enter in dangerous quantities and is dispersed immediately. When
the soul has finally set itself free it rises at once above the highest
heaven to the top of the universe, where it remains in inactive omni-
escient bliss through all eternity. This, for the Jainas, is Nirvāṇa.
Though Jaina philosophers developed their doctrines, and evolved
a theory of epistemology of great subtlety (p. 504f) and a remarkable
view of space and time suggesting the world picture of relativity
physics, their fundamental teachings remained essentially unaltered.
Mahāvīra and the twenty-three other Tīrthaṅkaras were adored in
the same way as the Buddha and the Hindu gods, but Jainism never
compromised in its atheism, and there was no development in this
sect comparable to the Great Vehicle in Buddhism. Jainism has sur-
vived for over 2,000 years on the basis of these austere teachings alone.

Full salvation is not possible to the layman. In this Jainism differs
from Buddhism and Hinduism, which concede it in exceptional
cases. To attain Nirvāṇa a man must abandon all trammels, includ-
ing his clothes. Only by a long course of fasting, self-mortification,
study and meditation can he rid himself of karma, and only by the
most rigorous discipline can he prevent fresh karma from clinging to
his soul. Hence a monastic life is essential for salvation. Very early,
however, many Jaina monks gave up the rule of nudity, and today few
if any monks, even of the Digambara sect, practise it regularly. Both
sects of Jainas, however, would admit that it is necessary to full
liberation. The universe is now rapidly declining, and no souls now
reach Nirvāṇa or have any hope of reaching it in the foreseeable future,
so in these degenerate days clothes are worn as a concession to human frailty.

The regimen of the Jaina monk was, and still is, strict in the ex-
treme. At his initiation his hair was not shaved, but pulled out by
the roots. He subjected himself to many hardships, such as meditating
in the full sunlight of the Indian summer, or maintaining an uneasy pos-
ture for long periods on end, though Jainism did not permit the more
spectacular penances of some Hindu ascetics. The monk’s frugal
meals were interrupted by numerous fasts, and many monks starved
themselves to death, following the example of Mahāvīra himself.

The life of the monk was governed by five vows, abjuring killing,
stealing, lying, sexual activity and the possession of property. These
vows were interpreted quite strictly. Acts of violence and killing,
whether intentional or not, were the most potent cause of the influx
of karma, and were therefore particularly to be avoided. Meat-eating
was quite forbidden to monk and layman alike. Even insect life was
carefully protected. Like the Buddhist monks, the Jainas strained
their drinking-water to save the lives of animalcule. Jaina monks
usually carried feather dusters, to brush ants and other insects from their path and save them from being trampled underfoot, and they wore veils over their mouths, to prevent the minute living things in the air from being inhaled and killed. No lay Jaina could take up the profession of agriculture, since this involved not only the destruction of plant life, but also of many living beings in the soil itself. Kindling a light or fire was not permitted by the monk, since it destroyed lives both in the fuel and in the surrounding air, while putting a fire out was also forbidden, since it destroyed the life of the fire itself. Thus, in its insistence on ahimsā, or non-violence, Jainism went much further than any other Indian religion.

It has been suggested that Jainism survived in India, whereas Buddhism perished, because the former sect took better care of its layfolk. In Jainism the layman was a definite member of the Order, encouraged to undertake periodical retreats and to live as far as possible the life of the monk for specific periods. Like Buddhism, Jainism encouraged the commercial virtues of honesty and frugality, and at a very early period the Jaina lay community became predominantly mercantile. The splendid Jaina temples at such places as Mount Ābu and Śravāṇa Belgoḷā are testimonies of the great wealth and piety of medieval Jaina laymen.

Jainism had no special social doctrines. The domestic rites of the layman, such as birth, marriage and death, were those of the Hindus. At one time Jainism maintained a cult of stūpas in the same way as Buddhism, but this has not survived, and early in the Christian era the Tīrthankaras were adored in temples in the form of icons. By the Middle Ages this worship approximated to that of the Hindus, with offerings of flowers, incense, lamps and so on. As with Buddhism, the chief gods of the Hindus found their way into Jaina temples in subordinate positions, and though there was no real compromise with theism the sect easily fitted into the Hindu order, its members forming distinct castes.

Jaina religious literature is generally dull and pedantic, and its ethics, though they inculcate such virtues as honesty and mercy, tend to be negative and fundamentally selfish. The virtue of non-violence in Jainism often had little of love about it, but merely involved vegetarianism and precautions against the accidental killing of small animals. There are, however, passages in the Jaina scriptures which show warmth and human sympathy. Thus, discussing the doctrine of non-violence, the early Ācārāga Sūtra writes:

"A wise man should be neither glad nor angry, for he should know and consider the happiness of all things... Life is dear to the many who own
fields and houses, who get dyed and coloured clothes and jewels and earrings, and grow attached to them. ... Only those who are of controlled conduct do not desire these things; therefore, knowing birth and death, you should firmly walk the path.

"For nothing is inaccessible to death, and all beings are fond of themselves, they love pleasure and hate pain, they shun destruction and cling to life. They long to live. To all things life is dear."

More typical of Jaina moral teachings are the following verses, said to have been spoken by Mahāvīra to Gautama, one of his disciples (not, of course, to be confused with Gautama the Buddha).

"As the dead leaf when its time is up
falls from the tree to the ground,
so is the life of man.
Gautama, always be watchful!

"As the dewdrop that sways on a blade of grass
lasts but a moment,
so is the life of man.
Gautama, always be watchful!

"For the soul which suffers for its carelessness
is whirlèd about in the universe,
through good and evil karma.
Gautama, always be watchful!

"When the body grows old and the hair turns white,
and all the vital powers decrease . . .
despondency and disease befall, and the flesh wastes and decays
Gautama, always be watchful!

"So cast away all attachments,
and be pure as a lotus, or as water in autumn.
Free from every attachment,
Gautama, always be watchful!"

As an example of Digambara teaching we give a few verses, remarkable for their conciseness, by the 4th century monk Pujyapāda.

"Body, house, wealth and wife,
sons and friends and enemies—
all are different from the soul.
Only the fool thinks them his own."

"From all directions come the birds
and rest together in the trees;
but in the morning each goes his own way,
flyin in all directions."
"Death is not for me. Why then should I fear?
Disease is not for me. Why then should I despair?
I am not a child, nor a youth, nor an old man—
All these states are only of my body."

"Time and again in my foolishness I have enjoyed
all kinds of body and have discarded them.
Now I am wise!
Why should I long for rubbish?"

"The soul is one thing, matter another—
that is the quintessence of truth.
Whatever else may be said
is merely its elaboration."61

The Ājivikas

A third unorthodox sect which emerged at the same time as Buddhism and Jainism was that of the Ājivikas, a body of ascetics who were under a rigorous discipline similar to that of the Jainas, and who also practised complete nudity. The doctrines of the founder of the sect, Gośāla Maskarīputra, bear a generic likeness to those of his contemporary and former friend Mahāvīra. Like Mahāvīra, he looked back to earlier teachers and ascetic groups, whose doctrines he refurbished and developed. According to both Buddhist and Jaina tradition he was of humble birth; he died a year or so before the Buddha, about 487 B.C., after a fierce altercation with Mahāvīra in the city of Śrāvastī. His followers seem to have combined with those of other teachers, such as Pūraṇa Kāśyapa the antinomian and Pakudha Kātyāyana the atomist, to form the Ājivika sect. After a period of prosperity in Mauryan times, when Aśoka and his successor Daśaratha presented caves to the Ājivikas, the sect rapidly declined, and only retained some local importance in a small region of Eastern Mysore and the adjacent parts of Madras, where it survived until the 14th century, after which we hear no more of it.

No scriptures of the Ājivikas have come down to us, and the little we know about them has to be reconstructed from the polemic literature of Buddhism and Jainism. The sect was certainly atheistic, and its main feature was strict determinism. The usual doctrine of karma taught that though a man’s present condition was determined by his past actions he could influence his destiny, in this life and the future, by choosing the right course of conduct. This the Ājivikas denied. The whole universe was conditioned and determined to the smallest detail by an impersonal cosmic principle, Niyatti, or destiny. It was impossible to influence the course of transmigration in any way.
All that have breath, all that are born, all that have life, are without power, strength or virtue, but are developed by destiny, chance and nature, and experience joy and sorrow in the six classes [of existence]. There are . . . 8,400,000 great aeons (mahākappa), through which fool and wise alike must take their course and make an end of sorrow. There is no [question of] bringing unripe karma to fruition, nor of exhausting karma already ripened, by virtuous conduct, by vows, by penance, or by chastity. That cannot be done. Samsāra is measured as with a bushel, with its joy and sorrow and its appointed end. It can neither be lessened nor increased, nor is there any excess or deficiency of it. Just as a ball of string will, when thrown, unwind to its full length, so fool and wise alike will take their course, and make an end of sorrow.”

Though nothing that a man could do would in any way influence his future lot Ṭaṭṭika monks practised severe asceticism, because the force of destiny compelled them to do so, although their religious opponents accused them of licentiousness and immorality.

The Dravidian Ṭaṭṭikas developed their doctrines in a way resembling Buddhism of the Great Vehicle. Gosāla became an ineffable divinity, like the Buddha in the Mahāyāna system, while the doctrine of destiny evolved into a Parmenidean view that all change and movement were illusory, and that the world was in reality eternally and immovably at rest. This view bears a certain resemblance to Nāgārjuna’s doctrine of “the Void”.

Scepticism and Materialism

Buddha, Mahāvīra, Gosāla, and many lesser teachers of their period ignored the gods, but they were not thoroughgoing atheists and materialists. All admitted the existence of supernatural beings of strictly limited powers, and all accepted the fundamental doctrine of transmigration, though they interpreted its mechanics individually. Some thinkers, however, rejected all immaterial categories completely, and their influence may have been wider than appears from the religious texts of the period. In the fairly early Kaṭha Upaniṣad the interlocutor Nāciketas (p. 158) questions Yama, the god of death, in these terms: “There is doubt about the state of a man who is dead—some say he is, others, he is not.” “On this point”, Yama replies, “even the gods formerly had their doubts. It is not easy to understand.” At this time unbelief must have been fairly widespread.

Ajita Keśakambalin (“Ajita of the Hair-blanket”, no doubt so called from the garb of his order), a contemporary of the Buddha, was the earliest known teacher of complete materialism.

“Man,” he said, “is formed of the four elements. When he dies earth returns to the aggregate of earth, water to water, fire to fire, and air to air, while his senses vanish into space. Four men with the bier take up the
corpse; they gossip [about the dead man] as far as the burning-ground, where his bones turn the colour of a dove’s wing and his sacrifices end in ashes. They are fools who preach almsgiving, and those who maintain the existence [of immaterial categories] speak vain and lying nonsense. When the body dies both fool and wise alike are cut off and perish. They do not survive after death.”

If we are to believe the Buddhist scriptures, Ajita founded a sect of monks. The Buddha condemned them as having no good motive for their asceticism, the degree of which is nowhere made clear. It is possible that, like the Epicureans, they were not so much an ascetic order as a fraternity of men with common aims, cultivating together the simpler pleasures of life. In any case, an element of materialism is traceable in Indian thought from this time onwards. Religious and philosophical literature, whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jaina, devotes much space to attacking the evil tenets of the Cārvaka or Lokāyata, as the materialist schools were called. Throughout the period which we treat these unbelievers are referred to with scorn and disapproval which sometimes seems to contain an undertone of fear, as though the pious authors thought it really possible that the materialists might shake the foundations of the established order. Materialist and irreligious undercurrents are traceable in some secular literature, such as the Arthaśāstra and the Kāmasūtra.

The general attitude of the materialist schools, according to their adversaries, was that all religious observance and morality were futile. A man should make the most of life and get what happiness he could out of it. The frugal virtues of Buddhism and Jainism were rejected.

“As long as he lives a man should live happily and drink ghee, though he run into debt, for when the body is turned to ashes how can there be any return to life?”

A man must not turn back from pleasure for fear of concomitant sorrow. He must accept occasional sorrow gladly, for the sake of the joy which he finds in the world, as he accepts the bones with the fish or the husk with the corn. “Whoever turns in fear from the joy that he sees before him is a fool, no better than an animal.”

Their opponents ascribe only base ideals to the materialists, and there is no definite evidence that they had any ethical doctrines, but one verse attributed to them shows that they were not blind to the warm ties of family and friendship.

“If a man really left his body, and passed on to the other world, would be not come back once more, drawn by his love for his kin?”
Besides numerous quotations attributed to materialists in religious and philosophical works one anti-religious philosophical text has survived. This is the *Tattvopaplavasimha* (freely “The Lion Destroying all Religious Truth”) written by a certain Jayarâsi in the 8th century A.D. The author was an out-and-out Pyrrhonist denying the possibility of any certain knowledge at all, and he demolished with able dialectic, to his own satisfaction at any rate, all the basic presuppositions of the chief religious systems of his day.

(IV) HINDUISM

*Development and Literature*

As well as the aristocratic religion of the brâhmaṇs, the Buddhist and Jaina scriptures mention popular cults, connected with earth-spirits (*yakṣas*), snake-spirits (*nāgas*), and other minor deities, centred round sacred spots or caityas (p. 264). Very early a god named Vâsudeva was widely worshipped, especially in Western India. It was to this god that the Besnagar column, to which we have more than once referred, was erected. The inscription on the column shows that by the end of the 2nd century B.C. the cult of Vâsudeva was receiving the support of the ruling classes, and even of the Western invaders. Soon after this Vâsudeva was identified with the Vedic god Viśṇu, if indeed the identification had not already been made, and further syncretisms were taking place. Nârâyana, a god of obscure origin mentioned in the Brâhmaṇa literature, was also identified with Viśṇu, whose name was by now closely connected with that of Kṛṣṇa, one of the heroes of the martial traditions which were brought together to form the great epic, the *Mahâbhârata*.

The character of Viśṇu, and those of the gods associated with him, developed through the centuries, as further popular divinities were in one way or another identified with him. Among some of the lower orders theriomorphic cults prevailed, especially in parts of Mâlwâ, where a divinity in the form of a boar was worshipped. By Gupta times the cult of the divine boar was assimilated to that of Viśṇu. A pastoral flute-playing deity, popular among herdsmen and of uncertain origin, was identified with the hero Kṛṣṇa, by now recognized as an incarnation of Viśṇu. The Brâhmaṇic hero Paraśurâma was similarly accounted for, while later Râma, the hero of the second great Indian epic, was also brought into the Vaiṣṇavite pantheon.

Simultaneously a fertility deity, whose cult may have been kept alive in non-brâhmaṇic circles from the days of the Harappâ culture, rose in prominence. This was Śiva, identified with the Vedic Rudra and usually worshipped in the form of the phallic emblem (*liṅga*).
With Siva were later associated certain other popular divinities, such as Skanda and the elephant-headed Gaṇeṣa. At the end of the Gupta period goddesses rose to prominence, together with magical cults, religious sexuality, and a new form of animal sacrifice, which increased in importance throughout the early Middle Ages.

The final form of Hinduism was largely the result of influence from the Dravidian South. Here, on the basis of indigenous cults fertilized by Aryan influences, theistic schools had arisen, characterized by intense ecstatic piety. It was this devotional religion, propagated by many wandering preachers and hymn-singers in the medieval period, which had the greatest effect on Hinduism as it exists today.

During this period an enormous body of sacred literature was produced. The Vedas, Brähmaṇas and Upaniṣads, theoretically still the most sacred of all India's religious literature, were studied only by those who had undergone the ceremony of initiation, and became more and more the preserve of the brähmaṇas, who themselves often interpreted them figuratively in the light of the new doctrines. The real scriptures of Hinduism, as distinct from Brähmaṇism, were available to all, even to men of low caste and to women. These were the Epics, the Purāṇas, the books of Sacred Law, which we have treated elsewhere (p. 113), and numerous hymns and religious poems. For the learned there was a voluminous literature of commentaries, and many treatises were written on various aspects of theology and philosophy.

The two great Epics were originally secular, and in their literary aspect will be treated later (p. 409ff). Very early, probably well before the Christian era, the Mahābhārata began to receive religious interpolations and to be looked on as a sacred text. The most important of these interpolations is the famous Bhagavat Gītā, itself a compilation of material from various sources, to which we shall often refer in the course of this chapter; and much literature on the Sacred Law, as well as religious legends of many kinds, has found its way into the Epic which, as it exists at present, forms an encyclopedia of early Hinduism. An important appendix to the Mahābhārata is the Harivamśa, giving the legend of the god Kṛṣṇa in a developed form. The second epic, the Rāmāyana, was also at first secular, but at a comparatively late period, possibly after the age of the Guptas, an introductory and a final canto were added, together with other interpolations, which raised the text to the status of a sacred scripture.

The Purāṇas ("Ancient Stories") are compendia of legends and religious instructions. There are eighteen chief Purāṇas, of which perhaps the most important are the Vāyu, Viṣṇu, Agni, Bhaviṣya and Bhāgavata Purāṇa. In their present form they are not very ancient,
none going back earlier than the Gupta period and all containing interpolations, but most of their legendary material is very old indeed.

Much later religious poetry is of small literary value, and has little more sanctity than have "Hymns Ancient and Modern" in the Church of England. Certain poems, however, became very sacred in later Hinduism, notably the Gīta Govinda, a collection of interlinked religious songs by the 12th-century Bengali poet Jayadeva (p. 430f). Some medieval stotras or hymns of praise, such as those attributed to the theologian Śaṅkara, have considerable literary merit, and are looked on with great respect.

The Peninsula produced much vernacular sacred poetry during our period, some of which is of great value, and is considered to be very holy. A beautiful collection of moral aphorisms in Tamil verse, the Tirukkūral ("Sacred Couplets"), attributed to Tiruvaliullar, perhaps dates from the 4th or 5th centuries A.D., though some authorities would put it much earlier. Later, from the 7th to the 10th centuries, were composed the eleven sacred books (Tirumūrai) of the Tamil Śaivites, anthologies of hymns by the sixty-three Nāyaṇārs, or Teachers. Chief of these eleven works are the Tēvāram, containing songs by the three poets Appar, Nānasambandar, and Sundaramūrti, and the Tiruvaṉagam of Māṇikka Vāṣagār. The Tamil Vaiṣṇavites at about the same period produced the Nālāyiram ("Four Thousand"), a collection of stanzas attributed to the twelve Āḻvārs or saints of the sect. Similar collections of devotional poetry, still looked on locally as very holy, were composed at the end of our period in Canarese and Telugu. At a later time much devotional literature was written in the Āryan vernaculars, but none survives from the period before the Muslim invasions, except perhaps the works of some of the Marāṭhā Vaiṣṇavite hymn singers, Jīnāesvar, Nāmdev and a few others, who, according to tradition, lived at the end of the 13th century.

We cannot here catalogue the great mass of religio-philosophical literature of Hinduism, some of which will be mentioned in the following pages.

Viṣṇu

To the Vaiṣṇavite, the devotee of Viṣṇu, this god is the source of the universe and of all things. According to the most famous cosmic myth of Hinduism he sleeps in the primeval ocean, on the thousand-headed snake Śeṣa. In his sleep a lotus grows from his navel, and in the lotus is born the demiurge Brahmā, who creates

* Not to be confused with the impersonal Brahma (p. 252) of the Upaniṣads.
the world. Once the world is created Viṣṇu awakes, to reign in the highest heaven, Vaikuṇṭha. He is usually depicted as a four-armed man of dark blue colour, crowned and seated on his throne, bearing in his hands his emblems, the conch, discus, mace and lotus, wearing the holy jewel called Kaustubha round his neck, and with a tuft of curly hair (Śrīvatsa) on his chest. He rides the great eagle Garuḍa, generally shown with a half-human face, who is perhaps the survival of an ancient theriomorphic cult and who was already associated with Vāsudeva, one of Viṣṇu’s early forms, when Heliodorus erected his column at Besnagar. Viṣṇu’s spouse, Lakṣmī, is an important goddess in her own right.

Viṣṇu’s status as the Universal God, of whom all other gods are aspects or emanations, appears as early as the Bhagavad Gītā.

“Now I will tell the chief of my holy powers . . . .
though there is no end to my fullness,
I am the self in the inmost heart of all that are born . . . .
I am their beginning, their middle and their end. . . .
I am the beginning, the middle, the end, of all creation,
the science of the soul among sciences,
of speakers I am the speech,
of letters I am A.∗

“I am unending time,
I am the ordainer who faces all ways,
I am destroying death,
I am the source of all that is to be. . . .
I am the dice-play of the gamester,
I am the glory of the glorious,
I am victory, I am courage,
I am the goodness of the virtuous. . . .
I am the force of those who govern,
I am the statecraft of those who seek to conquer,
I am the silence of what is secret,
I am the knowledge of those who know,
and I am the seed of all that is born. . . .

“There is nothing that can exist without me.
There is no end to my holy powers. . . .
And whatever is mighty or fortunate or strong
springs from a portion of my glory.”87

Though his counterpart Śiva has a rather ferocious and dangerous side to his character, Viṣṇu is generally thought of as wholly benevolent. The god works continuously for the welfare of the world, and

∗ A is the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. It is also implicit in all the other letters, if they are not modified by special marks (p. 398).
with this in view he has from time to time incarnated himself, either wholly or partially. The earliest version of this doctrine is contained in the Bhagavad Gītā, wherein Kṛṣṇa reveals himself as the ever-active godhead incarnate.

"In essence I am never born, I never alter. I am the lord of all beings and the full master of my own nature, yet of my own power I come to be.

"Whenever the Sacred Law fails, and evil raises its head, I take embodied birth. To guard the righteous, to root out sinners, and to establish the Sacred Law, I am born from age to age."88

The Avatāras ("Descents") or incarnations of Viṣṇu are, according to the most popular classification, ten. The divinities and heroes composing the list were adopted by Vaiśṇavism at different times, but all were incorporated by the 11th century. It may be that the Vaiśṇavite doctrine of incarnation owes something to the Buddhist and Jaina doctrines of former Buddhas and Tīrthaṅkaras, which are certainly attested earlier. An incarnation might be total or partial—for "whatever is mighty or fortunate or strong springs from a portion of my glory". In this sense every good or great man was thought of as a partial incarnation of Viṣṇu. The ten chief incarnations, however, are of a more special type, for in them the full essence of the god is believed to have taken flesh to save the world from imminent danger of total destruction. They are as follows:

1. The Fish (Matsya). When the earth was overwhelmed by a universal flood Viṣṇu took the form of a fish, who first warned Manu (the Hindu Adam) of the impending danger, and then carried him, his family, and the seven great sages (Ṛṣis) in a ship fastened to a horn on his head. He also saved the Vedas from the flood. The fish legend first appears in the Brāhmaṇas, and the Noah's Ark theme suggests Semitic influence. The Fish incarnation was never widely worshipped.

2. The Tortoise (Kūrma). Many divine treasures were lost in the flood, including the ambrosia (amṛta),* with which the gods preserved their youth. Viṣṇu became a great tortoise, and dived to the bottom of the cosmic ocean. On his back the gods placed Mount Mandara, and, twining the divine snake Vāsuki around the mountain, churned the ocean in the manner in which an Indian dairyman churns

* The words ambrosia and amṛta are probably connected etymologically; but amṛta was a drink, and should therefore perhaps be translated "nectar".
butter, twirling the mountain by pulling the snake. From the churned ocean emerged the ambrosia and various other treasures, including the goddess Lakṣmī. The story is probably a piece of very early folklore, but the identification of the tortoise with Viṣṇu is comparatively late, and, though frequently mentioned in literature, this incarnation had little real importance.

(3) The Boar (Varāha). A demon, Hiraṇyaśa, cast the earth once more into the depths of the cosmic ocean. Viṣṇu took the form of an enormous boar, killed the demon, and raised the earth on his tusk (pl. XXVd). The legend looks back to the Brāhmaṇas, but probably developed through a primitive non-Āryan cult of a sacred pig. The cult of the Boar incarnation was important in some parts of India in Gupta times.

(4) The Man-Lion (Narasimha). Another demon, Hiraṇya-kaśipu, had obtained a boon from Brahmā ensuring that he could not be killed either by day or night by god, man or beast. Thus safeguarded he persecuted gods and men, including his own pious son Prahlāda. When Prahlāda called on Viṣṇu for help the god burst from a pillar of the demon’s palace at sunset, when it was neither night nor day, in a form half man and half lion, and slew Hiraṇya-kaśipu. Narasimha was worshipped as their special divinity (iṣṭadevata) by a small sect, and was often depicted in sculpture.

(5) The Dwarf (Vāmana). A demon named Bali gained control of the world, and commenced a course of asceticism, by which his supernatural power so increased that he menaced even the gods. Viṣṇu appeared before him in the form of a dwarf, and asked as a boon as much space as he could cover in three strides. When the boon was granted the god became a giant, and in two strides covered earth, heaven and the middle air. Magnanimously he refrained from taking his third stride, and left the infernal regions to the demon. The three steps of Viṣṇu are as old as the Rg Veda, but other popular elements were incorporated into the story.

(6) Paraśurāma (“Rāma with the Axe”). Viṣṇu took human form as the son of a brāhmaṇ Jamadagni. When his father was robbed by the wicked King Kārtavīrya, Paraśurāma killed the latter. Jamadagni was in turn killed by the sons of Kārtavīrya, after which the enraged Paraśurāma destroyed all the males of the kṣatriya class twenty-one times in succession. Though Paraśurāma is frequently referred to in literature, he seems rarely to have been specially worshipped.

(7) Rāma, Prince of Ayodhyā and hero of the Rāmāyaṇa. Viṣṇu incarnated himself in this form to save the world from the oppressions of the demon Rāvaṇa. To one who is not a Hindu his story is rather a matter of literature than of religion and it will be told in a later chapter
Rāma may have been a chief who lived in the 8th or 7th century B.C., and in the earliest form of the story he has no divine attributes. Though he was believed to be an earlier incarnation than Kṛṣṇa, his cult developed later than Kṛṣṇa’s, and does not appear to have become very important until towards the end of our period. Rāma is usually depicted as of dark hue, often bearing a bow and arrow. He is attended by his faithful queen Sītā, the personification of wifely devotion, and often also by his three loyal brothers, Lākaśman, Bharata and Śatrughna, and by his friend and helper, the monkey-god Hanumant. To his devotees Rāma combines the ideals of the gentle, faithful husband, the leader brave in hardship, and the just and benevolent king. It is perhaps significant that his cult only became really popular after the Muslim invasion.

(8) Kṛṣṇa is undoubtedly the most important of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. His legend in its final form is very long and can only be outlined briefly here.

Kṛṣṇa was born at Mathurā, of the tribe of the Yādavas. His father was Vasudeva, and his mother was Devaki, the cousin of the ruling King Kaṁsa. It was prophesied that Kaṁsa would be killed by Devaki’s eighth son, so he set out to destroy all her children. But Kṛṣṇa and his elder brother Balarāma were saved, and were brought up as the sons of the cowherd Nanda and his wife Yaśodā. Kaṁsa, hearing that the boys had escaped his clutches, ordered the slaughter of all the male children in his kingdom, but Nanda smuggled the boys away, first to Vraja and then to Vindāvana, districts not far from Mathurā which are still very sacred to Kṛṣṇa.

In his childhood the incarnate god performed many miracles, killing demons, and sheltering the cowherds from a storm by holding Mount Govardhana over their heads with his finger; he also played numerous childish pranks, such as stealing Yaśodā’s butter. In his adolescence he had many amours with the wives and daughters of the cowherds (gopīs), and accompanied their dances on his flute. His favourite was the beautiful Rādhā.

But his youthful days soon ended. Kaṁsa traced him and made further attempts on his life. Kṛṣṇa then gave up his idyllic pastoral ways, and turned on his wicked cousin. He slew Kaṁsa, and seized the kingdom of Mathurā, but, pressed between Kaṁsa’s father-in-law, Jarāsandha king of Magadha, and an unnamed Yavana king of the North-West, he was forced to leave his kingdom, and with his followers founded a new capital at Dvārakā in Saurāshtra. Here he made Rukmīṇī, daughter of the king of Vidarbha (modern Berar), his chief queen, and amassed a total of over 16,000 wives and 180,000 sons. His adventures at this stage of his career include

* There is some ambiguity about the relationship of Kaṁsa and Kṛṣṇa, owing to the fact that Indian usage makes no sharp distinction between brothers or sisters and cousins. Hence Kaṁsa is often referred to as Kṛṣṇa’s uncle, when according to strict English usage the two were second cousins.
the destruction of wicked kings and demons all over India. Throughout the story of the *Mahābhārata* he appears as the constant friend and advisor of the five Pāṇḍavas, and he preached the great sermon of the *Bhagavad Gītā* to Arjuna before the battle which is the centre of the epic story.

After seeing the Pāṇḍavas safely installed in the Kuru land, Kṛṣṇa returned to Dvārakā. Here ominous portents beset the city, as the Yādava chiefs quarrelled among themselves. Kṛṣṇa banned strong drink, in the hope of staying off the evil day, but on the occasion of a festival he relaxed the ban. The Yādava chiefs began to brawl, and the whole city was soon in uproar. For all his divinity, Kṛṣṇa could do nothing to quell the feud, which involved the whole people. His son Pradyumna was killed before his eyes, and his faithful brother Balarāma wounded to death; nearly all the chiefs of the Yādavas were slain. Kṛṣṇa dejectedly wandered in a forest near the city; there, as he sat musing on the loss of his friends and family, a hunter spied him through the undergrowth and mistook him for a deer. An arrow pierced his heel, which like that of Achilles was his one vulnerable spot, and he died. The city of Dvārakā was then swallowed by the sea.

Of the many elements which have gone to the making of this story that of Kṛṣṇa as hero was the earliest to have been given a place in orthodox tradition. A Kṛṣṇa son of Devaki is mentioned in one of the early Upaniṣads as studying the new doctrines of the soul, and it seems certain that there is some historical basis for the legend of the hero-god; but evidently tales of many heroes from many ages and many parts of India have been fused together in the Kṛṣṇa myth, including a few which seem rather inconsistent with the general character of the conquering hero, such as that of his somewhat ignominious retreat from Mathurā. Other elements in the story, such as the destruction of the Yādavas and the death of the god, are quite un-Indian in their tragic character. The themes of the drunken brawl leading to general slaughter, of the hero slain by an arrow piercing his one vulnerable spot, and of the great city engulfed by the sea, are well known in European epic literature, but do not occur elsewhere in that of India, and are not hinted at in the Vedas. The concept of the dying god, so widespread in the ancient Near East, is found nowhere else in Indian mythology. Kamsa, the wicked cousin, seems to echo Herod, and perhaps also Acrisius, the cruel grandfather of Perseus. Some parts of the legend may be derived from very ancient stories, handed down and developed by Aryan warriors from the days before they entered India; others are of indigenous origin; and yet others are possibly inspired by garbled versions of tales from the West.

Kṛṣṇa in his pastoral and erotic aspect is evidently of different origin from Kṛṣṇa the hero. The name means "black", and the god is usually depicted as of that colour. Perhaps the oldest clear reference
to the pastoral Kṛṣṇa is in the early Tamil anthologies, where “the Black One” (Māyōr) plays his flute and sports with milkmaids. He may have been originally a fertility god of the Peninsula, whose cult was carried to the North by nomadic tribes of herdsman. A tribe which appeared in Mālwa and the Western Deccan early in the Christian era, the Ābhīras, is thought to have played a big part in the propagation of the worship of Kṛṣṇa Govinda (“Lord of Herdsman”, a very common epithet of the god in this aspect).

The young Kṛṣṇa’s erotic exploits have been the source of much romantic literature which, superficially, contains but a faint religious element. Invariably, however, the love of the god for the cowherds’ wives is interpreted as symbolic of the love of God for the human soul. The notes of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, calling the women to leave their husbands’ beds and dance with him in the moonlight, represent the voice of God, calling man to leave earthly things and turn to the joys of divine love. So Jew and Christian alike have interpreted the Song of Songs, and so many mystical poets of all religions have depicted their spiritual experience. Despite its luxuriant eroticism the legend of the Divine Cowherd has produced great religious poetry (p. 480f), and inspired many pious souls.

The third element of the Kṛṣṇa legend is that of the child god. This is definitely the latest part to be assimilated, and its origin is quite unknown. Can it be partly inspired by tales brought by Christian merchants or Nestorian missionaries to the west coast of India in the early Middle Ages? Most authorities would deny this, but we do not reject the possibility out of hand. In any case, the story of the child Kṛṣṇa, often depicted in later sculpture as a plump infant crawling on all fours, gave the god a rare completeness. As hero he met the worshipper’s need of a divine father and elder brother; as the young cowherd, he was a divine lover; and as infant, a son. The cult of the child Kṛṣṇa made a special appeal to the warm maternity of Indian womanhood; and even today the simpler women of India, while worshipping the divine child, so delightfully naughty despite his mighty power, refer to themselves as “the Mother of God”.

Vāsudeva, the popular god of Western India in the early centuries B.C., was early identified with Kṛṣṇa, and it may be that the name, falsely interpreted as a patronymic, resulted in the tradition that Kṛṣṇa’s father was called Vasudeva (with short a in the first syllable). Other deities, originally independent, were associated with Kṛṣṇa in one way and another. Chief of these was his elder brother Balarāma,

* Govinda is probably a Prākrit word, absorbed by Sanskrit in its original form. The correct Sanskrit equivalent would thus be Gopendra. On the orthodox assumption that the word is pure Sanskrit its translation would be “Cow-finder”. 
also called Halāyudha ("Armed with a Plough") and Saṅkarśaṇa. Balarāma, bearing a wooden plough on his shoulder, was originally an agricultural deity. Traditionally he was a heavy drinker and had some of the characteristics of a Silenus. Temples to him existed at one time, but his importance waned in the Middle Ages, as that of Kṛṣṇa increased. Less important were the cults of Kṛṣṇa's son Pra- dyumna, of his grandson Aniruddha, and of his friend Arjuna, the Pāṇḍava hero. The chief feminine associate of Kṛṣṇa was Rādhā, the favourite mistress of his youth, who was often worshipped with him in the late Middle Ages. Rukmiṇī, his chief queen, also received some reverence.

(9) Buddha, the last historical incarnation of Viśnu. According to most theologians the god became Buddha in order to delude the wicked, lead them to deny the Vedas, and thus ensure their damnation. Jayadeva's Gita Govinda, however, which contains one of the earliest lists of incarnations, states that Viśnu became Buddha out of compassion for animals,\(^6\) in order to put an end to bloody sacrifice. This probably gives a clue to the true background of the Buddha avatāra. He was included in the list, as other deities were included, in order to assimilate heterodox elements into the Vaiṣṇavite fold: Until quite recently the temple of the Buddha at Gayā was in the hands of Hindus, and the teacher was there worshipped by Hindus as a Hindu god; but in general little attention was paid to the Buddha avatāra.

(10) Kalkin, the incarnation yet to come. At the end of this dark age Viśnu will appear in the form of a man mounted on a white horse, with a flaming sword in his hand. He will judge the wicked, reward the good, and restore the age of gold. This is a late addition to Vaiṣṇavite myth, and does not play a very important part in literature or iconography, though it is said that many simple Hindus take the Kalkin very seriously, and long for his arrival just as old-fashioned Christians look forward to the second coming of Christ. Christian parallels have been found, especially with the horseman of the Book of Revelation,\(^6\) but the main inspiration of the Kalkin may have come from Buddhism, which taught the coming of Maitreya Buddha long before the Vaiṣṇavites devised the Kalkin. Zoroastrian ideas may also have helped in the formation of the myth.

**Śiva**

Almost as popular as the numerous forms of Viśnu was Śiva, who evolved from the fierce Vedic god Rudra (p. 240), with whom merged elements of a non-Āryan fertility deity. Though developed Śaivite sects often made of their chosen divinity a wholly moral and paternal
father in heaven, Śiva’s character, unlike that of Viṣṇu, is ambivalent. He lurks in horrible places, such as battlefields, burning-grounds and crossroads, which, in India as in Europe, were looked on as very inauspicious. He wears a garland of skulls and is surrounded by ghosts, evil spirits and demons. He is death and time (Mahākāla), which destroy all things.

But he is also a great ascetic, and the patron deity of ascetics generally. On the high slopes of the Himalayan Mount Kailāsa Śiva, the great yogī, sits on a tiger skin, deep in meditation, and through his meditation the world is maintained. He is depicted thus as wearing his long matted hair (jatā) in a topknot, in which the crescent moon is fixed, and from which flows the sacred river Gangā. In the middle of his forehead is a third eye, emblem of his superior wisdom and insight. His neck is black, scarred by a deadly poison which was the last of the objects churned from the cosmic ocean, and which he drank to save the other gods from destruction. Snakes, of which he is the lord, encircle his neck and arms. His body is covered with ashes, a favourite ascetic practice. Beside him is his weapon, the trident, while near him are his beautiful wife Pārvatī and his mount, the bull Nandi.

Though in this aspect Śiva is continually wrapped in meditation, he can, in his divine power, divide his personality. He is not only the god of mystical stillness, but also the Lord of the Dance (Naṭarāja) (pl. XXXVIII). This aspect of Śiva is specially popular in the Tamil country, where religious dancing was part of the earliest known tradition. In his heavenly palace on Mount Kailāsa, or in his southern home, the temple of Cidambaram or Tīlai (near the seacoast about fifty miles south of Pondicherry), mystically identified with Kailāsa, Śiva dances. He has invented no less than 108 different dances, some calm and gentle, others fierce, orgiastic and terrible. Of the latter the most famous is the tāṇḍava, in which the angry god, surrounded by his drunken attendants (gaṇas), beats out a wild rhythm which destroys the world at the end of the cosmic cycle.

A further form in which the god is worshipped is known as the “South-facing” (Dakṣiṇāmūrti); in this aspect he is the universal teacher, depicted in an informal pose, with one foot on the ground and the other on the throne on which he sits, and with one hand raised in a gesture of explanation. This form of Śiva perhaps owes something to Buddhist inspiration.

But Śiva was and still is chiefly worshipped in the form of the liṅga (pl. XVⅷⅸ), usually a short cylindrical pillar with rounded top, which is the survival of a cult older than Indian civilization itself. Phallic have been found in the Harappā remains. Early Tamil litera-
ture refers to the setting up of ritual posts, which seem to have been phallic emblems. The cult of the līṅga, at all times followed by some of the non-Āryan peoples, was incorporated into Hinduism around the beginning of the Christian era, though at first it was not very important. As early as the Rg Veda, Rudra, the mountain god, was connected with plants and animals. The horned ithyphallic god of Mohenjo Daro, surrounded by animals, may well be the prototype of Śiva as the patron of reproduction in men, animals and plants. In this form he is known as Paśupati ("Lord of Beasts") and is often represented in South India as a four armed man, with one hand in an attitude of blessing, the second open, as though bestowing a boon, an axe in the third, and a small deer springing from the fingers of the fourth.

Some Śaivite sects declare that Śiva has performed a series of avatāras, but these are pure imitations of those of Viṣṇu and have never played a big part in Śaivite thought. The god has, however, manifested himself from time to time in theophanies, or taken temporary incarnation to destroy demons or test the virtue of warriors or sages. Numerous legends are told of him, some of them quite uncomplimentary. The most famous of these legends is that of his marriage to Pārvatī, the daughter of Himālaya, the personified mountains.

The gods were troubled by the demon Tāraka, and it was prophesied that he could only be destroyed by the child of Śiva and the Daughter of the Mountains. But Śiva was continually wrapped in meditation, and the prospect of his producing offspring seemed to the other gods to be faint indeed. However Pārvatī, the beautiful daughter of Himālaya, was sent at their behest to wait upon Śiva, but though she made many attempts to win the god’s attention he took no notice of her, and in the course of her efforts Kāma, the love-god, who had done his best to help her to win him, was burnt to ashes by the flames from Śiva’s third eye. At last Pārvatī decided to follow the god in his asceticism. Laying aside her ornaments she became a hermitess on a nearby peak, and in this guise Śiva noticed her and fell in love with her. They were married at a great ceremony at which all the gods took part, and soon Pārvatī gave birth to the war-god Skanda, who, when he grew to manhood, destroyed the demon Tāraka.

In South India a rather similar story is told of the marriage of Śiva and Mīnākṣī, daughter of a Pāṇḍyan king of Madurai, and the event is commemorated by one of the most famous and splendid of South Indian temples.

The Relations of Viṣṇu and Śiva

From the beginning of the Christian era, if not before, most educated Hindus have been either Vaishnavites or Śaivites—that is to
say they have looked on either Viṣṇu or Śiva as the high god, or indeed as the only God, the others being merely secondary expressions of the divine, holding rather the same positions as the saints and angels in the mind of the Roman Catholic. Thus the Vaiṣṇavite does not deny the existence of Śiva, but believes that he is merely one god among many, the creation or emanation of Viṣṇu or of his demiurge Brahmā. In the same way the Śaivite looks on Viṣṇu as an emanation of Śiva. Occasionally this difference of viewpoint has led to friction and some degree of persecution, but generally the two great divisions of Hinduism have rubbed along happily together, in the conviction that on ultimate analysis both are equally right. Hinduism is essentially tolerant, and would rather assimilate than rigidly exclude. So the wiser Vaiṣṇavites and Śaivites recognized very early that the gods whom they worshipped were different aspects of the same divine being. The Divine is a diamond of innumerable facets; two very large and bright facets are Viṣṇu and Śiva, while the others represent all the gods that were ever worshipped. Some facets seem larger, brighter, and better polished than others, but in fact the devotee, whatever his sect, worships the whole diamond, which is in reality perfect. The more devout Hindus, even when illiterate and ignorant, have always been fundamentally monotheist. Thus in the Bhagavad Gītā Kṛṣṇa says:

"If any worshipper do reverence with faith
to any god whatever,
I make his faith firm,
and in that faith he reverences his god,
and gains his desires,
for it is I who bestow them."

With this background of tolerance it is not surprising that attempts were made to harmonize Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. As early as Gupta times there was devised a holy trinity of Hinduism, the Trimūrti or Triple Form of Brahmā the creator, Viṣṇu the preserver, and Śiva the destroyer. The doctrine of the Trimūrti was popular in some circles, and is proclaimed in a fine hymn of Kālidāsa which inspired a once well-known poem of Emerson:

"Praise to you, O Trinity,
one before creation,
afterwards divided
in your three qualities! . . .

"You, the one cause
of death and life and births,
in your three forms
proclaim your own glory . . ."
"In the cycle of your day and night
all things live and all things die.
When you wake we live,
when you sleep we perish. . . .

"Hard and soft, large and small,
heavy and light, you are all things.
You are both substance and form,
ineffable in power. . . .

"You are the knower and the known,
you are the eater and the food,
you are the priest and the oblation,
you are the worshipper and the prayer."88

Early western students of Hinduism were impressed by the parallel between the Hindu trinity and that of Christianity. In fact the parallel is not very close, and the Hindu trinity, unlike the Holy Trinity of Christianity, never really "caught on". All Hindu trinitarianism tended to favour one god of the three; thus, from the context it is clear that Kālidāsa's hymn to the Trimūrti is really addressed to Brahmā, here looked on as the high god. The Trimūrti was in fact an artificial growth, and had little real influence.

Another significant syncretism was the god Harihara (Hari being a title of Viṣṇu and Hara of Śiva), worshipped in the form of an icon which combined characteristics of both gods. The cult of Harihara developed in the middle ages, and had some success in the Deccan, where Harihara temples were patronized by Vijayanagara kings, and where the god is still worshipped.

The Mother Goddess

Mother Goddesses were worshipped at all times in India, but between the days of the Harappā Culture and the Gupta period the cults of goddesses attracted little attention from the learned and influential, and only emerged from obscurity to a position of real importance in the Middle Ages, when feminine divinities, theoretically connected with the gods as their spouses, were once more worshipped by the upper classes.

The goddess was the sakti, the strength or potency of her male counterpart. It was thought that the god was inactive and transcendent, while his female element was active and immanent, and by the Gupta period the wives of the gods, whose existence had always been recognized but who had been shadowy figures in earlier theology, began to be worshipped in special temples. In the early 5th
century an inscription of Western India tells of a certain Mayūrākṣaka,

"minister of the king, who established, to gain merit,
this most awful temple,
a temple filled with demonesses, . . .
sacred to the Mothers, who shout
most loudly in the thick darkness,
where the lotuses are shaken
by the fierce winds
aroused by magic spells."\(^{64}\)

From this time onwards the Mother Goddess increased in importance, until the wave of devotional Vaiṣṇavism swept Northern India early in the Muslim period, and stopped the progress of her cult, which is still strong in Bengal and Assam, and is known in other parts of India.

The chief form of the Mother Goddess was that of the wife of Śiva, called in her benevolent aspect Pārvatī ("Daughter of the Mountain"), Mahādevī ("the Great Goddess"), Satī ("the Virtuous"), Gaurī ("the Fair One"), Annapūrṇā ("Bestower of Much Food"), or simply "the Mother" (Mātā, Tamil Ammāi). In her grim aspect she was known as Durgā ("Inaccessible"), Kālī ("the Black One"), and Caṇḍi ("the Fierce"). The terrible Tamil war-goddess Kōrjavai, who danced among the slain on the battlefield and ate their flesh, though independent in origin, was early identified with her.

In her fierce aspect she is often depicted as a horrible hag (pl. XXXVII\(b\)), frequently with many arms bearing different weapons, with fierce carnivorous tusks, a red tongue lolling from her mouth, and a garland of skulls. Her mount is a lion, and she is sometimes shown as a sternly beautiful woman, slaying a buffalo-headed demon in the manner of St. George and the dragon. The more gentle aspect of the goddess is that of a beautiful young woman, often portrayed with her lord Śiva. An interesting iconographical development is that of the Ardhanārisvara, a figure half Śiva and half Pārvatī, representing the union of the god with his sakti. As Śiva is worshipped in the linga or phallic emblem, so Durgā is worshipped in the female emblem, or yoni. According to legend Pārvatī, in the incarnation before that in which she became the bride of Śiva, had been born as Satī, the daughter of the sage Dakṣa, and had then also become the wife of the great god. When her father quarrelled with her divine lord she flung herself into the flames of his sacrificial fire, and the ashes of her yoni fell in various spots in India, which became the pīṭhas, or sacred shrines of her cult.
Lesser Gods

As well as Viṣṇu, Śiva and Durgā, many other gods were worshipped. Unlike the gods of the Veda, the new gods of Hinduism were no longer closely tied to natural phenomena, but were thought of more anthropomorphically.

Brahmā, the Prajāpati of later Vedic times, had a history of slow decline. In the early Buddhist scriptures he and Indra were the greatest of the gods, and in the Mahābhārata he was still very important; but though depicted in medieval sculpture, sometimes with four faces, he was little worshipped after Gupta times. A single temple of Brahmā, by the sacred lake Puṣkara near the modern Ajmer, is the only one known.

The numerous solar deities of the Vedas were merged in Hinduism into a single god, usually known as Sūrya ("the Sun") (pl. XXVIa) In Gupta and medieval times there existed numerous temples of the sun, especially in Western India, which was open to Zoroastrian influence, and some of his worshippers seem to have looked on him as the greatest god of all.

"He who is worshipped by the host of gods that they may live,
and by the blessed for their welfare,
by ascetics, who suppress their senses, intent on meditation, for their salvation,
—may that shining one, cause of the world's rise and decline, protect you.

"The divine seers, wise in true knowledge, for all their efforts have
not known him wholly,
whose rays reach out to nourish the three worlds,
whom gods and demigods and men hymn together as he rises,
who fulfils the desires of his worshippers—
homage to the Sun!"65

In comparison with the sun, the Moon (Candra or Soma), masculine in gender, had but slight religious importance, being little more than an emblem of Śiva. He had no independent cult, but was worshipped as one of the nine planets (p. 498). The cult of the planets was popularized by the growth of astrology in medieval times, and representations of them are fairly numerous.

Indra, the Vedic war-god, lost much of his prestige but gained new attributes. Mounted on his elephant Airāvata, he was guardian of the eastern quarter of the universe, and ruler of one of the lower heavens, Amarāvatī. Under an alternative name, Śakra, perhaps originally a different god, he was among the chief divinities of early Buddhism,
second only to Brahmā. By the Middle Ages he had few temples or worshippers.

Varuṇa, the all-seeing god of the Vedas (p. 238ff), descended from his heavenly palace to become a god of the waters, but he remained the guardian of the western quarter of the universe. The cult of Varuṇa disappeared early, though Tamil fishermen long worshipped a marine deity called Varuṇan, in the emblem of a “shark’s horn”. This god, however, is clearly an indigenous Tamil divinity who had acquired an Aryan name.

Yama, guardian of the southern quarter, the death-god of the Vedas, was still remembered, though rarely if ever specially worshipped. His role had somewhat altered, for he was no longer the cheerful lord of paradise, but the stern judge of the dead, ruling only over the purgatories where the wicked suffered until their rebirth. The idea of a divine judge, theoretically unnecessary according to the doctrine of karma, may have been imported from the West, where it was known in many cults. Sometimes Yama, aided by his clerk Citragupta, is described as weighing the deeds of the souls of the dead in a balance, rather like the Egyptian Thoth.

The northern quarter was ruled by the god Kubera, lord of precious metals, minerals, jewels, and wealth generally. This god, under the alternative name Vaiśravana, first appears briefly and faintly in later Vedic literature, and is well known in Buddhism and Jainism. He dwells in the beautiful jewelled city of Alakā, near Mount Kailāsa, and commands hosts of gnomes (gukyaka) and fairies (yakṣa). He is usually depicted as a dwarfish figure with a large paunch. He was the object of a cult, though not of an important one.

These four gods, Yama, Indra, Varuṇa and Kubera, were known as Lokapālas, or Guardians of the Universe. In late texts four further guardians of the intermediate quarters were added—Soma in the North-East, Vāyu (the wind-god) in the North-West, Agni in the South-East, and Sūrya in the South-West. Of these Agni, the fire-god, was still important at the time of the Epics, but he too lost much of his hold on the imagination in later times, while Vāyu, the wind-god, was a vague and tenuous deity, except in the late school of Madhva (p. 336).

The war-god Skanda, also called Kumāra (“The Prince”), Kārtikeya and, in the South, Subrahmanya, was probably originally a non-Aryan divinity. He was the son of Śiva and Pārvati and his sole function, according to orthodox tradition, was to slay the demon Tāraka, which scarcely accounts for his great popularity. From the beginning of the Christian era the cult of Skanda was widespread in North India, though it declined somewhat in medieval times. In the
South it was even more important, for the name and attributes of the
god were imposed on the chief deity of the ancient Tamils, Murugan,
by which name Skanda is still sometimes known in the Tamil country.
Murugan in his original form was a mountain god, worshipped in bacchanalian dances, at which he was impersonated by a medicine-man
holding a spear (velaṅ), whom the dancers identified with the god.
He aroused passion and erotic frenzy in girls and women, and the
dances of Murugan were evidently orgiastic. The Tamil Murugan
was armed with a spear, and joined his fierce mother Korravai in her
cannibal feasts on the battlefield; hence his identification with the
Āryan Skanda is not surprising, though Murugan’s original character
as a fertility god is evident even today. Skanda is usually depicted as
a handsome young man, often with six faces, mounted on a peacock.

Ganaśa or Ganapati, “Chief of the Ganaśas” (a class of demigod
attendant on Śiva), another son of Śiva and Pārvatī, is one
of the best known Indian divinities in the West. He has an
elephant’s head with one broken tusk and a fat paunch, and he rides on a rat.
Among the latest of the gods of the Hindu pantheon, he is not attested
before the 5th century A.D., and he was of little importance before the
Middle Ages. Evidently he is the survival of a primitive non-Āryan
elephant god, but in Hinduism he has become mild and cultured. He
is the “Lord of Obstacles” (Vighneshvara), and is worshipped at the
beginning of all undertakings to remove snags and hindrances. He
is particularly interested in literary and educational activities, and is
the patron of grammarians; manuscripts and printed books often begin
with the auspicious formula Śri-Ganeshaya namaḥ, “Reverence to
Lord Gañeśa”. The cheerful and benevolent elephant-god was, and
still is, revered by nearly every Hindu, whether Vaishnavite or Saivite.
A small medieval sect looked on him as their chief god, but his status
has generally been comparatively humble, though important.

Hanumant, the monkey god, the son of Vāyu and the friend and
servant of Rāma, was no doubt a popular deity long before his in-
corporation in the pantheon. He is still an important village god,
worshipped in many shrines in the form of a monkey with more or less
human body. He is a beneficent guardian spirit, and in his honour
monkeys are generally looked on as sacred.

Kāma (“Desire”), known by many other names and epithets, was
the Indian love-god. Like his European counterpart he is depicted
as a handsome youth, armed with a bow and arrow, but the Indian
Eros has a bow of sugar-cane strung with a row of bees, and his
arrows are flowers. He is attended by a troop of nymphs (apsarases),
one of whom carries his standard, which bears a sea-monster. Kāma
is referred to in the “Hymn of Creation” (p. 250f) and in certain
other Vedic passages as being the firstborn of the primeval chaos, but this kāma is certainly not the Hindu love-god, but vaguely personified cosmic desire. On the strength of these early references it was generally believed by the theologians of Hinduism that Kāma had no parents, but emerged spontaneously at the beginning of time to act as a catalyst in the universal process. His flowery arrows affect gods and men alike, and have only once been known to fail in their purpose—when Kāma attempted to rouse the passion of the great god Śiva, and was burnt to ashes for his pains (p. 311), to be restored to life through the entreaties of his favourite wife, the goddess Rati ("Pleasure"). He is frequently referred to in literature and was evidently a popular deity among young people of both sexes, honoured at a great annual festival (p. 209). The Buddhist Māra ("the Smiter") was sometimes identified with Kāma, but had sinister attributes, and was a sort of Satan, the personification of the world, the flesh and the devil. His temptation of the Buddha is one of the most famous episodes of Buddhist legend.

All the gods have complementary goddesses, their wives, but most of these are pale reflexions of their lords, bearing the same names with feminine terminations (e.g. Indrāṇī, Brahmāṇī, etc.). They were often worshipped in a group, usually of seven, to which the gods Kārtikeya and Gaṇeśa were sometimes added, and portrayals of these goddesses (Mātrikā, Ambikā, "the Little Mothers") are fairly common in medieval sculpture. As well as Durgā, who must rank as one of the three chief deities of Hinduism, other goddesses were important, however.

Lakṣmi ("Fortune"), the wife of Viṣṇu, also often called Śrī, was the goddess of good luck and temporal blessing. In some legends she is said to be coexistent with Viṣṇu, but according to others she appeared in her full glory, like Aphrodite, at the churning of the primeval ocean (p. 304f). She is usually portrayed as a woman of mature beauty, seated on a lotus and often with a lotus in her hand, attended by two elephants, who sprinkle water on her from their trunks. Though never an object of a special cult, her icons are numerous, and she was much worshipped as a subsidiary deity. She was believed to incarnate herself as the wife of the incarnation of Viṣṇu, and thus she was worshipped as Śītā, the spouse of Rāma, as Rukminī, the chief queen of Krṣṇa, or as Rādhā, the favourite of his youth.

Sarasvatī (pl. XXXIIIb), the wife of Brahmā, had an autonomous role as the patron of art, music and letters. In the Rg Veda she was a sacred river, but in later Vedic literature she was identified with a hypostatic goddess of temporary importance, Vāc ("Speech"). She was depicted as a beautiful fair young woman, often with a viṣṇā, or Indian
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Sarasvati, and a book in her hand, and attended by a swan. Traditionally she was the inventor of the Sanskrit language and the Devanāgarī script. Sarasvati has always been worshipped by students, writers and musicians, and her cult is still maintained.

Demigods and Spirits

As well as these greater gods there was an infinite number of lesser ones. Every village had its local god or goddess (grāmadevata), often a rude image or fetish set up under a sacred tree. Some of these village fertility deities, through a process of assimilation, attained widespread popularity. Local goddesses were often vaguely identified with Durgā, but were rarely thoroughly incorporated into the mythological scheme, and they maintained an autonomous existence on the fringes of the orthodox pantheon. Chief of such goddesses was Śītālā ("the Cool"), called in the Tamil country Māriyammai ("Mother Death"), the goddess of smallpox, worshipped for prevention and cure, especially by mothers on behalf of their children. Similarly the snake-goddess Manasā protected from snakebite. Her worship is not certainly attested in our period, but in medieval Bengal she attained a respectable status in the orthodox pantheon, and she was almost certainly worshipped by the masses in the earlier period. A male deity of this type, widely popular in the Tamil countryside from ancient days, was Aiyanar, a beneficent guardian deity much revered by peasants, and sometimes thought of as a son of Śiva. The cities of ancient India, like those of the classical world, had their guardian deities, who might be important members of the pantheon but were often of only local significance. Besides these local gods the world was full of demigods and spirits, good and evil.

The snake-spirits (Nāga) (pl. XXVIIIb), half-human but with serpents' tails, were very ancient objects of worship. They dwelt in the beautiful underground city of Bhogavatī, and guarded great treasures, some of which they occasionally bestowed on mortals whom they favoured. They could take wholly human form, and more than one dynasty of ancient India claimed descent from the union of a human hero and a nāgini. Probably the prototypes of the nāgas were the dark primitive tribes, met by the Āryans in their expansion over India, for a primitive people called Nāgas exists in Assam to this day; the cult of serpents is so widespread in India that the nāgas must certainly owe much to aboriginal snake cults followed by many tribes all over India.

The Takṣas, especially associated with the god Kubera, were a sort

*Harṣa, strictly a type of goose; but, owing to the connotation of the word "goose" in English, Harṣa is usually translated "swan" in this and other works on ancient India.
of gnome or fairy, reverenced by country people. Before the Christian era their cult was widespread, but they lost their significance as the great gods of Hinduism became more widely worshipped. They were generally looked on as friendly to men, but their womenfolk might sometimes be malevolent, and ate little children.

The *Gandharvas* survived from Vedic times as servants of Indra and heavenly musicians. In the time of the Buddha they seem to have been specially connected with the procreation of children, and the presence of a Gandharva was thought necessary for conception. Associated with them, and sometimes referred to as a subdivision of their order, were the *Kinnaras*, also heavenly musicians, who had human heads and horses' bodies, and thus resembled the classical centaurs, with whom they may be connected.

The Gandharvas were all male: Their female counterparts were the *Apsarases*, in Vedic times connected with water, but later translated to heaven. They were beautiful and libidinous, and specially delighted in tempting ascetics in their meditations. Thus Menakā the apsaras seduced the great sage Viśvāmitra, and conceived Śakuntalā, the heroine of Kālidāsa's famous drama (*p. 437ff*). Another apsaras famous in story was Urvasī, the heroine of another drama of Kālidāsa, the story of whose love for the mortal king Purūravas (*p. 407ff*) is as old as the *Rg Veda*. Sometimes the apsarases appear in the role of valkyries, raising slain heroes from the battlefield and bearing them to heaven to be their lovers.

A further group of demigods was that of the *Vidyādharas* or heavenly magicians, mysterious beings who lived in magic cities in the high Himālayas. Like the Vedic munis (*p. 245*) they could fly through the air and transform themselves at will, and they were generally favourable to men.

The *Ṛṣis* ("sages" or more literally "seers"), were the composers of the Vedic hymns, and other legendary wise men of olden times who had been translated to heaven, where they enjoyed a status comparable to that of the gods. Chief of these were the "Seven Ṛṣis", identified with the stars of the Great Bear—Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pūlastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasiṣṭha. Other important ṛṣis were Kaśyapa and Dakṣa, said in some stories to have been the progenitors of gods and men; Nārada, who invented the vīnā and was a sort of patron saint of music; Viśvāmitra, a kṣatriya who by his piety and asceticism raised himself to brāhmaṇ status, and who is heard of in many legends; Bṛhaspati, the preceptor of gods and demons, who began his career in Vedic times as a god, but whose status fell to that of a ṛṣi, also identified with the planet Jupiter, and who is said to have founded the materialist system of philosophy and
the science of statecraft; and Agastya, who taught the Southerners religion and culture. Less exalted than the rśis were the Siddhas, a large class of saints who had won a place in heaven by their piety.

Chief among evil spirits were the Asuras, or demons. The word asura was in Vedic times applied to certain gods (p. 238), but in Hinduism it was used for a group of supernatural beings continually at war with the gods, whose power they sometimes shook, but never conquered. More immediately dangerous to men were the various classes of goblin, such as the Rākṣasas, most famous of whom was Rāvana the ten-headed demon king of Lanka (Ceylon), whom Rāma defeated and killed. Few rākṣasas had the same power as Rāvana, but all were frightful and dangerous, taking terrible forms and lurking in dark places at night, to kill and eat men and otherwise distress them. Somewhat less terrible were the Piśacas, who, like the nāgas, may have had a material basis in a wild tribe, since a very base dialect of Prākrit was attributed to them. Both these classes of demon haunted battlefields, charnel grounds, and places of violent death, as did a special class of demon, the Veṭāla or vampire, which took up its abode in corpses. Finally the night was haunted by ghosts (preta, bhūta), the naked spirits of those who had died violent deaths and for whom śrāddha had not been performed. These were very dangerous to men, particularly to their own surviving relatives.

Hindu worship was not confined to the propitiation of gods and demigods, for the whole of nature was in some sense divine. Great and holy men were reverenced, both during their lives and for long after their deaths, for they contained a portion of godhead. Thus the sixty-three Nāyaṇars of Tamil Śaivism and the twelve Āḻvārs of Tamil Vaiśnavism still enjoy the status of demigods, as do other great religious teachers. Not only men, but animals and plants were and still are holy, notably the cow. According to legend the cow Surabhi, the mother of all cows, was one of the treasures churned from the cosmic ocean. The "five products of the cow" (pañcagavya)—milk, curd, butter, urine and dung—were all of great purifying potency, especially when combined in a single mixture. Despite her sanctity, there was no cow-goddess, and Surabhi and the various "wishing-cows" of legend, by milking which all desires were fulfilled, had no temples in their honour. The living beast was revered, not as representative of any deity, but in her own right. The bull, on the other hand, received honour as the mount of Śiva; the image of Nandi is found in most Śaivite temples and honoured with offerings.

After the cow the snake was perhaps the most revered animal of ancient India. Legendary serpents, such as Śeṣa (p. 302) and Vāsuki (p. 304), gave the snake prestige, but the cult no doubt sprang
from very primitive levels, since the mysterious snake is revered all
over the world by uncivilized peoples as an emblem of both death and
fertility. An offering to snakes, made at the beginning of the rainy
season, was part of the regular domestic ritual of Hinduism. Ant-
hills were respected as the home of snakes. Other animals, though
associated with various divinities, played little part in Hindu cults.
The monkey, much revered by peasants and simple folk in many parts
of India, is not referred to as specially sacred in early Hindu texts.

Tree cults, common the world over among ancient peoples, were
widespread in India, where each village had its sacred tree or grove.
Specially sacred were the pippala or atvattha (pāpal, Ficus religiosa),
the sanctity of which spread to Buddhism, and the vaśa or nyagrodha,
the banyan (Ficus indica), the secondary roots of which, reaching
down from its branches, formed the basis of much religious sym-
bolism. Many other trees were more or less holy, notably the
ekata (p. 204), to which women prayed for children. There were also
sacred plants, such as the tulasi, a type of basil, which was connected
with Viṣṇu, and which is still grown in the courtyards of many Hindu
homes and tended with great care. Two types of grass, kusa and
derbha, were also sacred from Vedic times onwards. The Vedic
soma plant, however, was forgotten.

Every hill or mountain had some degree of sanctity, especially the
Himālayas, which were the foothills of Mount Meru, the centre of the
world. Around Meru, on mountains which reached to the heavens,
dwelt the gods. Vaikunṭha, the home of Viṣṇu, was never satisfac-
torially identified, but Kailāśa, the mountain of Śiva, was recognized
as a certain peak in the Central Himālayas which has long been a
place of pilgrimage. Numerous other mountains and hills in many
parts of India were famous for their sanctity. Even rocks often had a
religious significance, especially if upright and vaguely resembling
the liṅga of Śiva. The ammonite (ṭālagrāma), a fossilized shellfish,
was recognized as one of the symbols of Viṣṇu.

Rivers were also sacred, especially, of course, the Gangā, which
sprang from the foot of the Viṣṇu, flowed over the sky in the form of
the milky way (Mandākhini), and then fell to earth from the matted
locks of Śiva. Gaṅgā was often personified as a goddess in her own
right, like her great tributary Yamunā. Other rivers held specially
sacred were the Sarasvatī, which was believed to flow under-
ground and join the Gangā at its confluence with the Yamunā at
Prayāga (Allahābād), the Narmadā, the Godāvari, the Kṛṣṇā
(modern Kistmā) and the Kāvirī. Certain lakes, notably Mānasa in
the high Himālayas near Mount Kailāśa, and Puṣkara, near Ajmer,
were also sacred, and even cities were divine (p. 202, n).
Cosmogony

Hindu cosmology in its final form was perhaps later than the cosmologies of the Buddhists and Jainas. According to this system the cosmos passes through cycles within cycles for all eternity. The basic cycle is the *kalpa*, a "day of Brahmā", or 4,320 million earthly years. His night is of equal length. 360 such days and nights constitute a "year of Brahmā" and his life lasts for 100 such years.* The largest cycle is therefore 311,040,000 million years long, after which the whole universe returns to the ineffable world-spirit, until another creator god is evolved.†

In each cosmic day the god creates the universe and again absorbs it. During the cosmic night he sleeps, and the whole universe is gathered up into his body, where it remains as a potentiality. Within each *kalpa* are fourteen *manvantaras*, or secondary cycles, each lasting 306,720,000 years, with long intervals between them. In these periods the world is recreated, and a new Manu appears, as the progenitor of the human race. We are now in the seventh manvantara of the *kalpa*, of which the *Manu* is known as *Manu Vaivasvata*.

Each manvantara contains seventy-one *Mahāyugas*, or æons, of which a thousand form the *kalpa*. Each mahāyuga is in turn divided into four *yugas* or ages, called *Kṛta, Tretā, Dwāpara* and *Kali* (p. 209). Their lengths are respectively 4,800, 3,600, 2,400, and 1,200 "years of the gods", each of which equals 360 human years. Each *yuga* represents a progressive decline in piety, morality, strength, stature, longevity and happiness. We are at present in the Kali-yuga, which began, according to tradition, in 3102 B.C., believed to be the year of the Mahābhārata War.

The end of the Kali-yuga, according to many epic passages, is marked by confusion of classes, the overthrow of established standards, the cessation of all religious rites, and the rule of harsh and alien kings. Soon after this the world is destroyed by flood and fire. This view is propounded strongly in texts which date from about the beginning of the Christian era, when alien kings did in fact rule much of India, and when established practices were shaken by heresies such as Buddhism and Jainism. An earlier tradition would place the Mahābhārata War c. 900 B.C. (p. 40), according to which the 1,200 years of the Kali-yuga, if read as human years and not as "years of the gods", would at this time be nearing their end. Evidently some pious Hindus thought that the dissolution of the cosmos was imminent. Perhaps it

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* Brahmā is said to be now in his fifty-first year.
† Though the terms "day" and "year of Brahmā" are commonly used, the god whose life contains the universe is, as we have seen, thought of by Vaishnavites as Viṣṇu and by Śaivites as Śiva, and Brahmā is a mere demijuge, the god in his creative aspect.
is to the departure of this fear in later times that we must attribute the devising of the "years of the gods", which made the dissolution of the world comfortably distant. Most medieval texts state that the cosmic dissolution occurs only after the last cycle of the kalpa, and that the transition from one Æon to the next takes place rapidly and comparatively calmly; the expectation of the Kalkin (p. 309), who will not destroy but will regenerate the world, could not otherwise be harmonized with the scheme of the yugas. In this, its final form, the Hindu system of world-cycles is clearly an imperfect synthesis of more than one independent doctrine; the manvantaras, especially, do not fit tidily into the scheme, and must surely be derived from a source different from that of the mahâyugas.

The system of the four yugas immediately brings to mind the four ages of ancient Greece—and indeed the Indian yugas are sometimes named after metals—gold, silver, copper and iron. A similar doctrine of four ages existed in ancient Persia, and the three schemes may have been borrowed from a common source.

The act of creation was thought of in more than one manner. The school called Sânkhya (p. 326f) and some lesser schools postulated the existence of primeval matter (prakṛti), of which the creator made use to form the world, but the Vedânta school, certainly the most influential in the Middle Ages, maintained that everything in the universe, souls and matter alike, was produced from God's own essence. The motive of creation was explained by the Vedânta school as the "sport" (lilā) of the World Soul, and the creation of the cosmos was thought of on the analogy of the production of a work of art from the mind of an artist.

The Soul, Karma and Samsâra

The doctrine of karma, elaborated in Upaniṣadic times and adopted by Buddhism and Jainism, was also part and parcel of Hinduism. According to the Hindu definition karma (literally "work," or "deed") was the unseen ripening of past actions, and though not in Hinduism a substantial category, as in Jainism, it was thought of as accumulating and dispersing. Through karma the body of the next life, divine, human, animal or hellish, was acquired; and on previous karma depended a man's character, fortune and social class, and his happiness and sorrow. Every good act sooner or later brought its result in happiness, and every evil act in sorrow.

The belief in karma does not necessarily involve fatalism. A fatalist strain often appeared in Hindu thought, but most teachers disapproved of it. Our present condition is inevitable, but only
because of the karma accruing from our past deeds. We cannot escape the law of karma any more than we can escape the law of gravity or the passage of time, but by judgement and forethought we can utilize the law of karma to our own advantage.

The process of transmigration was interpreted somewhat variously, but all schools agreed that the soul does not transmigrate in a state of nudity, but with a sheath or series of sheaths of subtle matter; the condition of the sheaths depends on the balance of previous good and evil karma, and the new birth is determined by the nature of the sheaths which surround the soul. The subtle body of transmigration is deprived of sense-organs, including mind, the sixth sense, and therefore the soul cannot normally remember previous births or the passage from one body to another. Very advanced souls, however, can sometimes recapture memories of previous existences, and some sects evolved a special technique for doing so. Souls are liable to transmigration throughout the life of the god Brahmā, though at the end of each cosmic day or kalpa they return to his body as potentialities only. On the death of Brahmā, at the final dissolution of the universe at the end of a hundred Brahmā-years, they are absorbed into the World Spirit and their karma is annihilated.

Saṃsāra, the continual passage from body to body, often compared to an ever-rolling wheel, is infinitely tedious, and Hinduism inherited the desire for release from transmigration which was almost universal in Indian thought. Conceptions of the state of release or salvation (mukti) and the means of obtaining it differed widely.

The Six Systems of Salvation

Early in the Christian era, if not before, there was a theoretical classification of the various schools of thought looked on as orthodox, and the Śaḍdārṣaṇa or "Six Doctrines" became a regular feature of Hinduism. The Six Schools were actually of differing origin and purpose, but all were brought into the scheme by being treated as equally valid ways of salvation. They were divided into three groups of two, which were thought to be related and complementary. These were: Nyāya and Vaiṣeṣika; Śāṅkhyā and Yoga; and Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta.

Nyāya ("Analysis") was rather a school of logic and epistemology than of theology. It looked back to the teacher Akṣapāda Gautama, the sūtras or aphorisms attributed to whom are probably no earlier than the Christian era. Logic was forced into the scheme as a means of salvation by the contention that clear thinking and logical argument were essential means to the highest bliss, and thus a religious basis was given to what was essentially a system of reasoning (p. 505f).


**Vaiśeṣika ("the School of Individual Characteristics")** was complementary to Nyāya, though perhaps older, and in medieval times the two merged into what was virtually a single school. While Nyāya specialized in logic, Vaiśeṣika was interested rather in physics than theology. The earliest text of the school is the sūtras of the legendary founder, Ulūka Kaṇāda, which had numerous exponents and commentators, the greatest of whom was Praśastapāda of the 5th century. The basic tenet of Vaiśeṣika, held in common with Jainism and some schools of Buddhism, was that nature is atomic. The atoms are distinct from the soul, of which they are the instrument. Each element has individual characteristics (vīteṣas), which distinguish it from the four non-atomic substances (dravyas) which the school recognizes—time, space, soul and mind. The atoms are eternal, but in the great dissolution at the end of the life of Brahmā they are separated one from another, and all things are destroyed. The new Brahmā utilizes the old atoms to create the world afresh. Vaiśeṣika thus postulated a dualism of matter and soul, and declared that salvation depends on fully recognizing the atomic nature of the universe, and its difference from the soul.*

**Sāṅkhya ("the Count")** is perhaps the oldest of the six systems, being mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gitā* and occurring in a primitive form in the Upaniṣads. Its legendary founder was the ancient sage Kapila, but the earliest surviving text of the system is the *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* of Iśvarakṛṣṇa, perhaps of the 4th century A.D. Sāṅkhya resembles Jainism in its rigid dualism and fundamental atheism. It teaches the existence of twenty-five basic principles (tatva), of which the first is *prakṛti*—a term usually loosely translated "matter". Creation, or rather evolution, is not due to the operation of a divinity but to the inherent nature of prakṛti. From prakṛti develops (2) Intelligence (*buddhi*, also called *mahat* "the Great One"), and hence is produced (3) Self-consciousness (*ahaṅkāra*). Prakṛti has in fact evolved into an active divinity. Through self-consciousness emerge the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*), invisible matter in its most ethereal form; the five are (2) "ether" (*ākāśa*), (5) air, (6) light, (7) water and (8) earth. From the subtle elements the material elements (*mahābhūta*) emerge (9–13). Working on this material, Self-consciousness then produces the five organs of sense (*jnānendriya*): (14) hearing, (15) touch, (16) sight, (17) taste and (18) smell, and the five of action (*karmendriya*): (19) speech, (20) grasping, (21) walking, (22) evacuation and (23) procreation. Each of

* For further details on Vaiśeṣika atomism see p. 499.
these organs corresponds to an element, in respective order. Finally Self-consciousness produces the twenty-fourth of the basic components of the world, mind (manas), looked on as a sixth sense, which acts as intermediary between all the ten organs and the outside world. This remarkable and fantastic doctrine of cosmic evolution, interpreted in simple terms, implies that bodies, and indeed the whole cosmos, are products of the ego (ahankara), conceived as basically material.

But there is another tattva, the twenty-fifth. This is Purusa, literally “the Person”, the soul. As in Jainism, there is an infinite number of souls in the universe, all equal, eternally inactive spectators of the evolution of prakrti. Purusa is not dependent on prakrti nor prakrti on purusa—a universe is conceivable completely devoid of soul and yet evolving in the same way as the universe we know, for intelligence, personality and mind are not parts of the soul. Yet souls in some way become involved in matter, and their salvation lies in realizing their difference from it.

A very important feature of Sankhya metaphysics is the doctrine of the three constituent qualities (guna), causing virtue (sattva), passion (rajas) and dullness (tamas). In its undeveloped state cosmic matter contains these three in equilibrium, but as the world evolves one or other of the three preponderates in different objects or beings, and the proportions account for the values of the universe. Sattva guna, the quality of virtue, is present in all things tending to truth, wisdom, beauty and goodness; the quality of passion inheres in all that is fierce, violent, energetic, forceful or active; while dullness is found in what is dark, stupid, gloomy, wretched or unhappy. This threefold classification affected many aspects of Indian life and thought and its influence reached far beyond the Sankhya school which made it its own.

The dualism of soul and matter and the fundamental atheism of Sankhya were somewhat modified in the Middle Ages as a concession to the prevalent monism and theism. Purusa literally means “person” or “man”, and prakrti is of feminine gender. It is not surprising that the latter was personified as the wife of the former, especially by the tantric sects. The inactive purusa of the earlier system became a generative force, and the cold and rather pedantic Sankhya, in a much modified form, became the common property of popular Indian religion of later times.

Yoga, the name of the fourth system, is a word well known in the West, and is connected etymologically with the English word “yoke”. It may be freely translated “spiritual discipline” or “application”. The term is loosely used to imply all the religious exercises and acts.
of self-mortification of Indian religion, the earnest follower of such
practices being a yogi. In this broad sense yoga has been part of
the teaching of every Indian sect, but it was also the name of a
distinct school, which emphasized psychic training as the chief
means of salvation. The basic text of this school is the Yoga
Sūtras of Patañjali; this teacher was traditionally identified with a
famous grammarian believed to have lived in the 2nd century B.C.,
but the sūtras in their present form are probably several centuries
later.

The metaphysical ideas of the Yoga school were originally closely
akin to those of Sāṅkhya, but they differed in that they brought a deity
into the picture. The God (Iśvara) of Yoga was not a creator, but a
specially exalted soul which had existed for all eternity without ever
being enmeshed in matter. Thus the god of Yoga resembled the
Buddha of the Lesser Vehicle, or the glorified Tīrthaṅkara of Jain-
ism, never coming in contact with his worshippers but invaluable as
an example. He was specially symbolized in the sacred syllable ŌM,
which in the Yoga school was much revered, as giving insight into
the sublime purity of the soul and thus aiding meditation. A Yoga
theism soon developed, however, and the God of later Yoga texts
differs little from that of other schools.

The course of training of the yogi was divided into eight stages,
reminding us of the eightfold path of Buddhism, but far less practical:

1. Self-control (yama), the practice of the five moral rules: non-violence,
   truthfulness, not stealing, chastity, and the avoidance of greed.
2. Observance (niyama), the regular and complete observance of five
   further moral rules, some of them rather overlapping with those in the
category of self-control—purity, contentment, austerity, study of the Vedas,
and devotion to God.
3. Posture (āsana), sitting in certain postures, difficult without prac-
tice, which are thought to be essential to meditation. The most famous of
these is padmāsana, the “Lotus Posture”, in which the feet are placed on the
opposite thighs, and in which gods and sages are commonly depicted.
4. Control of the Breath (prānāyāma), whereby the breath is held and
   controlled and the respiration forced into unusual rhythms, which are be-
   lieved to be of great physical and spiritual value.
5. Restraint (pratyāhāra), whereby the sense organs are trained to take
   no note of their perceptions.
6. Steadying the Mind (dhyāna), by concentration on a single object,
such as the tip of the nose, the navel, an icon, or a sacred symbol.
7. Meditation (dhyāna), when the object of concentration fills the whole
   mind.
8. Deep Meditation (samādhi), when the whole personality is tempo-
   rarily dissolved.
Yoga was sometimes developed in special and rather dubious ways, especially by the tantric schools of the Middle Ages. The course of training outlined above was known as "Royal Yoga" (rājayoga), but other yoga systems developed, such as the "Yoga of Spells" (mantrayoga), which taught the continual repetition of magic syllables and phrases as a means of dissociating the consciousness; the "Yoga of Force" (hāthayoga), which emphasized the importance of physical means such as special acrobatic exercises and very difficult postures, and sometimes advocated sexual union as a means of salvation; and the "Yoga of Dissolution" (layayoga), often identified with hātha-yoga, based on certain ancient Indian physiological notions, which play a big part in the form of yoga sometimes taught by Western practitioners.

The chief vein of the body, known as susumna, runs through the spinal column. Along it at different points are six "wheels" (cakra), or concentrations of psychic energy. At the top of the vein susumna, within the skull, is sahasrāra, a specially powerful psychic centre symbolically referred to as a lotus. In the lowest "wheel", behind the genitals, is the kūṇḍalinī, the "serpent power", generally in a quiescent state. By yogic practices the kūṇḍalinī is awakened, rises through the vein susumna, passes through all the six "wheels" of psychic force, and unites with the topmost sahasrāra. By awakening and raising his kūṇḍalinī the yogī gains spiritual strength, and by uniting it with sahasrāra he wins salvation.

The awakened kūṇḍalinī gives to the yogī superhuman power and knowledge, and many yogīs have practised yoga rather for this than for salvation. Some adepts of yoga have developed certain powers which cannot fully be accounted for by European medical science and which cannot be explained away as subjective, but the physiological basis of laya- and hātha-yoga is certainly false; there is no kūṇḍalinī, susumna or sahasrāra. The ancient mystical physiology of India needs further study, not only by professional Indologists, but by open-minded biologists and psychologists, who may reveal the true secret of the yogī. For whatever we may think about his spiritual claims there is no doubt that the advanced yogī can hold his breath for very long periods without suffering injury, can control the rhythm of his own heart-beats, can withstand extremes of heat and cold, can remain healthy on a starvation diet, and, despite his austere and frugal life and his remarkable physical contortions, which would ruin the system of any ordinary man, can often survive to a very advanced age with full use of his faculties.

Mimāṃsā ("Enquiry"), differed in origin from the other systems in that it was not so much a school of salvation as of exposition. Its
original purpose was to explain the Vedas, and it was virtually a survival of brāhmaṇism. The earliest work of the school is the sūtras of Jaimini (perhaps of the 2nd century B.C.), which set out to show that the Vedas are eternal, self-existent, and wholly authoritative, and to defend their authenticity against all comers. This led to some development of logic, dialectics and semantics in the school. Śabaraśavāmin (?6th century) the greatest of Mīmāṁsā scholars, had much to say on law. It was only in the 7th and 8th centuries that the school developed a full philosophy of salvation, according to which respect for the Vedas and observance of their rules were essential first steps on the road. By the time of Kumārila (8th century) the Mīmāṁsā school was beginning to merge with the Vedānta.

Vedānta (“the End of the Vedas”), also called Uttara Mīmāṁsā (“later Mīmāṁsā”), is the most important of the six systems, and in its many sub-schools it has produced the characteristic features of modern intellectual Hinduism. The basic text of the system is the Brahma Sūtras of Bādarāyana, written early in the Christian era, which have been commented on by many scholars of all ages, down to the present day. Vedānta is still a living school, and modern theologians and mystical teachers such as Vivekānanda and Aurobindo Ghose, and philosophers such as Rādhākrishnan, are all Vedantists. The doctrines of Vedānta were based on the Upaniṣads, and gave logical and organized form to their many mystical speculations. The classical Vedānta is that of the great philosopher Śaṅkara (?788–820), a South Indian Śaivite brāhmaṇ who in a short lifetime composed extensive commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras and the chief Upaniṣads, travelled all over India preaching his doctrines, and founded an order of Hindu monks.

Śaṅkara was an orthodox brāhmaṇ, for whom all the Vedic literature was sacred and unquestionably true. To harmonize its many paradoxes he had recourse to an expedient already known in Buddhism (p. 281), that of a double standard of truth. On the everyday level of truth the world was produced by Brahmā, and went through an evolutionary process similar to that taught by the Sāṅkhya school from which Śaṅkara took over the doctrine of the three guṇas. But on the highest level of truth the whole phenomenal universe, including the gods themselves, was unreal—the world was Māyā, an illusion, a dream, a mirage, a figment of the imagination. Ultimately the only reality was Brahmaṇ, the impersonal World Soul of the Upaniṣads, with which the individual soul was identical. As in the Upaniṣads, salvation was to be obtained by recognition of this identity through meditation. Śaṅkara’s Brahmaṇ is not really different from the
"Void" or the Nirvāṇa of Mahāyāna Buddhism (p. 279), a fact well recognized by his opponents, who called him a crypto-Buddhist.

Śaṅkara's greatness lies in his brilliant dialectic. By able use of logical argument, and, we must admit, by interpreting some phrases very figurally, he reduced all the apparently self-contradictory passages of the Upaniṣads to a consistent system which, though not unchallenged, has remained the standard philosophy of intellectual Hinduism to this day. The comparison of Śaṅkara in Hinduism with St. Thomas Aquinas in the Roman Catholic Church is a very fair one.

The doctrine of Śaṅkara is often known as advaita ("allowing no second", i.e. monism) or kevalādvaita (strict monism).

Theism and Devotion

The sect of the Bhāgavatas, worshippers of Vāsudeva, identified with Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu, was active at least a century before Christ. A little later arose a sect of Pāṇḍavas, devotees of Pāṇḍavas, or Śiva. We know little about the early history of these sects, but it is certain that they were theistic, and stressed the merits of worship rather than those of sacrifice. In the Middle Ages their doctrines were given a philosophy.

A widespread Vaiṣṇavite school, known as the Pāńcarātra ("Of Five Nights", a term of uncertain significance), gave a cosmological basis to the myths of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa by identifying him and his family with cosmic emanations, and thus building a system of evolution similar to those of the more orthodox six systems, of which we have described the Sāṅkhyan as a typical example. From Vāsudeva, identified with Viṣṇu the ultimate personal godhead, developed Saṅkarṣaṇa (another name of Kṛṣṇa's brother Balarāma) at the beginning of time; this emanation was identified with prakṛti, or primal matter. The two produced Pradyumna (Kṛṣṇa's son) identified with manas or mind; thence arose Aniruddha (Kṛṣṇa's grandson), who was self-consciousness (ahaṅkāra). Only then did the three guṇas evolve, and with them Brahmā the demiurge.

In the Pāńcarātra system Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are not merely aspects of the divine character but gods in their own right, as they were with the early Bhāgavatas. The gods are thus simultaneously one and many. There is no question here of different levels of truth, as in Śaṅkara's system, but of an eternal paradox. The soul is one with God, but at the same time it is an individual. Even in the state of full salvation it retains enough individuality to realize the bliss of union with the godhead. The Pāńcarātra doctrine of emanations (vyūha) may have developed in Kashmir, where it is believed that the earliest texts of the school were written; but it found a
complementary development in the Tamil country, where a great
growth of devotional religion was taking place at the same time.

The devotion (*bhakti*) of the early Bhāgavatas, as exemplified in
the *Bhagavad Gītā*, had been somewhat restrained in its expression.
By the less spiritually developed worshipper the god was probably
not thought of as an ever-present and indwelling spirit, but as a mighty
and rather distant king, to be adored from afar. This is the spirit of
the Gupta hymn to the Sun quoted above (p. 315) and even in
general of the *Bhagavad Gītā* itself. When Kṛṣṇa reveals himself as
the supreme god and shows his transcendent form, Arjuna falls to the
ground in terror, unable to bear the awful splendour of the theophany.
The god admittely states that he is in the heart of all beings, that he
raises his worshippers from the sea of transmigration, and that they
are very dear to him; but he is still rather God Transcendent than
God Immanent. Arjuna compares Kṛṣṇa's relation to him to that of
friend and friend, father and son, lover and beloved; but his chief
feeling at the revelation of Kṛṣṇa's divinity is one of awe:

"You are the father of the universe, of all that moves and all that moves not,
its worshipful and worthy teacher.
You have no equal—what in the three worlds could equal you,
O power beyond compare?

"So, reverently prostrating my body,
I crave your grace, O blessed lord.
As father to son, as friend to friend, as lover to beloved,
bear with me, God.

"I rejoice that I have seen what none has seen before,
but my mind trembles with fear.
Graciously show me again your earthly form,
Lord of the Gods, Home of the World."

Thus the early *bhakti* was inspired by feelings as much of respect as
of love. Divine grace was the condescension of a mighty potentate,
sterne and functional: His glory was the glory of an emperor, which
the ordinary mortal could hardly contemplate.

Buddhism may have influenced the new form of piety which ap-
peared in medieval times, for the concept of the Bodhisattva, looking
down in love and pity and helping all creation, was probably earlier
than any comparable idea in Hinduism. But the new form of devo-
tion seems to have developed first in the Tamil country. One of its
earliest expressions is a remarkable poem of the collection called
the "Ten Odes", almost certainly earlier than the 7th century. This is
the "Guide to the Lord Murugan", a description of the chief shrines of
the old Tamil god, which the worshipper is advised to visit in turn. Throughout most of the poem the god retains his wild and primitive character, with the attributes of the northern Skanda added (p. 316f); but at last the worshipper meets him face to face.

"When you see his face, praise him with joy, worship him with joined palms, bow before him, so that his feet touch your head. . . .

"Holy and mighty will be his form, rising to heaven, but his sterner face will be hidden, and he will show you the form of a young man, fragrant and beautiful; and his words will be loving and gracious—
'Don't be afraid—I knew you were coming!'"87

Here surely we find a new conception of godhead struggling to express itself, the idea of a god who feels an intense love for men and to whom the worshipper can return the same love. This found its first full expression in the hymns of the early Tamil devotees (Nāyānārs and Āḻvārs), which are among India's greatest contributions to the world's religious literature.

The devotion of the Tamil hymnodists is no longer reverence for a transcendent deity, but ecstatic love for an immanent one. The love of God, moreover, is reflected by the worshipper in love for his fellows. In the Tamil word anbu we have something more closely approaching the Christian virtue of love than is to be found in any Sanskrit term. Moreover the Tamil devotees often worshipped their God with a deep sense of sin and inadequacy, which is rarely to be met in contemporary Aryan religious literature and recalls the Vedic hymns to Varuṇa.

"'You are father, you are mother,
you are elder brother,
you are kinsmen,
you are fair women, and abundant riches.
You are family, friends and home,
sount of pure wisdom, of wisdom to press onward.
You are gold, you are jewel, you are pearl—
You are lord, Rider on the Bull, * you are bliss.'"88

"'O most desired, O king, O lord, eternal form,
my fortune, supreme mystic!' Thus I sang each day.
My gold! My hill of coral! in love of you . . .
I have journeyed far to see the bright flower of your feet.'"89

* An epithet of Śiva.
"A sinner, I have left the way of love and service.  
Too well I have known the meaning of sickness and pain.  
I will go now and worship.  
How foolish I have been! How long can I be parted  
from my pearl, my mighty jewel, my diamond, Lord of the shrine of  
Ārūri?"  

"He whom the King of Gods knows but in part, the God of Gods,  
The triple Lord, who makes, preserves and ends  
the lovely universe, the Primal Form,  
the Ancient of Days, the Lord of Pārvatī, . . .  
came in his grace and took me for his own,  
so now I bow to none, and revere him alone.  
I am among the servants of his servants,  
and I shall bathe in joy, and dance and sing.""  

"Into my vile body of flesh  
you came, as though it were a temple of gold,  
and soothed me wholly and saved me,  
O Lord of Grace, O Gem Most Pure.  
Sorrow and birth and death and illusion  
you took from me, and set me free.  
O Bliss! O Light! I have taken refuge in you,  
and never can I be parted from you."

This impassioned devotionalism gradually affected the whole religious outlook of the Tamil country. The great Śaṅkara himself, though he maintained the rigid Upaniṣadic doctrine of salvation by knowledge, was the reputed author of some fine devotional poems in Sanskrit. It was only to be expected that the new forms of worship should receive formal shape and be harmonized with the Upaniṣads. This was done in different forms by a series of Dravidian theologians who succeeded Śaṅkara.

Chief of these was Rāmānuja, a brāhmaṇ who taught in the great temple of Śrīraṅgam. He is said to have lived from 1017 to 1137, but the first date is in all probability several decades too early. Like Śaṅkara he taught in many parts of India, and claimed to base his doctrines on earlier sources, writing lengthy commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Upaniṣads. Rāmānuja’s system was founded on that of the Pāñcarātras, but his emphasis was rather different. He admitted the usefulness of ritual observances, but only in qualified measure, and he also admitted Śaṅkara’s doctrine of salvation by knowledge, but declared that those so saved would find a state of bliss inferior to the highest. The best means of salvation was devotion, and the best yoga was bhakti-yoga, such intense devotion to Viṣṇu that the worshipper realized that he was but a
fragment of God, and wholly dependent on him. Another means of salvation was *prapatti*, the abandonment of self, putting one's soul completely in the hands of God, trusting in his will, and waiting confidently for his grace.

Rāmānuja's God was a personal being, who was full of love for his creation. He could even override the power of karma to draw repentant sinners to him. Unlike the impersonal World Soul of Śaṅkara, which made the illusory universe in a sort of sport (*lilā*), Rāmānuja's God needed man as man needed God. By forcing the sense Rāmānuja interpreted the words of Kuṇḍa, "the wise man I deem my very self"\(^{73}\), to imply that just as man could not live without God, so God could not live without man. The individual soul, made by God out of his own essence, returned to its maker and lived forever in full communion with him, but was always distinct. It shared the divine nature of omniscience and bliss, and evil could not touch it, but it was always conscious of itself as an I, for it was eternal by virtue of its being a part of godhead, and if it lost self-consciousness it would cease to exist. It was one with God but yet separate, and for this reason the system of Rāmānuja was called *vishisṭādvaita*, or "qualified monism". Rāmānuja was not as brilliant a metaphysician as Śaṅkara, but Indian religion perhaps owes even more to him than to his predecessor. In the centuries immediately following his death his ideas spread all over India, and were the starting-point of most of the devotional sects of later times.

Many later theologians developed Rāmānuja's teaching, and in the Tamil country two main doctrinal divisions arose, analogous to the Arminians and Calvinists of early Protestantism. The Northern School taught that salvation could only be obtained "on the analogy of the monkey"; God saves souls as the monkey carries her young to safety, clinging to her body—some effort on the part of the believer was needed. The Southern School taught salvation "on the analogy of the cat"; just as a cat picks up her kittens in her teeth, so God saves whom he wills, with no effort on their part.

A teacher who developed Rāmānuja's doctrines in surprising directions was Madhva, who taught in the 13th century. This Canarese theologian broke completely with the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the unity of God and the human soul, and taught dualism (*dvaita*). He explained away as figurative all the passages of scripture which maintained monism, and declared that Viṣṇu, individual souls and matter were eternally and completely distinct. Viṣṇu has full power over both souls and matter, and saves the former entirely by his grace, which is only granted to those who live pure and moral lives. Evil souls are predestined to eternal damnation, which is conceived as
infinite remoteness from God, while souls of mediocre quality will transmigrate eternally.

An interesting feature of Madhva's theology is the important part played by the wind-god Vāyu, the son of Viṣṇu, who is his agent in the world and has some of the features of the Holy Ghost of Christian theology.* The resemblances of Madhva's system to Christianity are so striking that influence, perhaps through the Syrian Christians of Malabār, is almost certain. The sharp distinction between God and the soul, the doctrine of eternal damnation, and the status of Vāyu are obvious points of similarity. In the legends about Madhva there are stories of miracles which must surely have been borrowed from the Gospels: as a boy he successfully disputed with learned brāhmaṇas in a temple; when he undertook asceticism a voice from heaven proclaimed his greatness; he fed multitudes with handfuls of food; he walked on water; and he stilled the raging ocean with a glance.

Śaivism too developed a theology adapted to the devotional literature of the hymnodists. The early literature of the Pāṣupatas and other Śaivite sects, called Āgamas and written in Sanskrit, was supplemented and then virtually superseded by texts in Tamil repeating much of the older theology, but incorporating the devotional faith of the Nāyanārs. A series of fourteen such texts, all written by the 14th century, forms the bible of the Śaivaśiddhānta, and is among the most influential religious literature of South India.

Tamil Śaivism teaches the reality of the three categories, God (Pati, "Lord"), souls (pāśu, literally "animals") and matter (pāta, "bond"). In salvation the soul is united, but not identified, with the deity. Tamil Śaivism thus goes further in the direction of dualism than the qualified monism of the Vaiśnavite Rāmānuja. Its most striking feature is the disappearance of all the harsh, capricious and amoral attributes of the old Śiva. In his character as bestower of karma he is pure justice, and his justice is but an aspect of his love for his creatures. He is ready at their call, and manifests himself to them in whatever form they worship him.

"His form is love, his qualities, his knowledge are love, his deeds are love, his hands and feet are love, all his attributes are love. Unfathomable godhead assumes all these for the welfare of all things living."  

"In his love the Lord punishes that the sinner may mend his ways and follow the right. All his acts flow from his love.

* In Hebrew and Syriac the word רוח means equally wind, breath or spirit.
"Goodness, love, grace and gentleness,  
courtesy, friendship and modesty,  
honesty, penance and chastity,  
charity, respect, reverence and truthfulness,  
purity and self-control,  
wisdom and worship—  
all these together are perfect virtue,  
and are the word of the loving Lord."**

Tamil Śaivism perhaps approached nearer to thorough-going monotheism than did any other Hindu sect.

"Whatever god you accept, he is that god.  
Other gods die and are born, and suffer and sin.  
They cannot reward,  
but he will see and reward your worship!"**

"We worship some god—our parents for instance—  
but they do not reward us, even when they seem to show us their grace,  
for all these gods are under the command of the Almighty,  
and through them he fulfils our prayers.

"If Śiva alone rewards us, loving him is the highest virtue,  
and the worship of other gods is of little use.  
Dharma is his will; he has no desires  
extcept to do good—so be firm in his worship."**

In Kashmir another school of Śaivism arose, known as Trika or Triad, from the fact that the sect had three chief scriptures. This school, unlike the Tamil Śaivasiddhānta, was monistic, and shared Śaṅkara’s doctrine of the unreality of the phenomenal world, which, it declared, only existed because the soul failed to recognize its true nature. For the school of the Trika salvation came with an act of recognition or sudden enlightenment, rather like the sudden conversion of old-fashioned Nonconformity. The greatest name in Kashmir Śaivism is that of Abhinava Gupta (10th century), a brilliant theorist both in theology and poetics.

A third important Śaivite sect was that of the Lingayats or Vīra-śaivas, founded by Basava, a minister of King Bijjala Kalacuri who usurped the throne of the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī in A.D. 1158. This sect is noteworthy rather for its cult and social doctrines than for its theology, which is a “qualified monism” with few striking features. Basava opposed image worship; in his sect the only sacred symbol is the liṅga of Śiva, a small specimen of which is constantly carried on the person of the believer. Basava completely rejected the Vedas and the authority of the brāhmaṇ class, and ordained a new priesthood—the jatgamas. He opposed pilgrimage and sacrifice and instituted
complete equality among his followers, even to the equality of women, who were permitted to remarry on the death of their husbands. Among other Aryan practices which Basava condemned was cremation, and his followers are still usually buried. It is possible that he was influenced by what he had heard of Islam. The Lingayats still retain their individuality, though they have now compromised with orthodoxy in some respects, and they are an important sect in parts of Andhra Pradesh and Mysore. Their sacred literature is mainly in Canarese and Telegu.

Hindu Rites and Ceremonies

Whereas the basic rite of the Vedic religion was sacrifice (yajña), that of Hinduism is worship (pūjā). In general a god is worshipped in the form of an icon (arca) which has been sanctified by special rites, after which it is believed that the divinity has in some sense taken up his abode in it. Though devotees often ask for boons at the feet of the idol, pūjā is not so much an act of prayer as of homage and entertainment. The god is offered water for washing the feet, flowers and betel quids, like an honoured guest. In the morning he is ceremonially awakened with the sound of music, the ringing of bells, and the blowing of conches. He is washed, dried and dressed. He is honoured with flowers, garlands, incense and swinging lamps; he is fed, usually with rice and fruit, of which he eats the subtle part, leaving the gross material food for his worshippers, or to be given to the poor. In many temples he is taken to his bedroom at night, where he joins his wife or wives. In the larger shrines he is fanned by attendants and entertained by dancing girls like any ancient Indian king. On festival days he tours the city in a splendid car, often pulled by his devotees, followed by lesser gods in their cars, musicians, bearers of yak’s-tail flywhisks (cauri), parasols and fans, and dancers.

The temple originated as a small wooden hut enshrining a rough icon or fetish. Temples played no part in Vedic religion, and none has been traced in archaeological sites from before the Christian era. It is possible that they were introduced as a result of the wave of foreign influence following the Greek and Saka invasions.

In any case by Gupta times India was probably as much a land of temples as she is at present. The heart of the temple was the central shrine, the home of the chief divinity. Often a “tank” or a flight of steps leading down to a river adjoined the temple, for ritual ablution, important at all times, had by now become an essential part of religious observance. The temple might also contain a meeting hall, where the Epics, Purāṇas, and other non-Vedic sacred literature were recited for all who wished to listen, and a rest-house for
pilgrims was also often provided, as well as many other offices and annexes, some of which served the social needs of the people.

Congregational worship of the Christian or Islāmic type was unknown in early Hinduism, though it developed in a few medieval sects. The worshipper went to the temple either alone or in a family group, made his offerings, and departed. In the greater temples the acts of worship by regular officiants might be watched by a large number of people, but they were rather an audience than a congregation.

Though the formal animal sacrifices of the Vedic period gradually disappeared, a new type of bloody sacrifice, almost certainly adopted from the non-Āryan aboriginals, became popular in the Middle Ages. Such rites rarely if ever took place in Vaiśṇavite shrines, but some Śaivites and many devotees of Durgā adopted the new type of sacrifice. The animals were no longer killed with complicated ritual, but decapitated before the sacred icon, frequently in such a way that some of the blood fell on it. The ritual slaughter of animals was justified by the doctrine that the soul of the victim went straight to heaven, but it was not approved by the best minds of the times, and its survival in Bengal and elsewhere is a matter of shame to most modern Hindus.

Favourite animals for sacrifice were buffaloes, goats, sheep and cockerels. Human sacrifice was also practised. Theoretically the execution of every criminal was a sort of sacrifice, and his soul was thought to be purged of guilt thereby. The victims of human sacrifice were thus often criminals provided by the secular arm, but victims were also obtained by more dubious means. We read of girls being kidnapped to serve as human sacrifices in secret rites, and of a temple of Durgā at which a daily human sacrifice was offered. Voluntary human sacrifice, or religious suicide in various forms, became quite common in the Middle Ages, especially in the Deccan, where numerous inscriptions commemorate the many pious souls who, in fulfilment of vows or to ensure the success of their king, leapt from pillars and broke their necks, cut their own throats, or drowned themselves in sacred rivers. The last rite of the sati was, in one aspect, a human sacrifice.

Another form of religious ceremony was that practised by the sects which worshipped feminine divinities. These sects are generally known as tantric (from their scriptures, called tantras), saktic (from their worship of the sakti, or personified energy of the god), or “left-hand” (from the fact that the goddess sits on the left of her lord). Their members believed that the usual Hindu rites and ceremonies, though not wholly ineffectual, were only suitable for ordinary worshippers; the adepts, who had undergone long rites of initiation, practised other ceremonies of much greater efficiency,
similar to those of the Buddhists of the "Vehicle of the Thunderbolt" (p. 282f). The tantric rites involved the breaking of all the usual taboos of Hinduism. Small groups of initiates met at night, often in a temple or private house, but also frequently in a burning-ground, among the bones of the dead. The group formed a circle, seated around the circumference of a large circular magical diagram (yantra, mandala) drawn on the ground. Though the members of the circle might include brâhmaṇs and outcastes, there was no class distinction at the ceremony—all were equal, and no ritual pollution occurred from their contact. After regular evening worship, the propitiation of ghosts, and other rites, the group would indulge in the five Ms (pāṭha-makāra): madya (alcoholic drink), māṃsa (meat), matsya (fish), mudrā (symbolical hand gestures, known in other branches of Indian religion and in dance and drama, also sometimes taken in this context as roasted grain), and maithuna (sexual intercourse). The rites concluded with the worship of the five elements, to which the five Ms mysteriously corresponded. Among some tantric groups the last of the five Ms involved promiscuous copulation, while the members of others brought their wives to the circle. With yet other groups those rites which were reprehensible to orthodoxy were performed only symbolically.

The remarkable "black mass" of the tantric sects, whether in Buddhism or Hinduism, became very popular in Eastern India in the late medieval period. It is still sometimes practised, but quite without publicity, and it is probable that with the growth of puritanism and rationalism the number of tantric groups in India is now comparatively small.

**Hindu Ethics**

At the bottom of most Hindu writing on ethics and morality lay the concept of the three ends of life (p. 171), and the full recognition that individuals of different classes and ages had different duties and standards of conduct. The ascetic should set his whole mind on unworldly things, but the layman was encouraged to blend the claims of religion, profession and material pleasure into a harmonious whole. This aspect of Hindu morality we have touched on already in other contexts and need not discuss further.

To the uninitiated Westerner the usual moral attitude of Hinduism, especially before the great changes of modern times, must seem a strange mixture of reason and taboo. The following passage, taken from the Mānasollāsa, a text on the duties and amusements of kings attributed to the 12th-century Deccan king Someshvara III Cālukya, illustrates perfectly this aspect of Hindu morals.
"A king should avoid (1) untruth and (2) treachery, (3) illicit intercourse with women, and (4) eating what is forbidden.

"He should shun (5) envy and (6) contact with outcasts, he should (7) revere all the gods, and satisfy (8) cows and (9) brāhmaṇas,

"(10) reverence his ancestors, and (11) feed his guests, (12) obey his preceptors, (13) practise penance, and (14) bathe in sacred waters.

"He should (15) nourish the poor, and (16) the orphan and widow, (17) the afflicted, and (18) his kin, and (19) his servants,

"and (20) protect those who come to him for refuge.

These are the twenty conditions of a successful reign."

This passage shows that great emphasis was placed on such virtues as hospitality, charity and honesty, but piety, in the sense of the performance of such religious acts as worship, pilgrimage, and the feeding of cows and brāhmaṇas, was equally if not more important. The maintenance of taboos on contact with untouchables and eating forbidden food (not only meat, but food handled by low-caste persons or left over from a previous meal), was not clearly distinguished from honesty and self-control. At all times, however, the more intelligent teachers realized that mere outward observance was not as meritorious as inner goodness. Thus in the lawbook of Gautama, after a catalogue of the forty religious rites which the Āryan should practice, we read:

"There are eight virtues of the soul—compassion for all beings, patience, contentedness, purity, earnest endeavour, good thoughts, freedom from greed, and freedom from envy. Whoever performs the sacred rites without possessing these eight virtues does not come to Brahmā or to his heaven; but if a man has performed only one rite and has all eight good qualities he comes to Brahmā."

Many other sources give lists of virtues like this, all tending to encourage an earnest kindliness and tolerance in human relations. The doctrine of non-violence, qualified though it was, had a real effect on Hindu life, going far beyond mere restrictions on the killing of animals. All Hindu texts teach mercy, compassion and friendliness, but positive benevolence, except in the form of almsgiving, is less prominent, though often among lists of virtues we find "desire for the welfare of all beings". A positive ethic of love and forgiveness is a feature of much Tamil sacred literature. We quote from the maxims of the early Tirukkural:

"Men without love think only of self,
but the loving strip themselves to the bone for others."

"For a kindness done without expecting reward
heaven and earth are hardly sufficient recompense."
"The joy of the avenger lasts but a day.
The joy of the peacemaker lasts for ever."

"They are great who fast and do penance,
but they who forgive wrongs are even greater."

"This, they say, is the highest wisdom—
to return no harm to them that harm you."\(^{80}\)

This exalted ethical tone is to be found in much Tamil literature, notably in the *Nāladiyār*, a collection of moral verses of somewhat later date than the *Tirukkuṟal*, and in the devotional hymns which we have quoted elsewhere. But it is not only in Tamil literature that we find the call to love and kindness.

"Viṣṇu is most pleased with him who does good to others,
who never utters abuse, calumny or untruth,
who never covets another's wife or wealth,
and who bears ill will to none,
who neither beats nor slays any living thing,
who is ever diligent in the service of the gods
and of brāhmaṇs and his teachers,
who always desires the welfare of all creatures,
as of his children and of his own soul."\(^{81}\)

If the general ethical outlook of Hinduism favoured tolerance and kindliness, it was not equalitarian, and it recognized the needs of a society divided into many sections and classes with varied functions. A man's relation with his social inferiors should naturally differ from his relations with his betters. His standards of conduct depended on his social class. The virtues of the brāhmaṇ, such as the recitation of the Veda, were sins to the śūdra, while the śūdra might legitimately do things, such as drinking spirits, which were forbidden to the brāhmaṇ. Similarly the child, the student, the householder and the ascetic had their own codes and standards. Certain broad principles applied to all sections of the community, but beyond these no detailed code of morality was universally binding. Each group had its own rules of conduct, varying widely.

It is with this background in view that we must read the most famous ethical text of ancient India, the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Though this work contains much theology, its kernel is ethical and its teaching is set in the framework of an ethical problem. The hero Arjuna awaits in his chariot the beginning of battle. In the ranks of the enemy are his old friends, relatives and teachers, men whom he has known and loved all his life. Though convinced of the justice of his cause his spirits begin to sink, and he feels that he cannot fight
against those who are so dear to him. He turns to Kṛṣṇa, who is acting as his charioteer, and asks his advice. Kṛṣṇa first explains that the death of the body does not involve the death of the soul and is comparatively unimportant:

"He who thinks this [soul] is the slayer and he who thinks this is the slain do not understand. It neither slays nor is it slain.

"It is never born and never dies, nor, once it exists, does it cease to be. Unborn, eternal, abiding and ancient, it is not slain when the body is slain...

"As a man puts off his worn out clothes and puts on other new ones, so the embodied [soul] puts off worn out bodies and goes to others that are new.

"Weapons do not cleave it, fire does not burn it, waters do not wet it, wind does not dry it.

"It cannot be cleft or burnt, or wetted or dried. It is everlasting, it dwells in all things, firm, unmoving, eternal...

"To be born is certain death, to the dead, birth is certain. It is not right that you should sorrow for what cannot be avoided...

"If you do not fight this just battle you will fall in your own law and in your honour, and you will incur sin."

Then Kṛṣṇa develops his teaching on the topic of human activity. The right course is not the inactivity of the meditating sage, for this attempt to put works on one side is impossible and futile. God himself is continually active, and man also should act; but, as far as possible, he should act without attachment, without personal desires or ambition. He must fulfil his function in the society of which he is a member, doing all things for the glory of God.
There is nothing in the three worlds which I need,
nothing I do not own,
nothing which I must get—
and yet I labour forever.

If I did not always work unwearingly . . .
men would follow my ways.
The worlds would perish if I did not work—
I should bring back chaos, and all beings would suffer.

So, as the unwise work with attachment,
the wise should work without attachment,
O son of Bharata,
and seek to establish order in the world . . .

Cast all your acts upon me,
with your mind on the Highest Soul.
Have done with craving and selfhood.
Throw off your terror, and fight! . . .

For there is more joy in doing one's own duty badly
than in doing another man's duty well.
It is joy to die in doing one's duty,
but doing another man's duty brings dread."

The teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā is summed up in the maxim
"your business is with the deed, and not with the result". In an
organized society each individual has his special part to play, and in
every circumstance there are actions which are intrinsically right—from
the point of view of the poet who wrote the Gītā they are those
laid down by the Sacred Law of the Āryans and the traditions of class
and clan. The right course must be chosen according to the circum-
stances, without any considerations of personal interest or sentiment.
Thus man serves God, and in so far as he lives up to this ideal he
draws near to God.

The stern ethics of the Gītā are clearly intended as a defence of the
old established order against the attacks of reformers and unbelievers.
The virtue of the brāhman is wisdom, of the warrior, valour, of the
vaśya, industry, of the sūdra, service; by fulfilling his class function
to the best of his ability, with devotion to God and without personal
ambition, a man will find salvation, whatever his class. It may be
that the author of the Gītā sought merely to convey this message,
rather barren and uninspiring when thus condensed. But behind his
teaching was the fervour of a great religious poet, which transcended
the narrow framework of contemporary social and religious law.
Hence the inspiration of the Bhagavad Gītā has been widely felt in
India from the time of the Guptas to the present day, and it has been
commended by Christians and Muslims, as well as by the Hindus, whose most influential scripture it is. No one so ungrudgingly admitted his debt to its doctrine of tireless and unselfish service as Mahatma Gandhi, who so strongly opposed the two features of ancient Indian society which the Gita itself was in part written to defend—militarism and the class system.

(v) Non-Indian Religions

If we are to believe a very old tradition the first Christian converts in India were made by the Disciple Thomas himself, soon after the Crucifixion. The Indian king Gondophares sent to Syria for a skilful architect to build him a new city, and the envoy returned with St. Thomas, who told the king of a City not made with hands, and converted him and many members of his court. St. Thomas afterwards preached in other parts of India, and died a martyr’s death at the hands of a king called in Christian tradition Mischeos, who cannot be identified. The historicity of Gondophares, however, is unquestioned (p. 61), and the story in its main outline is not impossible, for at the time contact between India and the West was close, and an enterprising missionary could easily have travelled from Palestine to India. Roman Catholics believe that the tomb of St. Thomas is to be found in the cathedral at Mailapur, a suburb of Madras, though the evidence for the Saint’s martyrdom there is not sufficient to satisfy the historian.

Several rather unreliable references to other early missions exist in church tradition, but the first certain evidence of Christian activity in India is found in the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes, an adventurous Alexandrian monk of the 6th century who left an account of his travels. He states that there were churches in Kerala and Ceylon, in the hands of Persian priests, and supervised by a Persian bishop at Kalliana (perhaps the modern Cochin). It is clear that the Indian Christians had embraced the Nestorian heresy, which was then widespread in Persia. The Nestorians were active missionaries, and their intrepid monks even crossed the wastes of Central Asia and founded successful churches in China. Whatever truth there may be in the legend of St. Thomas, it seems that these missionaries, no doubt following in the wake of Persian merchants, were chiefly responsible for establishing the Christian community in South India. When, at a later date, Islam stamped out both Zoroastrianism and Christianity in Persia, the Indian Christians turned for guidance to the patriarch of Antioch, and have maintained contact with Syria to this day.
When European travellers again visited India they noticed the Christian churches of the South. Marco Polo, at the end of the 13th century, saw the tomb of St. Thomas, and remarked on its popularity as a place of pilgrimage. But the Syrian church was corrupt. There is no evidence that Indian Christians ever accepted the doctrine of transmigration, but many Hindu customs had been adopted, and the Kerala Christians, like the Buddhists and Jainas before them, were in the process of becoming a rather heterodox Hindu sect. Jesuit missionaries of the 16th and 17th centuries succeeded in preventing further decadence. One section of the Syrian church in India accepted the authority of Rome, while the other, which remained true to its traditions, reformed and purified itself.

It is in this connexion that we find the first record of an Englishman visiting India. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle states that in A.D. 884 King Alfred, to fulfil a vow, sent an envoy to India with rich gifts for the tomb of St. Thomas. Florence of Worcester, writing some 900 years later, adds that the name of the envoy was Swithelm, and that he returned safely. William of Malmesbury, on the other hand, gives his name as Bishop Sigelinus, and states that he brought back a rich present of jewels and spices from the local Indian king, who, if the story is true, must have been the Cōla King Āditya I or one of his chiefs. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is generally reliable, and it is reasonable to believe that Alfred sent the envoy, but "India" for 9th-century Europe was a very loose term, embracing many vaguely known parts of Asia and Africa, and we cannot be sure that the envoy actually visited the tomb of St. Thomas at Mailapur, or even that it was in existence at the time. The discrepancy in the names given to the envoy by the two later chroniclers shows that the tradition was not vividly remembered, and adds to our suspicion.

On the other hand we know that Christian pilgrims undertook very difficult journeys in order to visit holy places. At the time Islām was not violently anti-Christian, and the pilgrim might have found his way across Egypt without difficulty, and thence in an Arab merchant vessel to South India. It is pleasant to picture the brave English cleric, whatever his name, telling the Cōla king through Arab and Tamil interpreters of King Alfred's battles with the Danes, and King Alfred, several years later, listening to the envoy's account of the wonders of India and sampling the rare spices of the Tamil land. Whatever our doubts, we cannot but hope that the story of Bishop Sigelinus is a true one.

As well as Christians small communities of Jews settled in Kerala. The earliest certain reference to this community is a 10th-century charter by which the king of the Cēras, Bhāskara Ravivarman,
gave lands and privileges to a Jew named Joseph Rabbān; but the tradition of the Jews of Kerala tells of a large settlement at Cochin in the 1st century A.D. In any case a small Jewish community has existed in India for well over a millennium. One branch has mixed closely with the local Malayāḷī inhabitants and its members now have typical Indian complexions and features; the other branch retains its racial purity, and is still evidently Semitic. A further ancient community of Indian Jews, the Beni Israel, has lived for many centuries on the west coast, and is now centred in Bombay.

Another non-Indian religious community was that of the Zoroastrians, now generally known as Pārsīs. Under Achæmenid and Sāsānian emperors Zoroastrianism was certainly practised in parts of N.-W. India, and had some influence on Hinduism and Buddhism, but no very clear traces of a Zoroastrian community have survived there. Though Zoroastrian merchants may have settled on the west coast of India very early, we have no record of them until after the Arab conquest of Persia, when Persian fugitives came to India in appreciable numbers. According to the Pārsīs' own traditions one band of refugees settled first at Diū in Saurāshtra, and then at Thanā near Bombay, in the early 8th century.

Yet another community was that of the Muslims. Arabs visited India long before the days of Muhammad, and there is evidence of small Muslim communities in many of the coastal towns of the Peninsula from the 8th century onwards. The Māppilā (Moplah) community of Kerala is undoubtedly descended from settlers and converts of long before the days of Muslim invasion of India. There is, however, no clear evidence of any influence of Islām on Hinduism until after the Muslim conquest.

Thus India, though always loyal to her indigenous cults, gave a welcome to those of the West. If we except the uncertain tradition of St. Thomas' martyrdom there is no good evidence of the persecution of any of these non-Indian sects. Their members quietly pursued their own cults, small but significant elements in the religious life of the coastal cities, while the great body of Hindus were scarcely aware of the alien faiths, and in no way antagonistic to them. This capacity for toleration contributed to the characteristic resiliency of Hinduism, and helped to assure its survival.