-in-the-world's, which together, the sanyasi theoretically or mystically synthesised. The sanyasi's transcendence of this opposition would be paralleled by a transcendence of the self-alienation of the man-in-the-world and the world-alienation of the forest-dweller which the total system offers. It would also imply the redundancy of any doctrine or personal god.

The reviews of the systems are not intended to be philosophical critiques. The doctrines are complex and comprehensive, and beyond the present abilities of the writer to understand satisfactorily. Three aspects only will be treated: the relationships proposed between man and God and between man and the world, and the nature of the self. By concentrating on these three subjects, the intent of illustration will be fulfilled and perhaps some answers to the problems raised in this introduction incidentally intimated.

Brahmanism

Orthodox systems can be classified according to whether they accepted the authority of the Vedas and Brahmanas which were written between 1500 and 800 B.C. These specified the religion of works (karmayoga) for the man-in-the-world, describing the rituals and ceremonies that complemented caste and dharma. Provision was made in these documents for the sanyasi who sought perfection, which, it was accepted, was not available to the man-in-the-world. The stipulation that persisted was that he leave the world to achieve this end. Upon doing so he had access to possibly pre-Aryan yogic techniques and a system of thought that complemented them called Sankhya, which will be considered next. More probably, however, he took an entirely intellectual path (jnanayoga) whose content was being formally set down from 800 to 400 B.C. in the Upanishads.

These writings emphasized that erudition and scholarship could lead to that release (mukti) from ignorance which keeps man suffering in what his ignorance leads him to suppose is the real world. In reality the individual soul (atman) is everything, and everything is the individual soul. This is identical with Brahman. Brahman is the supreme principle that transcends the world of names and forms (namarupa), but produces that world in the social sphere and the sphere of the Vedic pantheon. When the ignorance that keeps playing this creative trick and

holds the production to be real is dispelled, then the real state of oneness between atman and Brahman is realized.

This might also imply a social sense of oneness with other people even though they may still be in "ignorance".

The phenomenal world therefore, is one of oppositions and of moral imperfection or even "impossibility" but in which man is enmeshed through ignorance and impurity. Its animating principle (Brahman plus atman) is non-dual, yet immanent and transcendent, neither pure nor impure. By self-analysis and understanding of the unity underlying the variety of the manifest world, a transcendent synthesis and a sense of oneness with all being can be achieved. Being in touch with this "micromacrocosmic essence" instead of being preoccupied with its transitory products, whether the moods of the ego or the occupations of the world, constituted a holy power which led to a transcendence over the threat of death and the suffering of life. "Brahmanical thinking was centered, from the beginning, around the paradox of the simultaneous antagonism-yet-identity of the manifest forces and forms of the phenomenal world, the goal being to know and actually to control the hidden power behind, within, and precedent to all things, as their hidden source" (Zimmer 1956:338).

One way of expressing this conceptualization might be to say that it is possible to become pure and whole but the price you pay is that you leave the world. Or, if you

leave the world, of course you become pure and whole because there is nobody to be anything else with, so that all talk of transcendence is merely talk of escaping. This is not the case. The sanyasi is still fixed by relationships with people-in-the-world. It might more fairly be expressed as saying that we in Indian villages three thousand years or so ago found that our busy minds organized us by categories and labels in order to interact with one another socially. Our minds therefore began to take precedence over our pure, free, essential beings. Our minds and social interaction produced problems and contradictions which socialization processes and ignorance perpetuated. These we covered up or made up for as best we could in rituals and ceremonies of atonement. But by knowledge and controlled activity of our minds, we can rediscover our essential beings, which can, for instance, observe the machinations of our minds; we can discover that our being and essence are one and overcome internally those problems and contradictions of our ignorant, social minds: this is the process of transcendence. A transcended state gives us the freedom of unconditional relationships with the world. It is the striving after this which is the opposite of the slavish, alienated, fragmented condition in the world, that is human. Is it more unhuman to find this kind of transcendence or to accept the condition of the world?

This approach may lead to "the genuine resolution of

the antagonism between man and nature, between man and man; the true resolution of the conflict between existence and essence, objectification and self-affirmation, freedom and necessity, individual and species" (McLellan, quoting Marx, 1970:183). It would not lead to the "riddle of history solved" however, because the premise of its doctrine and methodology is that it is only given to particular individuals to be human. The historical creation of a whole society of free individuals, India seemed to say, was one contradiction that cannot be resolved.

Historical conditions and more activity of the mind would lead to discrepancies or difficulties in any conceptualization that proposed to cope with ultimate questions. Reformulations of a more or less radical nature in proportion to the intensity felt over the discrepancies and difficulties continue to appear. To some extent the guru was entrusted with the task of reformulation and synthesis, for most new difficulties were probably raised by pupils (adhikarin). What remained constant was the prerequisites stipulated for becoming a pupil or sanyasi-to-be. These included initially a fervent desire to hear, obey and revere, and trust and composure of mind. Thus it was hoped that he would gain a transfer of knowledge from the guru who had to be an "actual individual communal being... equally the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of society explicitly thought and experienced",

a formulation by Marx that I propose as a model of the sanyasi who has reached the Brahmanic goal (McLellan 1970: 186). Furthermore he should have studied the Vedas, be cleansed of sins through having abstained from all rituals performed for the fulfillment of worldly desires and which cause injury to other beings, and should continue to do meditations, austerities and daily devotions for purification and "single-pointedness". After passing through pitr-loka (heaven of ancestors) and satya-loka (sphere of truth), he would arrive at knowledge of self. (Zimmer 1956:52,53).

This codification must have inhibited to some extent the kind of criticism that would present new difficulties and ask that truth be expressed differently. The Brahmanic doctrine was expounded much more elaborately than the presentation here would indicate however. Their "spiritual" discoveries had social application and significance. Not least of these, was use to which charlatans could put the powers derived from these discoveries by turning the control they acquired over themselves into control over people-in-the-world whose lives seemed to be governed by unintelligible forces. The secrecy and stringent stipulations surrounding knowledge would safeguard against this tendency. The challenge of pre-Aryan yoga and the Sankhya doctrine which was founded on different premises from a different culture was not answered intellectually by

Brahmanism until the fourth century B.C. The Bhagavad Gita represented a synthesis of two theories for arriving at ultimate truth, one proposing reason as the means, the other more intuitive, ecstatic techniques.

Sankhya and Yoga

Sankhya is the oldest independent system of thought in India. It shares with Brahmanism and yoga the assumption that it is ignorance of spirit that keeps men and women enslaved in the world. Brahmanism and Sankhya differ from yoga as to the means of finding freedom from this condition. The former stress metaphysical knowledge while the latter employs techniques of meditation, exploring different states of consciousness. Unlike Brahmanism and yoga, Sankhya is atheistic but in other essential features complements yoga. The god of yoga, Isvara, is only of secondary importance. Like other gods in other systems, Isvara is created after the yogi's ideal image, a sort of macroyogi, with a structural correspondence to the yogi. He is not the creator but can help the yogi's deliverance with "metaphysical sympathy" (Eliade 1969:74).

Eliade contends that dedication to yoga and Sankhya is an effort to become unhuman. With the intent of transcending the human condition, the yogi explores the limits of his physiological, social, cultural and religious

conditioning to see if anything exists beyond. Their answer is that there is a multiplicity of autonomous, isolated selves, eternally free and without attributes. There is no all-inclusive Being to be one with and from which the world of matter and energy emanates. The self is drawn into life in the world, which is real, by intellect, the subtlest manifestation of matter. The individuation produced by consciousness of self is not a transcendent but a material process. There is an entity behind this psychomental individuation which transcends the process. The intention is to go beyond a divine condition produced by the attainment of occult powers in the process of de-conditioning. The state reached (samadhi) is without categories, beyond imagination, and transcends all dichotomies. The implications of this doctrine are asocial.

There are many shamanic aspects to yoga. Of all the systems of Indian thought and method, it remained the least institutionalized. Even after it infiltrated orthodoxy and was accepted by Vedantists on the grounds that its techniques provided the necessary purification preliminary to ultimate metaphysical knowledge, it remained suspect for the profusion of forms that sanyasis began to take: "from the sorcerer and fakir who perform cures and miracles to the noblest ascetics and loftiest mystics, taking in cannibal magicians and extremist Vamacaris

along the way" (Eliade 1969:294). Where before, renunciation had been a stage of negation of society to prepare the sanyasi for a wholistic synthesis, the embrace of yoga opened the way to baroque practices of reversing social values, aberrant to respectable ideologies, whose watchword remained renunciation of all impurity including the secular use of power. Nonetheless, yoga offered accessible, intimate, concrete experience and was significantly most popular when Brahman ritualism was most settled between the fourth century B.C. and the fourth century of our era (Eliade 1969:144).

Despite Sankhya and yoga's apparently radical differences from Brahmanism, their reconciliation was predictable on account of their fundamental similarity of divorcing spirit from matter; of seeking the self in order to surrender the self and selfishness, which, Dasgupta suggests, does not imply a personal relationship to God but the moral qualities of compassion, humility, self-control and purity (Dasgupta 1927:118). With regard to yoga this implication seems logically questionable. At any rate, Eliade claims that all yogic exercises pursue a goal, similar to Brahmanism, "which is to abolish multiplicity and fragmentation, to reintegrate, to unify, to make whole" and to realize the paradox that "life" coincides with "death" (Eliade 1969:97,98). Living with the faculties and attributes of the dead past

detracts from the full, immediate experience of the present. Becoming deconditioned must therefore lead to a free, full consciousness of life now, but how this can then lead to an illogical mastery over death can presumably only be realized experientially by, for example, a dedicated yogi.

The Bhagavad Gita

The tension that must have existed between the priesthood and sanyasis has already been referred to in relation to gurus. On the one hand were the technicians of ritual offering a remote, institutionalized grace and on the other, more visibly holy people exemplifying an independent salvation ex opere operato (Weber 1958:179). An examination of the Bhagavad Gita, of which there have been many interpretations, sheds further light on how this problem was coped with.

Zimmer says it is a synthesis of Vedic and pre-Aryan thought. What it certainly represents is the way in which the orthodox doctrine coped with different ideas by enlarging its own framework for reconciliation, if not by synthesis. This tolerance was consonant with the caste system and showed the positive and religious perspective of striving for completeness. Commenting on the "organismic", inner-worldly ethic in the poem, Weber suggests that the

relativizing of all ethical and soteriological commandments by caste is not a matter of negative tolerance but "(1) of positive--only relative and graded--appreciation for quite contrary maxims of action; (2) of the recognition of the lawful and ethical autonomy, the equal and independent values, of the various spheres of life which had to result from their equal devaluation as soon as ultimate questions of salvation were at stake" (Weber 1958:190). This is the appraisal of an individual who, like the author of the poem, must have renounced the particular maxims and values of a single "caste". In other words, repressive opposition of any point of view would have been inconsonant with the structure of hierarchy coupled with the unattached perspective of the sanyasi which comprised the totality of Indian society.

According to Bhandarkar, the Gita is characterized by its assertion of the eternity of the human soul, and that control of senses (desires) leads to intelligence and knowledge, which develops will, which in turn leads to knowledge of spirit. It accepts both the Sankhya doctrine and jnanayoga, and the karmayoga of caste duty and work as ways to the self (Bhandarkar 1965:14).

Zimmer agrees with this last point and claims that it also accepts the validity of other ways. It is however full of paradoxes. The main protagonist is the god Krishna and it suggests that dualism belongs to the illusory, phenomenal

world. Its bias would appear therefore to be towards the orthodox. With regard to karmayoga, it elevates this way into bhaktiyoga, explaining that the surrender of selfish desires by devotional performance of caste duties can be an efficacious way to knowledge of the self (Zimmer 1956: 378-409). Its tone ranged from rebuking the twice-born for abusing their wealth to theological criticism of Vedic Brahmanism and of the caste system, making the radical suggestion that salvation could be found by all regardless of varna or ashrama.

The doctrinal largesse displayed in the Gita opened the way to a diffusion of doctrines and sects within the orthodox tradition. No longer were the strictures of the Upanishads as absolute as they had been. Their tone had been less compromising: "The Self is not easily known. It cannot be realized except by the greatest effort. Every vestige of the normal waking attitude, which is appropriate and necessary for the daily struggle for existence (artha), pleasure (kama), and the attainment of righteousness (dharma), must be abandoned" (Zimmer 1956:363). Written for the laity, the tolerance of the Gita must have satisfied the demand for truth under new conditions at the same time as it subverted radical change.

Vedanta

Following the Gita and the proliferation of Shaivite and then Vaishnavite cults, the mainstream of Vedic speculative thought came to be known as Vedanta. It was expounded most cogently and comprehensively in the eighth century of our era by a sanyasi named Sankara. His system was called Advaita (non-dualist), and was propounded by six sects that he founded. His language is Vedic but he argued that the study of the Vedas and the performance of Vedic rites were not necessary preconditions of release from ignorance. The prescribed moral action of pre-sanyasi life stages were upheld.

Ignorance is still the cause of the material world. When ignorance is dispelled the "Universal Self" (Atman-Brahman) which is a completely inactive, isolated principle, can be known. Knowledge of this non-atomic, insubstantial entity constitutes release. Four qualities are necessary to possess it. First, discrimination between "essential and accidental, Being and beings, the eternal and non-eternal; 2, complete nonattachment to the fruits of action both in this world and hereafter; third, practice of six virtuous exercises: sama (mental tranquillity), dama (control of senses), titiksha (being unaffected by dual conditions such as pleasure and pain, cold and heat, etc.), uparati (temporary withdrawal from acts), samadhana (concentrated attention) and sraddha

(faith); fourth, a burning desire for moksa (release)" (Singer 1966:158,159). Familiar ingredients but a different pie. The goal of bhaktiyoga which is a union of loving ecstasy with the highest personal divinity is considered a prelude to complete illumination.

These formulations appear to reveal progressively more drastic renunciation of the material and social nature of man. But again, the sanyasi did remain in a social orbit. The self he presents to others need not be anything essentially particular to himself, nor one that has been fashioned by prescribed relationships from the past. Validation of the enterprise, formulations and claims of Hindu doctrines may not be empirically possible, but they did express what was felt to be true at the historical periods in which they were made. By the end of the last century, Debendranath Tagore had updated Vedanta for Ram Mohan Roy's Brahma Samaj in the following way:

"God is a personal being with sublime moral attributes.-- God has never become incarnated.-- God hears and answers prayer.-- God is to be worshipped only in spiritual ways.-- Hindu asceticism, temples and fixed forms of worship are unnecessary.-- Men of all castes and races may worship God acceptably.-- He requires no worship but reverence of spirit.-- Repentance and cessation from sin is the only way to forgiveness and salvation.-- Nature and intuition are the sources of knowledge of God.--

No book is authoritative" (Schweitzer 1951:212). Among other influences, that of Vaishnavism is evident here.

Shaivism

Between the second and twelfth centuries of this era, many orthodox sanyasis took Shiva as their tutelary deity. Shiva had attained the full majesty of godhead by the time of the Vedas and speculation in some Upanishads accorded that gnosis with Shiva was ultimate bliss (Bhandarkar 1965:105). Shiva incorporated the Dravidian god Rudra, the howler, representing the awful, destructive, uncontrollable aspects of the universe. His appeal was probably greater in rural areas matched in the towns by the ascendance of Vishnu and a worship of love as opposed to fear. There were two extreme Shaivite schools and a more moderate one that attributed more paradoxical, inclusive qualities to him. Sects varied according to the methods prescribed by their founders for achieving gnosis.

The moderate school was a form of qualified monism. Shiva was an immanent God, made to act by the karma of individual souls. These were fettered to karma by impurity, ignorance and obstructive powers that prevented them from seeing their own atomic, eternal and all-pervasive nature (Bhandarkar 1965:124-27). The individual soul attained union with God by a combination of intellectual,

metaphysical knowledge, austerities, meditations and devotion, depending on the school. There were three classes of Shaivites: ascetics, ascetics' followers and the laity, all of whom presupposed renunciation for ultimate union.

The Kapalika sects stressed discipline least and enacted the grosser of the eccentricities attributed to Rudra. Some schools in Kashmir founded by Kallata and his pupil Vasugupta deviated by asserting that God is independent of his creation which is brought into being by his will. The most outstanding variation was the Lingayat sect founded in the twelfth century by Basava who had been a Brahman before renunciation. Basava was politically involved and his sect became a rival institution to the priesthood. Despite initial reforms within it including an effort to equalize the status of its female members, it became structured by caste and consisted mostly of twice-born adherents (Bhandarkar 1965:139).

Vaishnavism

Many of the most outstanding sanyasis belonged to Vaishnavite tradition, partly perhaps because of its stress on bhakti. This allowed that God represented an unintelligible power and that man, whether in or out of the world, can but serve him as an empty vessel that is

filled and emptied of his grace regardless of man's will. Its basic metaphysical beliefs did not deviate greatly from Brahmanism and Vedanta. Its attitude to God found validation also from traditional literature: "The Atman cannot be known and experienced by mere study and exposition of the Vedas, nor by intellect, nor by learning. He whom the Atman chooses, by that man alone can Atman be realized" (Katha Upanishad, 1,2,23). As Venkateswaran points out, its attitude entailed a return of the sanyasi to society (Singer 1966:150).

Vishnu was a minor deity in the Rg-Veda, but was later identified with Vasudeva of the Brahmanas who was identified with the early Brahmanic Narayana. Vishnu's avatars, Krishna and Rama, took on special significance in the Christian era, being considered human forms of incarnate spirit. Vishnu, like Shiva, manifests as an ambivalent, contradictory, enigmatical character. His devotees were opposed to the kind of monism that contained the doctrine of maya, which challenged the efficacy of bhakti. There were two classes of Vaishnavite teachers: alvars, who were like priests of the bhakti culture; and acaryas whose business was to establish the Vaishnavite creed. Among the latter was Ramanuja who was born at the beginning of the eleventh century when Sankara's system was posing a considerable challenge to Vaishnavite credibility. Ramanuja's response seems to have been

more disputatious and exclusive than the tone of compromise that marked other doctrinal differences, and may have been a symptom of a new dependence on secular adherence.

Conflicts were based on different interpretations of traditional sources. For Ramanuja there was one Supreme Soul who was the cause of individual (animal) souls (Cit) and of the insensate world (Acit). The individual soul is an eternal, atomic, self-illuminated, unchangable, unthinkable attribute of God, devoid of parts, impervious to senses and dependent on God for existence (Bhandarkar 1966:52-54). His system developed into sixteen fairly ritualistic forms of worship which split into two schools, one emphasizing that God brings grace and the other that man's effort brings deliverance. According to Bhandarkar, Ramanuja Brahmanized the traditional bhakti form of worship (Bhandarkar 1966:57).

In the thirteenth century, Madhva introduced variations on Sankara's pure monism and Ramanuja's qualified monism. His principal innovation was to teach in the vernacular as well as in Sanskrit. This opened the way for Ramananda (14th - 15th century) who carried the acceptance of Sudras a step further. Rama and Sita took the place of Krishna and Radha as tutelary deities. Kabir continued changes in the tradition by condemning idolatry. The next two centuries saw the founding of new sects by Malukdas, Dadu and Raida, the latter two

having been themselves Sudras. In Bengal the Vaishnavite sect was described by Dimcock as "a formalized sublimation of human sexual and emotional erotic experience as a means to the experience of the divine" (Singer 1966:42). Another outstanding figure was Vallabhacharya (1479-1531) whose sects continue today, affirming participation in the world and led by hereditary teachers. The opposite trend was exemplified by the poet-ecstatic Caitanya, who was wholly anti-formalistic.

Dadu's radical concern was the unification of Hindus and Moslems. This was again taken up in the seventeenth century by Atmarama Paramahansa and has continued since. It was part of the increasing trend to incorporate secular ideals into the religious ideology, which is probably the Vaishnavites principal influence on Vedanta. Preceding Gandhi was the notable reformist work of Vivekananda (after Ramakrishna), who started political and social enterprises with the founding of schools, hostels, relief centres and hospitals (Ghurye 1954:228). Serving the state had become part of the ideal of serving God. The concern now is the unification of the sects.

It would be erroneous to suppose that sanyasis were all literary men. Their traditions have of course come down through scholars and poets but there must have been millions of sanyasis who rejected intellectual paths. In an untitled tract of possibly Taoist origin, I found the

following anagram: "To arrive at understanding from being one's true self is called nature, and to arrive at being one's true self from understanding is called culture; he who is his true self has thereby understanding, and he who has understanding finds thereby his true self". The former of these two ways was current in India when Alexander the Great entered the sub-continent. Mandanes, the "oldest and wisest" of the gymnosophists interviewed by Alexander thought that Pythagoras, Socrates and Diogenes "were mistaken in preferring custom to nature" (M'Crindle 1969:391).

Amongst many Krishna sects, the devotees endeavoured to express an ideal state of love by ignoring differences of age, position, caste and learning. If this tendency of reversing the social system in more than a personal way ever asserted itself, it was too patchwork to make any impact on Indian society as a whole. The problem of social differentiation on the basis of sex was never tackled. Like the example of the sanyasi, this tendency must have made the intrusion of Western ideas less alien.

Jainism and Buddhism

The two emphatically heterodox systems were propounded within sixty years of each other by two sanyasis who had been powerful Kshatriyas. Both in course of time

became idolized and both were rejected by their followers as founders in favour of equally holy predecessors from ahistorical times: Mahavira was the twenty-fourth Jaina saviour and the Gautama Buddha the eighth incarnation of the perfect Buddha. Both discarded the rituals, teachings and holy language of the Vedas, yet neither posed a serious threat to the social order.

Despite being anti-political, Buddhism nonetheless became the only missionary Indian soteriology outside India. This can probably be attributed to the support it received from Kshatriyas whereby it even became the state religion under Ashoka, one of the first kings to unite India politically. This radical departure from the prescribed separation of hierarchy and power and the ensuing contradictions must have hastened its collapse and departure from India, although it may have contributed to the humanistic regime for which Ashoka was celebrated by modifying the amoral political code with religious values of compassion. The Jain religion continues amongst more than a million people, most of whom belong to prosperous sectors of the Vaishya caste. Although Jaina doctrine and practice differ from the orthodox religion and all other sects, these differences are minimized by their adherence to orthodox life stages and introvert application.

There are many epithets that have been used to describe the two doctrines: the pessimistic, materialistic monism

of Jainism, and the negativistic existentialism of Buddhism. I do not propose, however, to elaborate on their philosophies beyond saying that both Jainism and Buddhism differ from all other Indian systems and each other as to the nature of the universe, of the individual soul and of first causes, as well as to the means of arriving at liberation. They do not however, depart from the two fundamental structures of Indian society and thought: the opposition between pure and impure and that between spirit and matter.

The manner in which sanyasis of all doctrines tried to bridge these oppositions entailed preoccupation with truth, unselfishness, moral discipline and humanitarian concerns, which, along with the idea of social progress, were concerns that the Western individual brought with him to India (Dumont 1970a:236). Because India provided the opportunity for individuals to indulge these concerns within its total framework, it cannot be said that the sanyasi necessarily communicated in an alienated and restricted code commensurate with weak or no control by grid and group. In such asocial conditions, "opportunities for individual development are limited by lack of organization", "the range and quality of personal interaction are restricted", "the possibilities of knowing the self reduced by limited contact with other selves", and the cosmology "intellectually null" with "evil implicitly ignored" (Douglas 1970:140). In this cursory review of

some Indian cosmologies I hope to have shown that renunciation does not mean escapism, but the opportunity to seek new truth in a dynamic, dialectical relationship with society. Zimmer begins his Philosophies of India by saying that "though truth, the radiance of reality, is universally one and the same, it is mirrored variously according to the medium in which it is reflected. Truth appears differently in different lands and ages according to the living material out of which symbols are hewn" (Zimmer 1956 :1). As the world grows into a global community, it is conceivable that the ways in which people in one area of it have for three thousand years arrived at truths which transcend limitations imposed on its discovery, might be blended with other ways in other cultures to arrive at universal values. The doctrines themselves are unlikely to reach a static expression.

CHAPTER VII

Culture and Madness

If the language and categories of Western social psychology had universal application, a sound case could be made that the sanyasi is a madman. Sanyasis display many of the manifestations of "psychopathology", "schizophrenia", and "identity diffusion", as well as familiarity with a category of phenomenon labelled, for want of investigation and knowledge in the West, as extra sensory perception and the supernatural. These include for example, telepathy, being aware of the thoughts of others, and a different awareness of time which may include foresight and hindsight. Until recently at any rate, individuals who refused to deny their own apprehension of phenomena that did not fit into culturally acceptable categories had recourse either to conscious deception, to suicide, to jails or to mental institutions. Diagnoses and treatment in the latter control those perceptions by stifling them with drugs and electric shocks. The "patient" is reincorporated back into society by being told that his symptoms are unreal because they do not correspond with the version of reality held by secular power. This "curing" process is in consonance with a society where the place of the individual within the collectivity is determined by material power. Spirit, far from being divorced from matter, is joined with it to

serve it. Aside from inverting the precedence of matter over spirit found in India, the Western orientation to the subject matter of this chapter often leads to the removal of any status from those who admit of spiritual experience, save that of madman.

Such individuals were treated differently in India. The phenomena that they claimed to become aware of were considered dangerous powers (siddhi). They belonged to the realm thought of as sacred and dangerous, to which people in a transitional state had access. The phenomena were only denied so long as they were experienced within a particular social grouping. Rites of incorporation and the control of consciousness by caste and ashrama mitigated against the experience of them. Those who did not escape the evidence of their own deviant experience had recourse to a permanent state of transition (sanyasan). This provided the freedom for the individual to experience phenomena not admitted within society. It did not matter whether experience of these phenomena came before or after rites of separation from society for their validity to be accepted. They were judged unreal by a yardstick different from society's version of reality. This yardstick was the state of being approximating the fulfillment of the sanyasi's ultimate purpose. Rather than escape from them, they were to be transcended, and the powers derived from this transcendence renounced.

Laing has written that "experience may be judged to be invalidly mad or validly mystical" (Laing 1967:108). This observation highlights the difference in attitude between the West and India towards experience that endangers the security and comfort of life within society. India may have had a category of "invalidly mad", but it did not impinge on what was considered validly mystical. This chapter explores some connections between self-knowledge, madness and transcendence. A psychosocial analysis of the Indian context is also considered. It may be possible to translate some concepts of Western psychology which deal with the process of identity crisis through madness to reintegration, so that they shed light on the process towards self-knowledge through transition and siddhis to transcendence in India. Both cultures guard themselves against these processes by separating those who undergo them from its other members. It will, however, be argued that India's approach for institutionalizing this separation is more humane and more beneficial to the development of healthy individuals. The difference is between anathematization on the one hand and sacralization on the other.

Anathematization

The structure of Western society demands that the individual adopt, consciously or otherwise, an acceptable persona so that his search for self-knowledge can happen coincidentally with social incorporation. If self-knowledge is not thereby stifled, it also demands a deflation of the significance of social roles which could lead to a continual sense of charade or fraud, and possibly ensuing self-hatred, fear, anomy and isolation. Such states and their corollary symptoms are treated as temporary identity crises between the adoption of psychically comfortable, functional and synthetic personae. The development of a transcendent self is inhibited by an institutionalization that insists on reincorporation into occupational, kin and political units, endowing these with spiritual attributes. Analysis during identity crises is comparable to the transition rites that control the caste member's consciousness from one prescribed state to the next. What follows is concerned with European psychology based on individualism, which studies processes of individuation and of which Erikson's work is typical. The arguments that follow are not intended to apply to schools of psychology studying other processes.

Of the four analytic mechanisms that Erikson proposes are operative in the formation of identity, the caste member, unlike the Western individual, only uses three: introjection,

projection and identification. The sanyasi alone can repudiate and assimilate the effects of these three by using techniques peculiar to Indian soteriologies and the freedom sanyasan provides to do so. Most of Erikson's analytic concepts deal with identity conflicts arising from socialization processes in the Western family. These create personae more deeply imbedded than other attachments. Erikson suggests that the processes which form a self operate on the "ego identity" which is "the more or less actually attained but forever to be revised sense of the reality of the self within social reality"; on the ego, which is the central organizing agency; and on the super-ego, which is "that set of to-be-strived-for but forever not-quite-attainable ideal goals for the self" and which is historically contingent (Erikson 1959:149; Erikson's italics). The crises that precede the formation of the self are presented by Erikson as resolvable contradictions but the emergence of a healthy social individual depends on a form of resolution imposed by society. Apart from a philosophy that says the self and ideal cultural goals can become one, and techniques that are used in a reality apart from society's for this eventuality, the institution of sanyasan itself renders Erikson's framework inapplicable to the sanyasi. That framework is inadequate to explain the sanyasi's experience in seeking the self because what could be equivalent to identity crises for the sanyasi are

resolved differently by him. Erikson's concepts, which I take as a representative example of the psychology produced by Western society, will be examined here to show how this is so.

According to Erikson, the first crisis encountered by a developing individual arises from "the first experience of mounting need tension, of delay of satisfaction, and final unification with the satisfying 'object'" (Erikson 1959:141). Resolution of this crisis determines the degree of trust or mistrust felt by that person towards the world, which can be ascertained by his attitude towards time. "Malignantly regressed young people are clearly possessed by general attitudes which represent something of a mistrust of time as such...time must be made to stand still, if necessary by the magic means of catatonic immobility --or by death" (Erikson 1959:141). Less extreme forms manifest themselves in utopianism. The very point for the sanyasi is that he does not simply mistrust time; he wants to be released from its cycle once and for all. He has ideological teachings which make that a real possibility. Child rearing practices in India by and large offer immediate gratification to breast-feeding infants and so, by Erikson's analysis, basic trust has been fostered in the child by the time he becomes a man-in-the-world. By purposefully regressing, by stepping out of the world, the sanyasi can experience the antithesis, a necessary step towards the

resynthesis of a new, independent identity, There is no insistence on conforming to society's time scale, nor that its time scale is the only one.

Another crisis to which the sanyasi wilfully regresses is that which Erikson says comes in early childhood, when the child begins to realize there is a discrepancy between what he wants and what is culturally possible or permissible. The healthy response to this crisis is a feeling of autonomy, whereas the regressed individual experiences shame and doubt, whose origin in the frustrated outrage that anyone should want more or differently than what is given, Erikson ignores. Societally this second conflict is transcended by a "universal trend toward some form of uniformity (and sometimes to special uniforms or distinctive clothing) through which incomplete self-certainty, for a time, can hide in a group certainty, such as is provided by the badges as well as the sacrifices of investitures, confirmations and initiations" (Erikson 1959:143). In India, the developing self-consciousness of the child is eclipsed by institutionalized investiture into "group certainty", the family and the caste. Occasionally, the sanyasi will follow the pattern outlined by Erikson by joining a distinctive sect such as the militant bairagis. So long as he is a member of a sect the sanyasi is suspended from resolving the conflict and this may be why some sanyasis become hermits for a while--to test their autonomy.

Just as autonomy is not a realistic possibility for the man-in-the-world in India, so shame is not precisely its antithesis for the sanyasi. The ideology behind the institution of sanyasan so permeates the whole of society that there is no social approbation of, for example, the sanyasi's nakedness. Erikson hypothesises that being naked epitomizes a sense of shame: "Shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at: in one word, self-conscious. One is visible and not ready to be visible; which is why we dream of shame as a situation in which we are stared at in a condition of complete undress" (Erikson 1959:142). Hypothesising that this may be the case in India too, the sanyasi's nakedness can be seen as a rejection of the conventional, dressed persona in order to discover the self that transcends it. Nakedness develops that self-consciousness which transcends the conditional shame of the artificial persona.

The next crisis that Erikson pinpoints requires equal modification when applied to the sanyasi. Here the conflict is between the development of initiative or guilt. If it is successfully resolved, the Western adolescent experiments with different roles; if unsuccessfully, he chooses a negative identity. For the adolescent in traditional India, the problem does not present itself, at least in this form. Once again, caste, Brahmanism and initiation ceremonies circumscribe initiative and role

experimentation. The sanyasi, however, is free to take initiatives: he is dead to caste, he can be all things to all men. Sanyasan sanctions what would be a negative identity within society, namely, an autonomous individual.

Similarly, sanyasan sanctions his being manifestly unproductive, though he may be solicited for prayers and advice. Erikson diagnoses work paralysis as the adolescent regression stemming from feeling inadequate when engaged in competitive work situations, the crisis encountered by Western children when they first go to school. Again, the nature of caste society forestalls the crisis and the very fact of becoming a sanyasi transcends it even as it presents it.

There is one other crisis I shall deal with using Erikson's concepts, whose inapplicability to the sanyasi is nonetheless revealing. Erikson suggests that some questions such as whether life happens to the individual or is lived by his initiative can be attributed to isolation which is a regression from the issue of intimacy (Erikson 1959:126). It is the coincidence of four circumstances that make this and the other identity crises critical for the Western adolescent individual: finding himself faced with competition, an occupational choice, physical intimacy and a psychosocial definition (Erikson 1959:123). Neither competition nor the need for a psychosocial self-definition arise in the caste system.

Occupation is prescribed and so I would argue is the nature of physical intimacy. Whether by childhood marriage or by the moral absolutes of dharmā, which, within joint family living, prescribe unqualified obedience to the father, the caste member's sexual identity is prefabricated. To be isolated would be to become a sanyasi. It is only for the sanyasi that the problem has reality. (In terms of ultimate values, the "reality" of these problems is illusionary--the substance of the concept of "māya".) The caste member is bound to life after life, an endless cycle of them and its concomitant procreation.

The conflicts arising from competition and occupational choice are transcended for the sanyasi, as I have tried to show, by the institutionalized complementarity of caste and sanyasan (chiefly by the resulting sanction of "work paralysis"). Physical intimacy, however, and its bearing on a new psychosocial self-definition, is not so easily resolved. The institutionalized mechanism for coping with it is chastity. That this does not necessarily work, or is not the only solution, is witnessed by profuse forms of sexual experimentation such as the tantric cults. The deification of the river Ganges as Mother (Ganga Ma) and even India as a whole can be said to be ways of transferring uneasy identifications. (Erikson claims that an unsuccessful sexual identity leads to bisexual confusion).

The prescribed course of abstinence, upon which most

sanyasis take vows at their initiations, suggests that the sanyasi, having been a householder, is already familiar with his sexual persona. Tantrism would represent an attempt to sanctify intimacy which threatened to become a formalized program for procreation. It was anti-ascetic and anti-speculative, devising its own rituals and use of yoga. It grew out of the mystical eroticism (maithuna) of the Vedic era whose philosophy posited that flesh, the living cosmos and time were the fundamental elements of the world. Like yoga, it claimed to realize experientially, not just symbolically, that "life coincides with death". The tantrist experiences a state of "non-conditioned existence, of pure spontaneity" and is a "dead man in life" who has been reborn into another life (Eliade 1969: 268;273-3). The austerities practised by some sanyasis would represent the other side of the same coin, advocating inhibition as the best course to overcome a stylized persona to handle sexual energy. What both tantrism and abstinence, expressionism and inhibitionism, have in common is the attempt eventually to transcend sexuality altogether and to resolve the conflict that arises from the desire to be known intimately by another and yet to know the self apart from others. Sexuality is not treated as something that should be left alone, but as another sacred energy that is controlled socially by the strict ascription of sexual personae.

The manner in which a wide range of phenomena and experience is treated so differently in two different cultures indicates that the concepts devised by one culture to invalidate them as mad or deviant are crutches for its stability and comfort. In a secular community where society's version of reality and order is no longer designed for survival as it was in famine-prone India, these concepts may only serve the comfort and security of those who benefit from an established cultural gestalt. The kind of knowledge and experience that threatens that order is connected with self-knowledge. Western culture has anathematized those who find their way into such experience with the rationalization that they are harming themselves. It has co-opted the choices they can make in face of them, denying the possibility of transcending them. When spiritual experience has been considered valid, it is co-opted to sanctify the social order and to elevate its morality. For example, the Christian theologian Jurgen Moltmann suggests there can be no intellectual knowledge of last things, but the intellect can give them moral significance and therefore they are not void: "In moral action, man gets beyond the mechanism of blindly working causes...attains to the non-objective, non-objectifiable realm of freedom and of ability to be a self. Thus as Hans Urs von Balthasar aptly remarks, 'transcendental philosophy becomes the method toward inward apocalypse'" (Moltmann 1967:48).

The sanyasi's transcendence has moral implications for Indian society, which may be why its concepts are devised to validate his experience as mystical. There, however, the "madman" or "mystic" can interact as usefully with his fellow citizens as the Christian theologian can in the West. An increase in the number of suicides in India will be one indicator of an expansion of its category "invalidly mad" and the decline of sanyasan. de facto as well as de jure breakdown of caste will increase individuation.

Psychosocial Approaches to Culture

Before concluding this chapter, a brief digression will be made to discuss Carstairs' psychosocial approach to Indian society and the sanyasi, which suffers from the same ethnocentric relativity as Erikson's formulations. Carstairs assumes that a theory of national character and motivation can be derived from examining the conscious ideals, the learned behaviour and accepted deviations of a culture, and the influence of consistent, shared but concealed, infantile phantasies, which a culture imparts to its members by channelling what he calls their instincts.

Traditional Indian families easily lend themselves to Freudian interpretation. If, as Dubois wrote, a man's debt to his ancestors, was the most important duty of his

life, the pressures of that duty alone would lead to self-perpetuating conformity. The family would be "the social product of the interweaving of the lives of many people over many generations" (Laing 1972:1). Paternal control would be very powerful. The Indian villager's integration and stability is found by conformity "to the pattern of his enveloping society" at the cost of asserting his own personality (Carstairs 1957:146). This means that he lives in a world of deceptive appearances contradicted by the initial self-centred view of the universe that he has learnt as a child. Children are never made to feel hungry or alone, so feeling secure, they become imperious. Their position is suddenly usurped by their father. The inconsistency of relations with parents-in-law and the mystery of the menstruation taboo contribute to plunging him into a world where nothing is sure (hence all is maya) (Carstairs 1957:157). The only possible access to the mother and father is through total submission and castration. With this upbringing, the murder of a self-assertive younger brother by his Rajput elder brother is inevitable. (Carstairs 1953+54:51).

The Hindu's constant striving after essences and absolute certainty is further exacerbated by "the dilemma of being confronted with a number of for-ever-inaccessible roles". Carstairs ignores that the patterns of conformity and dharma inhibit the striving after inaccessible roles.

And so he argues that the contradictions of his upbringing can only be overcome "by the religious techniques of complete renunciation of all material and personal ties" (Carstairs 1957:61).

Aside from the self-made wealthy businessman, (a new phenomenon), who renounces all "sentimental ties and obligations towards their fellow-men", the villager's constant paradox is only transcended by the ideal figure of the ascetic. Only the self-dedication of the sanyasi reveals "prolonged and unremitting application to a task", so that they "escape from their fellows' recurring crises of doubt and mistrust because they have renounced the attempt to form personal ties with anyone at all" (Carstairs 1957:55-56). Holy men are inflicting extreme punishment on themselves. Their reward is an omnipotence greater than father figure gods, a bliss more ecstatic than sex, and "release from separate self-hood". In other words, the sanyasi seeks to triumph over his father, to repossess his mother, and to return to prenatal existence (Carstairs 1957:161). Shiva, for instance, is a sanyasi's godhead because, being the essence of maleness, he represents both generative power and universal destruction. His ideal conduct of austerities (tapassya) is the self-castration of obliterated sexuality, so he is both victim and destroyer of the demon goddess (Carstairs 1957:163).

This approach contradicts itself and that taken in

this paper. Carstairs may illuminate the state of repressed self-consciousness and the cost of conformity without self-knowledge, but it is unlikely that many caste members used to see themselves as separate selves so that they questioned their social personae. "Ultimate reconciliation with one's mother and father figures" may be what is meant by moksa and union with Brahma through self-knowledge, but it seems more likely to be an incidental effect. Eliade, among other commentators, insists that such blissful union (samadhi) is not comparable with spiritual escape into the deep sleep of pre-natal existence, "even if the recovery of totality through undifferentiated enstasis seems to resemble the bliss of the human being's fetal pre-consciousness" (Eliade 1969:99). For the sanyasi, sublimation and suppression are not comparable with self-knowledge and transcendence.

Sacralization

Self-knowledge presupposes knowledge of all the personae that fix social relationships moulded by affiliation to political, occupational and kin groups. They have been fixed for generations and ingested from the moment of birth. The sanyasi seeks to know the self that remains when these personae have been stripped away (the atman). Socially, he becomes everyone and no one. The experience and teachings

of others seeking that self inform him that if he acquires ultimate self-knowledge, he also finds unity with Brahma, the all-pervasive, Supreme Spirit. The first step is renunciation of those affiliations that determine his social personae. Henceforth "routine distinctions and observances of the mundane world are not binding on him" (Ghurye 1953: 74).

Where the man-in-the-world is static, the sanyasi becomes mobile with the freedom to wander in safety all over the sub-continent. Where before his safety depended on productive work, he is now provided for by all he meets. To avoid straining local economies he does not stay more than four days in one place except in those institutions (mats and ashrams) especially patronized for the maintenance of him and his fellow sanyasis. To these he can come and go as he chooses for meditation and schooling in yoga techniques and ayurvedic medicine for example. By seeing to his physical welfare and indirectly his psychic welfare the patronizing community receives medical care, spiritual advice and spiritual merit. Where before he had lived by day, he might now live by night too. Where before he had worn clothes he may now go naked. His eating and sleeping habits may change by learning to live with increasingly less of both. No boundaries are taboo. He has access to graveyards and cremation grounds. Therefore despite negating most aspects of his life in the world, he is supported in his enterprise by the whole society. By furnishing him with physical and psychic support, he is free to sustain a detached perspective towards all those

personae that have constituted his former being.

This sanctification of his individuation alleviates those pressures associated with self-examination that can lead to isolation, doubt, fear and despair. Detachment deflates the significance of social personae which are artificially organized forms to cope with sacred energies that are formless and limitless. The more pristine forms of these energies may be experienced as abstract love or hate, creation and destruction, for instance, or they may be anthropomorphised as Vishnu and Shiva. Their emotional forms were given tripartite categorization (gunas), attributes of spirit respectively associated with one of the three twice-born varnas. The sanyasi finds his way to their most pristine, undifferentiated state by finding his own pristine and undifferentiated self. This is the process of transcendence which leads to control over the differentiated personae that must be adopted in social interaction. It is as if the self is a prism through which energy is refracted into differentiated personae. Another metaphor used in the Vedas was that each individual has a spark whose essence is the same as that of the cosmic fire. As the light from the sun differentiates through time and space into colours, so its energy differentiates into manifold life forms. Such transcendence would imply the redundancy of worshiping any deity which the Upanishads professed was ultimately a vain occupation.

The greater the multiplicity, the more profane that

state is. States of less differentiation are more sacred. Indian society differentiated to form as consistent a facsimile of the sacred order as possible. Social and cultural boundaries and relative moral values, however, are themselves finite, differentiated forms of that energy, hiding their true nature and source in the spiritual centre of the individual (the atman) and the spiritual centre of the cosmos (the Brahman). This differentiation may nonetheless protect civil society from the transcendental power of the sacred. It is transcendental because it is less differentiated, which the sanyasi can know by knowing his own self. The totality of society comprised a collective transcendence of the problem of differentiation celebrated in ritual sacrifice. This order, however, restricted individual transcendence by denying more than partial awareness of the totality. For the man who sought individuated transcendence, the way led through renunciation, through personal awareness of the contradictions and problems inherent in differentiation as manifested in his own adopted condition and that of society, to self-knowledge and transcendence.

Unfortunately very little is apparently known about transcendence. From the Indian experience, it can be presumed to have something to do with resolution of contradictions and problems and states of madness. It has to do with a sense of being less personally troubled by multiplicity, which has been described as an effect of internal sacrifice. Sacrifice does not have connotations of destruction, denial or escape but propitiation on a conscious level for the profane state of oppositions and multiplicity.

By internal sacrifice, the sanyasi transcends differentiation and is thereby "more sacred". He becomes a "hierophant of the sacred" for society (Laing 1967:109), and a man who can accept the state of differentiation contingent to civil life. Whatever the "inner voices" are that sanyasis such as Krishnamurti and ~~Chandrasekhar~~ attest to, they are not dismissed as the machinations of an "overwhelming superego" advocating the rejection of the social background which formulated the "ego identity" (Erikson 1959:130). It is thought of as the manifestation of a more comprehensive morality which must come with knowledge of that energy which men-in-the-world cope with by breaking it up and encapsulating it in systems of good and bad, pure and impure.

The process of detachment, renunciation and transcendence has been systematized by sanyasis themselves and the dangers inherent in the enterprise left to them to surmount. Society protects itself by insisting that it be undertaken apart from itself. It may therefore benefit by being able to set itself against a standard that prevents the eruption of dangerous messianic energies intent on imposing the same absolute standards of good and evil on all its members in a secular, totalistic form. Its basis is that all power is of sacred origin and not the product of human institutions. The paradox it presents is that the whole society is nonetheless subject to religious ideas of an absolute order. The sanyasi's liberation from that order is a transcendence of it limited by the culturally determined degree of differentiation.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

Sanyasan is a peculiar structural complement to Indian society which allows a few individuals to explore their human potential to the limit. By being outside of the established order, their experience does not represent a threat to the established order, but indirectly reinforces it. From that order the following hypothesis can be derived: the greater the differentiation in a system, the greater the number of contradictions and problems; the scope for transcendence will therefore be greater, and for those who test this, the greater the scope to explore their human potential. Transcendent experience seems to be conditional on forsaking previously held assumptions and beliefs. This process cannot be induced but only made more feasible by social renunciation. If the differentiation in India was articulated less stringently, sanyasan might have taken a different form and sanyasis have greater impact on changing the social order.

Now that Indian society is changing, so is sanyasan. There are efforts afoot to turn it into a professional organization, somewhat analagous to a trade union. What its functions or source of livelihood will be remain to be seen. It could become something like an elite research establishment into human potential, synthesizing traditional Indian knowledge with Western science. Or it could become a stagnating traditionalists' club. Its form may depend

on its membership. If it becomes exclusive to former Brahmans as tradition decreed, or if it focuses on its role in contemporary India, the latter may prove to be the case. These two ways of treating the sanyasi I have eschewed, the first on the grounds that sanyasis come from all castes anyway, and the second because the sanyasi's functions do not appear to be the characterizing features of the institution. If on the other hand, its membership is comprised of seekers after truth, its vitality may be assumed, though the viability of a different institutionalization may prove questionable.

The question remains as to the desirability of sanyasan in contemporary Western society. If its establishment is contingent, as I have argued, on a complementary society such as India's, the answer must be no. On the one hand, an affirmative answer would condone a society built on ascribed inequality and waste. In this respect our two cultures may not be so divergent. To cite one example of pressure for prescribed but arbitrary order and experience in our society, (which may be pressure for a homogeneity without the range of rigidly unequal differentiation), the campaign against the use of certain drugs militates against certain states of altered consciousness as much as against those drugs. On the other, the problem with ideal figures is that they allow other men and women to lead vicarious lives and ignore the challenge of realizing their own potential. Moreover, the challenge of creating a whole

society of men and women with equal rights and equal opportunity remains unanswered. This implies a differentiated society in which people can see themselves and other apart from their roles, their identities as fixed by blood, political and occupational relationships, and apart from idiosyncratic desires, gratifications and perceptions. Such an enterprise may be contradicted by our social condition from which we may derive any identity at all, but the human condition surely implies striving to achieve it. The sanyasi holds out hope that it may be possible. With this in mind, I shall conclude with a small piece of experiential ethnography that seems to suggest that sanyasis too may have need of other ideal figure sanyasis to sustain them in their venture. On the premise that what we have in common is our particularities, not our generalities, it may also show that at least in terms of bizarre phenomena, experiences in Kathmandu are strikingly analagous to experiences on the peripheries of our own culture today.

Shivaratri

"Just think! There's aeons of time stretching this way and aeons of time that way, and every way, and here we've got just this tiny little bit to spend together, so let's make it memorable!" Jagadish held up two fingers together and his corpulent frame jiggled up and down on his knees as he laughed. "Today is Shivaratri, so let's

go to Pasupatinat. That's the temple where Shiva's buttocks fell to the earth at the creation of the world. Three other parts of him fell at the other three corners of this sub-continent. Today we have a festival in his honour and there'll be hundreds of saddhus there."

We pile into a bus following the holy Bhagavati river across the Kathmandu valley to where it flows placidly through a gorge from the foothills that lead up to the Himalayas. The bus only comes within half a mile of the temple before it is stopped by the crowds on the tarmac and public grazing fields. The way is lined with wandering traders, squatting or sitting cross-legged behind small rectangles of cloth on which they have spread their portable wares: gems and coloured stones from the Punjab, local flower wreaths and petals, rosaries and necklaces of rudraksha beads, varieties of hemp, pieces of rubber tyres and leather for mending shoes and sandals, sweet-meats and sacred food. We jostled towards the gold pagoda roof glinting below us. Past the old stone mats, where saddhus can be seen squatting by fires. Past the bulls and cows lying in the route, oblivious to the noisy hubbub, chewing provender of leaves and vegetables. Past armless, legless men.

"Bom! saddhu," Jagadish greets a naked, brown man, carrying a trident and wooden bowl.

"Bom!" he resonates, but his eyes, highlighted by three white tilak marks between, never waver and his long black

hair is swallowed by the throng.

"Hey Joe! Joe, come smoke with us." The imperious voice emanates from the shadows of a grey stone shelter. Three gaunt and blackened figures perch there. "You not American?" and they laugh derisively but good-naturedly. Two of them say they have come here on their hands and knees from Madras.

"Mister, bakshish, mister!" Groping little brown hands, plucking at us. "Me orphan, mister. Me good guide. Me your guide." They smile excitedly in the sun. The old lady with a baby at her breast plucks persistently and wordlessly, her cheeks lined with tears.

We nearly trip over a piece of string. A monkey screeches and leaps around our feet to cling to a saddhu with a begging bowl. He has no legs. Beside him a tapestry of flower petals. We stop to look at some miniature stone lingums and beads. We discuss their quality with the easy-going trader, sitting back on his heels. He turns to some saddhus behind him for an explanation of their significance. Some joke and laugh. One of them stands up and says he'll show me something. Loosening his lungi, he bends forward and inflates one side of his stomach activating different parts of the deflated side, apparently at will. Then he reverses the operation, doing the same to the other side. This, he says, is an exercise called Nauli Kriya which enables a person to control every part of his body. It is particularly efficacious in

ridding the intestines, stomach and bile of all impurities. He has been a doctor of ayurvedic medicine and has recently given up a government job teaching in Kashmir. As we leave he presents me with a rudraksha bead "for high-blood pressure".

We reach the main gates but are prevented from entering. "For Hindus only". Inside, with its backside to us, we can see an enormous statue of a bull, round which the crowd breaks into two streams. Sitting cross-legged on its rump is a saddhu. His only adornment is a ring with a large red stone on his penis, which he points out with a grin to those who glance up.

We move around the outer walls onto a stone bridge across the river, and up stone terraces to look back onto the temple. "Under that main gold roof, the one with the garudas on its corners. That's what they've come for. They go in there and walk around a pure black stone lingum in water and then out and down the steps into the river to wash..." Jagadish is an orthodox high Brahman, so has never been inside though he used to come here to play as a boy. "That stone sort of hut with the intricate barred gate is where the kings come when they are about to die, and those other ones are for less important people. The ghats in front are where their bodies are burnt. Only the kings can be cremated on that one beside that stone where there's an imprint of the Buddha's foot. There, where all those bathers are queuing up."

The river is sluggish, shallow and muddy but crowded

with people trying to immerse themselves in it. Lower down, below the bridge we had crossed, are other ghats. On one of them a fire has been started. A pile of wood and a white corpse. "A very poor man. See, he's got no mourners." It blazes and a pall of smoke flows down the river obscuring some fishermen who are wading beside the ghats with hand nets. "Only little fish now." There is a loud popping crack as the skull bursts in the flames. The monkeys scrambling about above us on the buttresses of stone shrines in whose shade we sit, pay it no more attention than the bathers.

"Hey mister, this man tell future." The lissom figure of our guide is all arms and legs pulling a grey-bearded man up the high granite steps, who surmounts them with no apparent haste and certainly no need of help. For ten minutes or so we gather a crowd of intent listeners, who laugh when I laugh with an ease dampened by my future's presentation: Saturn and Jupiter in my hands; marriage; money; all plain sailing but I should not cut my nails or hair on Thursdays, nor start a journey on Tuesdays, eat meat on Sundays. I must pay more to learn more: the first letters of the names of the women in my life; and other details or were they from the astrologist on Galiano, the Tarot reader in Vancouver or this dignified, migrant professional? My future slips by vacuously, as weightless as the past has weight.

We wander farther back up the hillside, in amongst the

trees and monkeys, away from the crowds, looking for the saddhus somebody had said they had seen yesterday lying horizontal to the ground with only their necks on the limbs of trees. More granite shrines, granite steps, granite shelters, ash-covered, black-haired, naked men about small fires. By one, a giant bronzed figure leaps to his feet, shouting, waving a sword. Others rush forward, grab at him, disarm him. He subsides back down, laying ultimatum threats.

An out-of-the-way shelter. Three or four younger men and two or three grey-beards sitting in the sunshine. "Ah, we can discuss philosophy here," Jagadish remarks. We sit down too, or lean against the walls. The same conversation seems to continue but now with more English. In response to my question one old man says with a twinkling smile that in his life, he's been everything but nothing. We are joined by Hermanta and Siroji, two student friends. Jagadish has lead the conversation on to the sexual prowess of Shiva, Pasupati himself, Lord of the Beasts. I cannot tell if he is being facetious on my account because he believes that Westerners consider saddhus fools, or whether his animated smile, half in my direction as though to gauge my response, is consciously amused by what we are all doing. The old man treats his responses that raise new difficulties with a smile equally animated, only more benign and patient. I too smile and respond seriously but without grim concentration.

"What do you think happiness is?" I think a moment and say that it always seems like I think of happiness when I look back at some time in the past. Jagadish says he thinks of happiness as steps on a staircase; that if you find your way onto one step, there is another one to step onto. I ask if you ever get to the top step, but we seem to lose connection here and he says there are always steps to climb but maybe... Hermanta says his childhood was happy and Siroji says rather loftily that he doesn't think it does any good to think about such things, at least not until later. Siroji and Hermanta laugh happily with each other and then with the rest of us. Our attention then moves back to the old man who says gently that happiness is like words...you keep trying to pin it down and it recedes farther back until you only have a tantalizing sense of it. He quotes something in Hindi to which Jagadish quotes something else. I ask Jagadish to tell me what they are saying. He says the saddhu said the problem of happiness does not arise when you lose the words and control the thoughts, but then, if worshipping Pasupati is happiness...

We wander back down to the river and into the crowds. "Julian, ever since I lived so long in the States, I've been hungry for meat, but since I'm a Brahman, you're going to have to get it. Tomorrow you can sacrifice a goat to Parvati, Shiva's lady, and then we'll feast."

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