

TRADITION AND MODERNITY: Dayananda Sarasvati's concept of the Vedic Golden Age

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Too often the modernizing process in South Asia has been studied in the context of an opposition of tradition and modernity, where 'modern' tended to be equated with 'western'. Social change and new ideas not only arose from the impact of outside forces on established traditional systems, but they may have sprung from alternatives contained in the tradition. As Milton Singer wrote, 'While extreme "modernists" and extreme "traditionalists" sometimes speak of irreconcilable conflict, there is, in fact, a mutual dependence ...' <sup>1</sup> The way to correct the perspective of the study of tradition and modernity is, in the words of the Rudolphs, 'to accord tradition a higher priority in the study of modernization'. <sup>2</sup> In other words, one has to dig deeper into the traditional sources and bring to the surface the complexity of their different perspectives. Only after that can the question of modernization be asked in a valid way.

Dayānanda Sarasvatī was steeped in his tradition; for the first forty-eight years of his life he lived within the bosom of traditional society and was largely isolated from outside influences. Yet he became a 'modern' reformer. His key concept of the Golden Age of Vedic times exhibits characteristics which would usually be called 'modern', such as the concept of man-made progress, the refusal of fatalism, the sense of history, the urge to demythologize, and the importance given to technological advance. The idea of a Vedic Golden Age had been advocated by the early British orientalisks under the influence of current European ideas propounded by influential thinkers such as Voltaire and Gibbon. <sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Hindu tradition also contained the concept of a Golden Age, the *kṛta yuga*. A study of the various factors that influenced Dayananda may throw some light on the process of modernization.

THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT

The most important primary sources for the traditional concept are the three great collections of the Dharmaśāstras, the Purānas, and the Mahābhārata. We are here not interested in the historical evolution of the idea, which 'began to take shape at least in the 4th or 5th century B. C. and had been fully developed in the first centuries of the Christian era', but in the various facets of the idea presented in the tradition. A difficulty that comes straight to mind here is the question how one can satisfactorily cope with the immense amount of source material. An excellent starting point is the voluminous work of P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, <sup>4</sup> wherein the bulk of the Dharmaśāstra literature is surveyed, plus a fair amount of the Mahābhārata and the Purānas. Its extensive indices refer back to a wealth of primary sources. We have supplemented the references of Kane by scanning eight of the most important Purānas <sup>5</sup> and the two most important books on ethics and politics in the Mahābhārata, the Śānti and Anuśāsana Parvans. We feel sure that very little of importance would have slipped through that net, and the few secondary studies on the topic confirmed that feeling.

The following is the scheme that became generally accepted. A *Mahāyuga*

is a period of time divided into four segments called the *Kṛta* (Golden), the *Tretā*, the *Dvāpara*, and the *Kali yugas*, following one another in fixed periods of diminishing length and totalling 4.320.000 years. If this timespan seems vast, it was subsumed under the immensely greater cosmogonic scheme of the *kalpa*, 'a day of Brahma', which encompasses one thousand *mahāyugas* and lasts 4.320 million years. These *kalpas* are divided into fourteen secondary cycles called *manvantaras*, each comprising seventy-one *mahāyugas*.<sup>6</sup> That is the broad scheme which in its historical evolution absorbed and adapted elements from astrology and mythology, and incorporated dynastic histories.

The total structure is a cosmogonic myth subsuming human history under the vast umbrella of the emanation and reabsorption of the cosmos by the creator, *Brahmā*. This myth affirms that human life and history are part of an eternal cyclic movement in which night follows day, winter follows summer, death follows life, Kali Age follows Golden Age, dissolution follows creation in a perpetual rotation which itself is in the last instance nothing else than a theophany. The primary purpose of that cyclic cosmogonic myth, which recurs in many civilizations, is to give sense to the vagaries of history welling up out of the darkness of the past and moving into the even more disturbing void of the future. History finds a meaning because it is a theophany, not wedged between two unknowns, but organically part of an ever-returning cycle; every age repeats a necessary pattern which has occurred before under divine guidance and leads to the predictable re-enactment of a future also divinely ordained. History and the enigma of time thus lose their terror.<sup>7</sup>

This level of explanation, however, subsumes the Golden and Dark Ages under an immensity where they lose their actuality. One has to make abstraction of the cosmogonic cycle, and look more closely at the description of the eras. This is not an unwarranted procedure: in fact the traditional writers do exactly that: when they speak specifically about the *yugas*, then cosmogony becomes irrelevant. Whenever the Kali Age is mentioned, it has two basic characteristics: it is a time of decadence, and it is the contemporary age of the writer. Kane summarizes it as follows:

From the *Mahābhārata*, *Manu*, *Nārada*, *Bṛhaspati* and the *Purānas* it is clear that they all believed in the existence of an ideally perfect community in the dim past, followed by a gradual degeneracy and decline in morals, health and length of life. But they also believed that a cycle of decline would be followed in the far distant future by another of moral perfection. The only pity is that all works that are extant think that they are in the midst of a very sinful age and there is not a single work which thinks that the era of perfection may dawn in the very near future.<sup>8</sup>

The decadence of the Kali Age is characterized by the following: the break-down of the system of classes, of sexual mores, and of health and longevity; the predominance of heretical sects; the reign of *Sūdra* and *Mleccha* (foreign) rulers; a rebellion of nature by famine and floods. All these could be described as the collapse of *dharma* in its broadest sense.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas the texts abound in descriptions of the ravages of the contemporary Kali Age and revel in that of worse catastrophes to come, the references to the *Kṛta* or Golden Age tend to be rather schematic. *Dharma*

reigned everywhere, and there was no sin or fickleness of opposites like love and hatred; the stages of life and the duties of classes were clearly distinguished and universally observed; men were equal in every respect, possessing the same happiness, beauty, and longevity (up to 4000 years in some texts); disease die not exist nor sorrow; human reproduction did not involve sexuality; nature spontaneously produced abundance without toil. The formulas used in the texts to describe the Golden Age are often identical, and it is clear that they do not pretend to portray a historical reality, but rather a theoretically ideal one, constructed as a contrast to the Kali Age.

What explanatory use do the texts make of the *yuga* scheme? The authors of the lawbooks, which kept being composed from 500 B. C. to 1000 A. D., were faced with a great number of conflicting statements in the older texts. A particular problem was that some of the oldest works allowed certain actions which contemporary society no longer permitted. In order to justify their prohibition of deeds permissible in Vedic texts, the authors introduced the category of *Kalivarjya*, 'a thing to be avoided in the Kali Age'.<sup>10</sup> Thus they accommodated *dharma* to changes that had in fact occurred in the ideas and practices of the people. The argument put forward to justify the prohibition was that in the *Kaliyuga* 'there was an absence of good people'.<sup>11</sup>

The *yuga* theory was used in a similar fashion in the following argument. As people were naturally good in the Golden Age, there was no need for a king or for the codification and administration of the law. In the *Kaliyuga*, however, where evil abounds, there is a pressing need for a powerful king backed by a strong administration and extensive legislation.<sup>12</sup> Thus the *smṛiti* writers used the *yuga* scheme to justify the enormous detail of their laws and their divergence from ancient prescriptions, and also to legitimize the extensive royal powers they supported.

The laws of *Manu* suggest in one verse an extension of that principle to a wider religious sphere:

*Tapas* (asceticism) was the highest goal (deemed to yield great results) in the *Kṛtayuga*, knowledge (of the self) was the highest in *Tretā*, *Yajña* (sacrifice to God) in *Dvāpara*, charity (*dānam*) alone in *Kali*.<sup>13</sup>

Here *Manu* suggests that man's basic approach in religious matters varies between ages, justifying thus the very fact that in contemporary society asceticism, knowledge, and sacrifice did not have the same prevalence they had in olden days. The *Purānas* took up this idea and made it their main emphasis. They were concerned with legitimizing their preaching of the absolute superiority of *bhakti* over all other means to secure merit and *mokṣa*. For that purpose they used the *yuga* theory, proclaiming that in fact the *Kali* Age was superior to any age because it brought with *bhakti* the most powerful religious method:

A man secures in a single day and night in *Kali* age as much reward of *tapas*, celibacy and *japa* as is obtained in ten years in the *Kṛta* age, in one year in *Tretā* and a month in *Dvāpara*; therefore I spoke of *Kali* as good; in *Kali* age man secures merely by the glorification or incessant repetition of the name of *Keśava* what he would secure by deep meditation in *Kṛta*, by sacrifice in *Tretā*, and by worship in *Dvāpara*; I am pleased with *Kali* because a man secures a great eminence of *dharma* with a little effort.<sup>14</sup>

The Mahābhārata repeats in detail the *yuga* scheme given by Manu, and reinforces the uses of it noticed in the Smṛtis and the Purānas. The Śānti Parvan shows how 'many new kinds of duty or religious observance are brought about in each *yuga*', causing great confusion: 'When the Śrūtis and the Smṛtis contradict each other, how can either be authoritative?' The question of 'righteous action' becomes very complicated and confused if one only refers to what is written. Therefore man needs to resort to more general ethical principles such as *ahiṃsā*, non-violence, in order to make a proper choice.<sup>15</sup> The same book also uses the *yuga* scheme to show how throughout the ages the religion of *bhakti*, devotion to Kṛṣṇa, was transmitted by generations of sagas. The *yuga* scheme becomes a backdrop to the glorification of Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva and *bhakti*.<sup>16</sup>

But the Mahābhārata also contains a series of texts where the *yuga* scheme is used differently. All these texts occur in the long section on *rājadharmā*, kingship. Yudhiṣṭhira asked Bhīṣma the question, 'There is the science of kingship, there is the king, and there are the subjects. Tell me how one of these is of advantage to the others.' Bhīṣma answered as follows:

As to the question whether the king makes the age or the age makes the king, You should have no doubt. The king makes the age. When the king rules with full and strict application of the science of government, then the best age called the Golden Age sets in.<sup>17</sup>

This is not a casual observation. The Śānti Parvan repeats the idea several times using the following clear expressions 'the king is the cause (*kāraṇam*) of the *yugas*'; 'the king is the creator of the Golden Age (*kṛtayugashraṣṭā*)'; 'all *yugas* have their root in the king (*rājamūlāni*)'.<sup>18</sup>

All these texts have the same message: that it is within the power of the king to bring about a Golden or a Dark Age. They all occur within the special context of *rājadharmā*, where the duties and powers of the king are explained and glorified. In this particular context the larger background of the inevitable cycle of *yugas* recedes into insignificance, and royal action which exerts itself on a much smaller time-scale becomes the immediate focus. On that time-scale *rājadharmā* is all-powerful and able to draw the *kṛtayuga* out of its cyclical far future into historical immediacy. In these Mahābhārata texts we find a view of the *yuga* scheme basically deviant from the rest of the tradition, affirming the possibility of the dynamic of short-term progress.

#### Dayānanda Sarasvatī

Dayananda had a profound personal knowledge of Manu and the Smṛiti literature, of the Purānas, and the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata was one of his favourite texts.<sup>19</sup> From 1873 onwards he was increasingly aware of the modern ideas current in nineteenth century India through his contacts with the Bengali, Maharashtrian and Punjabi intelligentsia, through his reading, and his discussions with foreign missionaries and administrators. To what extent was his central concept of the Vedic Golden Age influenced by the tradition, and to what extent did it incorporate modern ideas of his times?

First of all, Dayananda accepted the great cosmogonic scheme of the rhythmic emanation and absorption of the cosmos, but he purged it of its properly mythological dimension and presented it as a philosophical scheme, using Sāṃkhya and Nyāya categories in its elaboration. This scheme is only

occasionally referred to as a backdrop to particular discussions about the problem of creation, but most of the time it remains in fact invisible and without influence in the discussion of religious matters, just as it does in the tradition itself.<sup>20</sup>

Dayānanda also accepted the scheme of the four ages in its classical form as presented by Manu. But he is very concerned with dating exactly the four ages of the current cycle. The contemporary Kali age started about five thousand years ago with the great Mahābhārata war, and it is to run for another 400,000 years. The Swami traced the degeneration of Hindu religion, society, economy, and politics historically to the disruption caused by that war. The basic reason for this upheaval was the neglect of the Vedas, which led to the collapse of the social order, the degeneracy of the state, the corruption of religion, and the destruction of economic prosperity. In his description of the Kali age the Swami was always careful to refer to historical phenomena, and studiously avoided the fanciful flights of imagination into yet vaster catastrophes to come, which are part of many traditional accounts.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas the tradition used the Kali age as an excuse for justifying new developments in society and religion which diverged from the Vedic injunctions, and thus legitimized new customs and practices, Dayānanda rejected this procedure. To him the Vedic injunctions alone were intrinsically valid, and the Vedas were the supreme touchstone of truth. Thus he proved the admissibility of some of the famous Kalivarjyas such as the journey across the seas, intercaste marriage, the *niyoga* contract, and the employment of *śūdras* for cooking.<sup>22</sup> The claim of the Purānas that the Kali age justified the advent of a new all-powerful religion of *bhakti* that superseded the Vedas was also anathema to the Swami. To him, only moral action had religious effectiveness, and Purāṇic religion was a perversion.

Throughout Dayānanda's works we find incidental references to the Golden Age, when the *varṇaśrama dharma* worked effectively, when marriage by choice prevailed, when women were equal to men, highly educated and occupying important positions, when people interdined and intermarried without restrictions: it was an era wherein the religious and social orders were ideal. In a couple of passages where the Swami explicitly wrote about the Golden Age, he stressed two aspects. The Golden Age was when the wise kings of Āryāvarta ruled as universal emperors according to the perfect Vedic statecraft. Moreover, that age not only abounded in wisdom, but it was also far advanced in science and technology: both wisdom and science spread over the world from the centre of the Vedic land of Āryāvarta.<sup>23</sup>

Dayānanda therefore agreed with the tradition that the Golden Age possessed both the perfect social organization and the best kind of statecraft, the basic conditions for fulfilment and prosperity. However, the tradition went much further than that, affirming that in fact there was no vice or sin or evil, no disease or early death, no widowhood, that the seasons were perfect, the crops always plentiful, and that each man's cup of life, happiness, and beauty was equally overflowing. Never did Dayānanda's description of the Golden Age include any of these fanciful embellishments.

One of the reasons why the traditional sources let their imagination run riot about the Golden Age was that none of them thought that the next Golden

Age was to dawn in the near future. Only the Mahābhārata suggested the possibility of a Golden era independent of the cyclic necessity, when it stated that it was the king who created the Golden era. Dayānanda forcefully supported the idea, putting it succinctly and sharply as follows in one of his parables:

- Sage: When all wise men teach the same, then there will be no delay in the establishment of one religion.
- Objector: Today is the *Kaliyuga*. Do not aspire to things that belong to the Golden Age.
- Sage: *Kaliyuga* is but the name of a period of time. Since time itself is actionless, it is not a factor in the promotion or the prevention of *dharma* or *adharma*. It is you who are yourselves incarnations of the *Kaliyuga*.<sup>24</sup>

Dayānanda's whole programme of reform was founded on the conviction that the Golden Age could be brought back: he usually called it the 'future regeneration of Aryāvarta', or the 'recapturing of the conditions of that ancient time'. However, the Swami did not follow the Mahābhārata when it put the creation of the Golden Age squarely into the hands of the king, neither did he conceive that regeneration to be a quick process. The study of the Vedas was to be the key: this would lead to universal education, the re-establishment of the Vedic social order, and the emergence of an ideal state. Although the king was to play a significant role, the most important factor would be the multiplication of wise and moral men across the spectrum of society: these were the élite out of which an Aryan kingship would emerge; not autocratic but elected by that very élite. The Vedas were the key to everything because they were the 'book of revelation' containing not only the totality of theological wisdom, the perfect moral code, and the perfect idea of statecraft, but also the scientific and technological concepts that make for universal prosperity.<sup>25</sup>

Thus Dayānanda incorporated into his own conception many facets of the tradition, and carefully omitted others. The basic elements have deep roots in the tradition. However, there are three important aspects to his theory of the Golden Age which *as such* seem to be absent in the traditional accounts, namely:

1. The Swami's stress on the historicity and the non-mythical character of the Golden Age;
2. his idea that it was an age of scientific and technological eminence;
3. his idea that the four Vedas contain a complete blueprint for the reconstruction of the Golden Age.

These three aspects need closer investigation to determine their exact origin.

Historicity linked with a concern for chronology was definitely a 'modern' idea prevalent in nineteenth century India. The first concept of a Vedic Golden Age was constructed by the early British orientalist in the subcontinent, such as John Zephaniah Holwell, Alexander Dow, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, Charles Wilkins, Sir William Jones, and Colebrooke. Their concern

for chronology was the result of contemporary European thought. When European thinkers were faced with the discovery of the ancient religious cultures of China and India, the question of the superiority of Christianity was hotly debated. If these great Eastern religions contained the basic religious and ethical doctrines of Christianity, and yet antedated Moses, how could the claims of Christianity be upheld? Chronology and historicity were at the very centre of the debate, and that concern communicated itself to the budding new intelligentsia of the subcontinent, firstly in Bengal.<sup>26</sup>

Before Dayānanda went to Calcutta in 1872, he lived completely within traditional society and was not concerned with comparing the claims of various religions. The Bengali intelligentsia, who had been involved in controversy with Christianity since the time of Rommohan Roy brought that question to the Swami's attention. One such occasion deserves special mention. Rajnarayan Bose, leader of the Adi Brahma Samaj, was a pioneer of the movement of Hindu nationalism reacting against the influential attitudes of Utilitarians and Evangelicals for whom all history was a dark age and salvation was only to be found in the new dogma of progress, which meant westernization. He read to the Swami his lecture on 'The Superiority of Hinduism'. There he argued that for twelve reasons Hinduism was in every way superior to all other religions. One of these reasons is of particular interest: whereas other religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism derived from a relatively recent historical figure, Hinduism pre-dated them all in its hoary antiquity.<sup>27</sup> We can date Dayānanda's preoccupation with the superiority of Vedic religion from his stay in Calcutta. The chronological argument always loomed large among his proofs.

The influence of modern thought via the Bengali intelligentsia is incontestable. Yet even in this case one should not overlook the part played by traditional elements, because chronology and historicity were part of their concern in two ways. The texts declared that one of the characteristics of the Kali age was the advent of Sūdra and Mleccha kings and they often attempted to incorporate the dynastic tables of Aryan kings into the scheme of the *yugas*.<sup>28</sup> Part of the stress on historical authenticity was Dayānanda's total refusal of myth and miracle. One may wonder if this 'urge to demythologize' was a result of western rationalist influence. This is not so. The Swami's rationalism clearly ante-dated his contact with Islam, in particular of Sāṃkhya and Nyāya.

The second 'modern' element in Dayānanda's reconstruction of the Golden Age was that he ascribed to it scientific and technological superiority. Here again we may refer to Rajnarayan Bose's lecture, which gave as another reason for the superiority of Hinduism the fact that it contained within its scope the fulness of human knowledge, including the political and economic sciences. Hinduism was 'like an ocean containing gems without number'.<sup>29</sup> The germ of the idea was there. Dayānanda filled it out by including science and technology.<sup>30</sup> For this one can discern two contributing factors. The first was his admiration for technological and scientific advance and his conviction that they were an essential part of the progress and welfare of the nation. Proof of this lies in his own desire to found a technological institute with machines and even teachers from Germany.<sup>31</sup> The second was his

knowledge of ancient texts on astronomy, mathematics, and medical science, and of the epic texts referring to flying machines and magical science-fiction weaponry. All these elements somehow combined in his affirmation that the Vedas contained indications of considerable scientific and technological sophistication.

The third conception of Dayānanda which, in our view, is alien to the tradition is that the four Vedas constitute a definitive corpus of revelation given once and for all time, of the total wisdom of God, and that they therefore present the blueprint of the Golden Age. No doubt tradition extolled the Vedas as the revealed supreme religious authority, but throughout the ages Hinduism has accepted new revelations, through *avatāras* and through new books, such as the Purānas the Tantras, and the hymns of the saints, which complemented and even superseded Vedic revelation. This new concept of the Swami certainly did not come to him via the Bengali intelligentsia, who totally rejected his claims for the Vedas.<sup>32</sup> However, after his visit to Calcutta Dayānanda was frequently in contact with Christian missionaries, many of whom were fundamentalist in their approach to the Bible. To them Christianity was par excellence the religion of the book, which once and for ever had been handed by God to mankind for its salvation. Dayānanda transferred this idea to the four Vedas, making them into a definitive corpus of total revelation, recipe for all mankind's ills, be they religious, social, political, economic, or scientific.

Dayānanda's concept of the Golden Age was, therefore, far from simplistic, and certainly not caused simply by the process of a clash between traditional and modern ideas or by superficial borrowing. The basic idea of a Golden Age was available in the tradition, and was generally presented as a fatalistic, necessary episode in a pre-ordained rhythm of eternal return on a vast time scale. However, the Mahābhārata provided the idea of a Golden Age achieved by man in the short term outside the cycle of necessity, in other words it contained the idea of man-made progress. No doubt Dayānanda inherited from modern thought his concern for chronology and historicity. But the process was intricate, and greatly influenced by two other elements. First of all, chronological tables were already part of the traditional lore and of the *yuga* theory itself; these data were used by the Swami as historical proofs. Secondly, his concern for demythologization was not a modern borrowing, but had firm roots in the uncompromising rationalism of Nyāya and Sāṃkhya.

The idea that a perfect age of progress and prosperity would of necessity entail scientific and technological advance certainly was a modern one, as such absent from traditional lore. However, even here the ancient texts, particularly the Mahābhārata, with their wondrous vehicles and war-machines, gave a fundamentalist the opening he needed. Moreover, there was ample evidence of theoretical sophistication in astronomy, mathematics, geography, and medicine in the ancient literatures.

Dayānanda's concept of the Vedas as the definitive deposit of all knowledge was influenced by Christian ideas of revelation. However, in this matter tradition offered the Swami the basic elements to build on. The pre-excellence of the Vedas over all Hindu texts was amply affirmed, and generally accepted as a sign of orthodoxy. He took that idea and universalized it

in one direction: the Vedas were superior to *all* religious scriptures. In another direction he made it more exclusive by denying the claim of revelation to *any* other Hindu text.

At this state one may ask a further question. In the elaboration of his idea of the Vedic Golden Age the Swami made many choices. Were they prompted by some basic principles, or was his final system a mere eclectic amalgam of disparate elements? We have no time to elaborate, but our answer is that three fundamental principles came to dominate the Swami's thought and were decisive in his elaboration of the Vedic Golden Age. These principles took many years to mature, and basically they were independent from outside (western) influences.

The first of these principles was that there existed an original revelation with an authority that took precedence over the whole tradition. The second was the touchstone of rationalism: whatever offended reason (the miraculous, the contradictory, the physically impossible, the morally unsound) had to be rejected. The third principle was that among the wide range of religious practices available within (and without) Hinduism, only moral action as such had religious efficacy. This principle excluded the acceptance of any intrinsic power of *bhakti*, ritual, mystical experience, *mantra*, *prasāda* (grace), diet, etc. etc. It could be demonstrated that these three principles were decisive at every turn in the Swami's elaboration of the Vedic Golden Age.<sup>33</sup>

The detailed analysis of Dayānanda's total concept of the Golden Age demonstrates in one instance how intricate the process of modernization really was. Only a close investigation into the various facets of the total tradition can help to determine the exact areas of modern influence. The study of the interaction of tradition and modernity must cautiously avoid any simplistic assumptions and generalities about traditional India. Milton Singer was right when he said that in the relationship of tradition and modernity, the appearance of each face is illumined by the light reflected from the other'.<sup>34</sup>

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. Milton Singer, ed., *Traditional India: Structure and Change*, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia, 1958, p. XVIII.
2. L. I. and S. H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*, University of Chicago Press, 1967, p.10.
3. Cf. P. J. Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge U. P., 1970
4. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, 5 vols. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1930-62.
5. The Purānas consulted were the following: Agni, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Kūrma, Liṅga, Matsya, Śhiva, Vāyu, and Viṣṇu.
6. For a clear summary of the classical theory, cf. A. L. Basham *The Wonder that was India*, Grove Press, New York, 1954. pp. 320-22.
7. For a discussion of these ideas, cf. M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History, The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Harper, New York, 1959.

8. P. V. Kane, vol. iv, pp. 885-6.
9. For a long description taken from the Mahābhārata, Vanaparvan, 188, 30-64, cf. Kane, vol. III, pp. 892-5.
10. For an extensive treatment of the Kalivarjyas cf. Kane, vol. III, pp. 926-68.
11. Ibid., p. 930.
12. Ibid., pp. 4, 33, 244.
13. Manu, I, 86.
14. Yājñurāṇa, VI, 2, quoted in Kane V, 925.
15. Śāntiparvan, 231-2.
16. Śāntiparvan, 340, 349.
17. Ibid., 12. 70. 6-7.
18. Ibid., 12. 70. 6; 12. 92. 2; 12. 13.
19. Cf. J. T. F. Jordens, *Dayānanda Sarasvatī, his Life and Ideas*, O. U. P., Delhi, 1967, *passim*.
20. Cf. Ibid., pp. 106 - 7, 251 - 2.
21. Cf. Dayānanda's *Introduction to the Commentary on the Vedas*, Chapter I.
22. Cf. J. T. F. Jordens, *passim*.
23. Cf. Dayānanda's *Satyārth Prakash*, first ed., Banares, 1875, pp. 308 - 9, 373, 219 - 20; second edition, ed. Yudhisthir Mimamshak, Sonpat, 1972, pp. 329 - 34, 407 - 12.
24. *Satyārth Prakāsh*, second ed., pp. 591 - 2.
25. Cf. J. T. F. Jordens, *passim*.
26. Cf. P. J. Marshall, and also D. Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1969.
27. Rajnarayan Basu, *Hindudharmer Shreshhtatā*, Calcutta, 1872; for a discussion cr. Jordens, p. 78.
28. Cf. e.g. C. D. Church, 'The Myth of the four Yugas in the Sanskrit Puranas; a diamensional study', *Purāṇa*, vol. XVI, no. 1, Jan. 1974, pp. 15 - 18.
29. Rajnarayan Basu, *ibidem*.
30. This was developed by the Swami in particular in several chapters of his *Introduction to the Commentary on the Vedas*, and frequently referred to in his voluminous Commentary on the Rgveda and the Yajurveda.
31. *Rishi Dayānanda Sarasvatī ke patra aur vijñāpan*, ed., Pandit Bhagavaddatt, 2nd ed., Amritsar, 1955, pp. 250, 261.
32. Cf. Jordens, pp. 279 - 80, 89 - 91.
33. Ibid., *passim*, especially Chapter XII.
34. Milton Singer, p. XVIII.

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### 1. Establishing the Complexity

The great Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna wrote to his friend, King Udyāna of the Śatavāhana dynasty, the following famous lines (Nāgārjuna: 1975, 76):<sup>1</sup>

Just as the grammarian makes one study grammar,  
A Buddha teaches according to the tolerance of students;  
Some he urges to refrain from sins, other to do good,  
Some to rely on dualism, others on non-dualism;  
And to some (he teaches) the profound,  
The terrifying, the practice of enlightenment,  
Whose essence is emptiness that is compassion.

There could be no better entry into the study of Buddhist ethics than the contemplation of these words, containing both the variety, the difficulty, the profundity, and the simplicity of the subject.

Now this variety is the first thing with which the contemporary ethicist must treat his questions such as 'Is Buddhist ethics deontological? Is it teleological? Is it something again different? Or is it no such thing, not ethics at all?' "Buddhism" in a sense refers to a vast complex of religions, philosophies, practices, etc. spreading over all Asia over 2500 years of history. It is absurd to imagine that all its ethical teachings are only of one type. After all, there is a wide variety in Christian ethics over its large range of extension, including its marginal sects. Furthermore, aside from vast cultural and historical diversity, it is necessary to recognize another complicating factor, namely, the inveterate tendency in Buddhist thought and psychology to classify persons into a hierarchy of types, according to their stages of development and understanding, both as developed in their immediate lifetimes and as inherited (not from their parents) from their own experiences in former lives, a kind of transmigratory genetic code. Thus, each different type has an ethical code appropriate to it, resulting in a plurality of ethical codes corresponding to the variety of beings. This stands in contrast to Western ethics in general, particularly the deontological type of legalistic ethics of obligation, wherein every human being is basically the same, and any superiority in function of realization, as in the case of the saints, is attributed not to intrinsic qualities of the individual but to purity as fortune in receptivity of divine grace. The ethics of virtue on the other hand, such as those developed particularly by Augustine, exhibit strong similarity to the stratified ethics of the Buddhist systems, but I will return to this below.

An early typology of persons is found in the *Milindapañho*, and consists of five ranks, the "alienated individual" (*prthagjana*), the "stream-winner" (*srotāpanna*), the "once-returner" (*sakṛdāgamin*), the "non-returner" (*anāgamin*), and the "saint" (*arhat*). Ethically, the basic divisions here are fourfold; namely into the ordinary person who is lost is worldliness, seeking his own pleasure and other ephemeral ends, is a layman, and needs certain basic restrictive precepts; 2) the "stream-winner" who has heard the Buddha Dharma, and seeks heaven by virtuous action, or seeks nirvana by entering the monastic order; 3) the "once - and non-returners," who are mendicants devoted to liberation via single-minded practice of the three