

Christian Faith and Freedom Versus Indian Faith and Freedom

LEONARD F. BADIA*

It is clear that truth and freedom are complementary realities which sustain each other by virtue of a dialectic which is not merely conceptual but also existential. Truth and freedom are not just two concepts which imply each other, but they are two values which cannot exist without each other. They are related in such a way that each seems to be at the root of the other.

Freedom is rooted in our openness to truth. Free-will behaviour is ultimately a deliberate and efficacious value-judgment. It is a free judgment, says St Thomas, who saw in reason the ultimate foundation of freedom.¹ In this sense, one could say that the word of the Gospel, the truth shall make you free, expresses, beyond the religious mystery to which it primarily refers, a profoundly philosophical truth, which will never be sufficiently meditated upon, especially in our times.

Unquestionably, it is true that freedom is in retreat in our world, although it is talked about more than ever. It is not impossible that the principal reason for this retreat must be sought in the fact that people more and more tend to forget that freedom has its foundation in reason. True, the-man-in-the-street, who hardly ever reflects, has always had the tendency to confuse liberty with licence, and free decision with caprice. But it is characteristic of our times that even philosophers labour under an ill-advised irrationalism and tend to separate freedom and truth. They forget that freedom is first of all internal and therefore a quality of the soul, having its foundation in man's openness to truth. Certainly, free behaviour is a choice, but it is not a blind, arbitrary and empty choice, which would be nothing but pure "invention." It is a choice animated and orientated by values and consequently implies a deliberate and motivated value-judgment. For this reason, when freedom is no longer sustained by a concern for the truth, it always degenerates into internal and external anarchy. All anarchy leads to slavery. The man who does not reflect and lives in a kind of internal anarchy acts in a whimsical

* Dr Badia is Assistant Professor of Theology at St John's University, Staten Island, New York.

¹ St Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (New York: Benziger, 1947), p. 1g. 83a. 1.

way and makes himself a slave of his passions and moods. The same applies to society. A society of men cannot live in disorder and adventitiousness. This is the reason why freedom separated from truth ultimately leads to dictatorship.

What has been said about the bond which connects freedom with truth as its foundation applies not only to free-will behaviour, but to freedom considered as existential maturity and even to freedom in the sociological sense of the term.

As a matter of fact, with respect to the first sense, that internal and external autonomy, that ever-broadening self-possession which is the essence of personality, is the immanent fruit, as it were, of a long effort of the soul to open itself to values. Accordingly, it may be said that the first result of deliberate and free activity is to make ourselves conform more and more to true values, to develop in ourselves a certain harmony or, as St Thomas said, a certain connaturality between the soul and true values, which makes the good itself become easy and attractive.

Regarding social freedom, it will not really make us free unless it is based upon truth, unless it is animated by constant concern for the truth and the good and tends to favour, beyond the external freedoms, internal freedom. Once more, the ancients were not wrong in saying that the supreme purpose of politics is not simply to make man richer but better, wiser and more virtuous, more open to the true and to the good. For this reason, true democracy is the enemy of demagoguery. Demagoguery is the reign of the lie, of calumny and deceit; it is the art of the fascinating and hypnotizing the masses by promising them the impossible and flattering their instincts—briefly, it is a psychological dictatorship that is much worse than its political namesake. This explains, moreover, why demagoguery and dictatorship are so closely related and appear always connected in history.

If it is true that genuine freedom is rooted in openness to truth, the reverse is equally true. Truth can blossom only in a climate of internal and external freedom.

First of all, a climate of internal freedom is required. Human truth is not something quite finished which we find along the road, nor a spectacle which unfolds itself obligingly to our gaze as soon as we turn our eyes to it. Truth is a laborious and unending conquest. It is not only the progress of science which supposes in man a thought that is always on the alert and an inventive effort to create new hypotheses, improved techniques and mathematical tools of an ever increasing suppleness and range of application; philosophical truth also is reached only by an effort of assiduous reflection, unceasing struggle against ready made solutions, unbounded faithfulness to reality and a generous openness to the mystery of being which sustains and envelops us. To speak with Martin Heidegger, it is "to let being be." It is not without reason that the German philosopher sees the root and

even the essence of freedom in this "let be," i.e., in this quasi-religious reverence for reality which should make it possible for reality to reveal itself as it is.²

Moreover, to realize this presence of freedom in the innermost depth of our straining for truth, it will be sufficient to remark once more that human knowledge takes its beginning in wonder and questioning. Once again, this internal freedom, which is at the source of our quest of truth, is not a hollow freedom, a gratuitous and meaningless act. To use the language of phenomenology, it is an "intention" of consciousness, an attitude orientated towards an end—namely, the search for and promotion of truth in all its forms and all its splendour. Consequently, this freedom implies respect for the diversity and originality proper to the various domains of knowledge, as well as a love for a unifying synthesis. It is important to take due notice of this respect implied in freedom, for it happens only too frequently that man sins against truth in the name of a pretended appeal to truth, i.e., to a certain particular truth. This happens, for example, when a scientist gives in to the temptation of positivism and shows nothing but contempt for philosophical and religious truth. It happens also when the philosopher or the theologian claims to make the laws for the scientist and dictates to him what truths he must discover. In both cases, there is a lack of fidelity to the exigencies of truth.

It is quite evident that the climate of internal freedom presupposes external freedom, i.e., a social climate which is favourable to the search for truth. Such a climate is not only indispensable for the progress of positive science, but also for the growth of genuine philosophical thought.

It is characteristic of philosophy to think radically, to dig into problems down to their very last foundations, to pass beyond established and objectivized thought and reach the thinking thought. This is hardly possible without a loyal and sincere dialogue with others. In philosophical terms, it is in the confrontation of thoughts that the mind awakens and the transition is made from unreflective and anonymous knowing to reflective and personal knowing. In a society where everyone is compelled to think the same thing, there will hardly be any room for genuine philosophical thought.

Regarding religious faith, it, too, supposes a climate of freedom under penalty of degenerating into an external behaviour without internal adherence, a soulless formalism, which is nothing but a caricature of faith.

The problem which now concerns us is one of those eternal problems which has never ceased to attract the attention of Christian thinkers. Already the Apologists of the second century occupied themselves with it and tried to harmonize faith with the best of pagan thought. It is well known that, as a result of Aristotle's introduction

² John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Scribners 1966), p. 103.

to the schools, the synthesis of Faith and natural reason was one of the great preoccupations of mediæval theologians. Nevertheless it was only with the arrival of modern science, i.e., with Galileo and Descartes, that the problem of the harmony of faith and freedom of research received its present and final form. The reason is that, unlike Aristotelian philosophy and physics—the only physics known to the West before the Renaissance—modern science is an empirical knowledge in the sense that it does not only start with the facts but aims at an explanation which can be controlled by the facts. Against the facts no argument can stand up, not even if it is thought to be supported by revelation.

The problem of the agreement of faith and freedom is twofold. On the one hand, the question is how to reconcile faith, which is an adherence to divinely revealed dogmas, with freedom of scientific research; on the other, it is the question of effecting a synthesis of faith with the exigencies of reason in the very heart of religious thought itself, and this is the problem of the possibility of theological reflection.

Before this double problem can be examined more closely, a preliminary question has to be solved—what is to be understood by “dogma”?

The important point to be noted in this question is that the term “dogma” has two clearly distinct meanings. In the secular and philosophical sense, it means an opinion or assertion which is unjustified or even unjustifiable. Its psychological correlative, or to use the language of phenomenology, its noetic correlative, is dogmatism. Usually, only this sense of the term is known to unbelievers. They identify the idea of “dogma” with that of “prejudice” and imagine that the dogma of religion is like a domain placed under taboo and closed to investigation and reflection.

The second sense of the “dogma” is the religious and theological sense. In theology, dogma means the religious mystery which is the object of faith, or more exactly, our knowledge of this mystery by means of revelation, and finally the proposition in which this knowledge is expressed. Its psychological or noetic correlative is not dogmatism but faith. Faith is not a blind adherence and does not forbid reflection; on the contrary, faith demands reflection. The dogmatical proposition which serves to express the mystery of faith, taken intentionally, is not even the ultimate term of faith. Somehow, faith passes through this dogmatical proposition to give adherence to God Himself and His message of Salvation. “The Act of the believer does not terminate in the statement but in the object expressed by it.” Accordingly, to believe in God it is necessary to have a truthful idea of God which can be expressed in a proposition; yet faith stops neither at this idea nor at the proposition but terminates in God Himself. The same applies to all mysteries of faith.⁸

⁸ Albert Dondeyne, *Contemporary European Thought and Christian Faith*, trans. Eran McMullin and John Burnheim, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1963), pp. 176-77.

Now that we have examined the Christian concepts of faith and freedom, let us examine the Indian side of the picture. What exactly is the Indian concept of faith and freedom? We will consider the twofold division of the Indian side, namely the Buddhist conception of these two ideas and the Hindu conception.

Buddhism was the only religious and philosophical message of India to spread far beyond the borders of its homeland. Conquering Asia to the North and East, it became in those vast areas the creed of the masses and shaped the civilization for centuries. The Buddha's doctrine is called *yana*. The word means a vehicle or a ferryboat. This idea persists through all the differing and various conflicting teachings of numerous Buddhist sections. Each section describes the vehicle in its own way, but it remains always a ferry. For example, one only has to think for a moment about the actual everyday experience of the process of crossing the river in a ferryboat, to come to the simple idea that inspires and underlies all of the various rationalized systematizations of the doctrine. To enter the Buddhist vehicle, the boat of discipline, means to begin to cross the river of life, from the shore of the common sense experience of the non-enlightenment, the shore of spiritual ignorance (*avidya*), desire (*kama*), and death (*mara*), to the yonder bank of transcendental wisdom (*vidya*), which is liberation (*moksa*) from this general bondage.⁴

The Buddhist way of ascetic training is designed to conduce to the understanding that there is no substantial ego nor any object anywhere that lasts, but only spiritual processes, welling and subsiding sensations, feelings, visions. These can be suppressed or set into motion at will. The idea of the extinction of the fire of lust, illness and ignorance becomes devoid of meaning when this psychological power and point of view has been attained; for the process of life is no longer experienced as a burning fire.⁵

As the centuries passed, the teachings of Buddha divided into two main groups of thought, namely the Hinayana (early school) and the Mahayana (later school) and then there were several specific schools. Buddha did not formulate so much a new scheme of metaphysics and morals as rediscover an old norm and adapt it to the new conditions of thought and life.

His Four Noble Truths are that there is suffering, that it has a cause, that it can be suppressed, and that there is a way to accomplish this. All things pass away, dreams and hopes, fears and desires. None can resist the universal supremacy of death.

As Buddhism spread, different answers were given to these central metaphysical issues. The Hinayana developed the doctrine of the transitoriness of substances or individuals. The goal of existence is

⁴ Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 475.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

defined as nirvana, whose content is not further specified. It upholds the ideal of the saint (*arhat*), who frees himself from bondage to karma by his own ideals. The Buddha is not so much a saviour as an example. The worship of the Buddha is merely an act of commemoration. The popular gods were introduced into Buddhism in its more religious form to serve as objects of meditation.

The Mahayana gives us a positive philosophy which believes in the reality of an Absolute (*bhutatathata*), the essence of existence. Religiously, this is the *dharmakaya* (embodied law). The world of experience is phenomenal, an expression of the absolute reality. The Buddha himself is a personification of the law. Here we have the transformation of the *dharmakaya* into the *sambhogakaya* (enjoyment-body). It is the *adibuddha* (original Buddha) answering to Saguna Brahman, or Isvara, in Hinduism.

While the *arhat* is the ideal of the Hinayana, the *bodhisattva* (a would-be Buddha) is the ideal of the Mahayana. A *bodhisattva*, out of the abundance of his love, engages himself in the task of teaching every sentient being. Nirvana, for Mahayana, is not annihilation, but attainment.

In the course of the development of Buddhist thought many philosophical schools arose. Chief among these are four, the *Vaibhasika* (direct realism) and the *Sautrantika* (indirect realism) schools which belong to the Hinayana, and the *Yogacara* (idealism) and the *Madhyamika* (relativism; sometimes called nihilism) which belong to the Mahayana.*

Then, what is the faith of a Buddhist? The world, as we see it, is too small to hold all the love and faith that are in the heart of man. According to Buddhist theory, faith is the step in the direction of Buddhism, and for the layman faith is bound to cover more or less the sum total of his religious aspirations. Faith would in this context not be an acceptance of definite dogmas, but its essence would consist in some measure of detachment from this world and a partial turning-away from the visible to the invisible, without, however, quite reaching it. What then would the faith of a Buddhist layman consist in? He would have respect for the Buddha, for his doctrine (the Dharma), and for the community of monks.

Faith is a longing for things not of this world, and it expresses itself in worship. Buddhists are in the habit of worshipping the relics and footprints which were the visible traces of the Buddha's presence on earth. They also worship what is technically known as *Caityas*. A *Caitya* is a general name for any sanctuary or shrine. It is always connected with the person of the Buddha himself, although the connection may be a very indirect one. The *Caitya* may contain a relic of the Buddha's physical body, a tooth, or other bone; it may contain

* Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, *Indian Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 272-73.

something which the Buddha had worn on himself or used, like his robe, which was preserved at Hadda, or his alms-bowl, which was shown at Peshawar; or it may contain portions of the Dharma-body of the Buddha, in other words, of the Scriptures.⁷

The Old Wisdom School (Hinayana) and the New Wisdom School (Mahayana) differ on their view of Faith. The New Wisdom School was the movement of an elite which from compassion regarded the interests of the common people as their own.

The *Bodhisattva* was committed to skill in means. He could not possibly confine his activities on behalf of the salvation of others to the advice to meditate on emptiness. Otherwise the majority of the people would be left out, by their lack of metaphysical inclinations, their pre-occupation with earning a living, and their deep-rooted attachment to property, family and home. Since, however, the layman also is involved in suffering, and, as originally divine, endowed with spiritual longings and potentialities, the word of the Buddha is addressed to him as well.

Incapable of wisdom, he must use faith. The way of transcendental wisdom is supplemented by that of faith, or *bhakti*. Nagarjuna distinguishes the easy way of faith from the hard and difficult way of wisdom. Both lead to the same goal, just as one can travel to the same town either by water, or on land. Some prefer the method of zealous vigour, of austerities, and of meditation. Others can, by the easy practice of the helpful means of faith, simply by thinking of the Buddha while invoking his names, rapidly attain to a state from which there is no falling back, i.e., from which they go to full enlightenment in the certainty of reaching it.

Faith, a rather subordinate virtue in the Hinayana, now comes to rank equal with wisdom itself. Its power to save is much greater than the old schools assumed. The increasing degeneration of mankind had to be recognized. The hard way of self-trained, vigorous wisdom was no longer feasible for many, if not for the majority, even among the monks. Under these circumstances, the easy way of faith was the only one of which people were still capable.

From ca. 400 B.C. onward a movement of *bhakti* had gathered momentum in India, and about the beginning of our era it had gained great strength. *Bhakti* means the loving personal devotion to adored deities conceived in human form. About the time of the Christian era the bhaktic tendencies of the Indian masses, which had influenced Buddhism for a long time, invaded it in full force. The metaphysics of the New Wisdom School was sufficiently elastic to absorb the trend towards *bhakti*, and to provide it with a philosophical foundation. The result of the organic fusion between the "new wisdom" Buddhism and the bhaktic movement is what we shall call the Buddhism of Faith.⁸

⁷ Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

The first requirement of the spiritual pupil in India, as we have seen, is the great virtue of faith (*sraddha*), trust in the teacher and his words. The faith will be corroborated by the pupil's own experience in the course of his spiritual progress, but meanwhile he cannot presume to argue with his guru in callow criticism of the paradoxical doctrine. He must undergo, first, a transformation; that, not criticism, will be the means of his understanding. He must be brought by a process of evolution to a spiritual level from which to experience the meaning of the enigmatical teaching. And meanwhile, the process of his sublimation will be facilitated by meditation on the magic formula, which is the "Heart of the Wisdom of the Other Shore," and which he is to regard as an expression of his own supreme belief, designed to concentrate and intensify his faith. Though temporarily unintelligible to him, it is nevertheless his credo, to be repeated in constant recitation, as an invocation bidding the Wisdom of the Other Shore to come to him. And the wonder is that this magic formula actually can function as an effective charm, facilitating the transmutation that duly yields, of itself, the gold of enlightenment.⁹

Does the Buddhist believe in freedom? Buddhists believe that all men ought to deny their own selves and endeavour to help each other and to look for co-existence, because no man can ever be truly independent.¹⁰ All men ought to deny their own selves and endeavour to help each other and to look for co-existence, because no man can ever be truly independent.¹¹

The theory of Buddhism that self-lessness is the nature of all things leads to the theory that all things are impermanent (*anitya*). Generally speaking, men give all their energy to preserving their own existence and their possessions. However, Buddhists believe it is impossible to discover the core of their own existence, nor is it possible to preserve it forever. Nothing remains unchanged even for a moment. There is insecurity in relation to space and also in relation to time. If it were possible to discover a world which is space-less and time-less, that would be a world of true freedom, i.e., Nirvana.¹²

There are no ordinary eschatological questions in Buddhism because all beings are in the eternal flux of becoming. One should note, however, that birth incurs death and death again incurs birth. Birth and death are two inevitable phenomena of the cycle of life which ever repeats its course. The end of self-creation is simply the realization of the Life-Ideal, that is, the undoing of all life-conditions, in other words, the attainment of perfect freedom, never more to be condi-

⁹ Zimmer, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

¹⁰ M. Hiriyana, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976), p. 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

tioned by causation in space-time. Nirvana is the state of perfect freedom.¹³

Nirvana means extinction of life and death, extinction of worldly desire and extinction of space and time conditions. This, in the last analysis, means unfolding a world of perfect freedom.

Selflessness (no substance) and impermanence (no deviation) are the real state of our existence. Nirvana (negatively extinction; positively perfection) is our ideal, that is, perfect freedom, quiescence.¹⁴

486 B.C. saw a conclusion of Buddha's activity as a teacher in India. The death of the Buddha is called "Nirvana" the state of a fire blown out. When fire burns out, nothing remains to be seen. So the Buddha was considered to have entered into an invisible state which can in no way be depicted in word or form.¹⁵

In his lifetime the Buddha had a perfect freedom in his intellectual activity, and while he was a person, he had been super-personally enlightened.

The Buddha in Nirvana has a perfect freedom to live anywhere he pleases; he can act in whatever way he wishes and, on that account, has no fixed abode; his Nirvana is called the "Nirvana of No Abode." The Blessed One may reappear in this world when he feels the necessity of saving all beings as the historical Sakyamuni did. Therefore, the Buddha, according to the idealistic view, does not live in the world of life and death as he is not bound by causation. However, at the same time he does not rest at ease in Nirvana, because he is the sufferer of others' suffering.¹⁶

Having seen a few aspects of the Buddhist's idea of faith and freedom, we will look at the Hindu concepts of faith and freedom. It was Siddhartha Gautama called Buddha (the enlightened one) who rebelled against the Hindu tradition. He had prescribed a high ethical code but without mentioning a deity. He placed his main reliance on meditation and mental self discipline rather than on asceticism. He retains many doctrines of Hinduism. Buddhism flourished in India for almost 1,500 years after his death.

What was the Hindu concept of faith and freedom? The fundamental tenets of Hinduism took shape during the four or five centuries after about 800 B.C. They were set down in a series of treatises called the Upanishads. The Upanishads left some great issues unsettled. The individual Hindu is still free to decide whether he believes the one Supreme Reality is an impersonal essence or spirit, hence to be called Brahman (neuter), or a personal God, hence to be called Brahma

¹³ Junjiro Takakusu, *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Wing Tsit Chan and Charles A. Moore, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1956), p. 195.

¹⁴ Hiriyana, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

(masculine). Similarly the believer can decide that the world is one aspect of Brahman or Brahma, or that it is simply Its or His creation—or he may remain undecided.

In either case, the devout Hindu regards the visible world as *maya*. Like the English word "magic," the Sanskrit *maya* is often translated as "illusion," and many a Westerner has concluded from this that the Hindu believes the visible world to be a hallucination. What the Hindu actually means is that the world is not simply what it seems to the human senses—a view with which 20th Century western scientists wholly agree. (Although the Greek philosopher Democritus is generally credited with originating the concept of the atom, Hindu thinkers preceded him.)

There have been many interpretations of Hinduism by Indian thinkers, but Radhakrishnan has developed an interpretation that has become associated with his name. His systematic presentation, great erudition, and deep religious feeling, has given his views a wide audience. Especially significant has been the argument that Hinduism finds a place within itself for all the varieties of religious experience thus creating a religion of tolerance while Christianity and Islam, the inheritors of Judaism, display the intolerance of narrow monotheism.¹⁷

Hindu beliefs according to Radhakrishnan are as follows:

1. One supreme spirit, though different names are given to it.
2. Social economy—many castes, but one society.
3. Population—many races and tribes, but all bound together by one common spirit.
4. Many forms of marriage permitted, but only one ideal aimed at.

The world which is in perpetual flux is not all. Its subjection to law and tendency to perfection indicate that it is based on a spiritual reality which is not exhausted in any particular object or groups of objects. God is in the world, though not as the world. His creative activity is not confined to the significant stages in the evolutionary process. He does not merely intervene to create life or consciousness but is working continuously. There is no dualism of the natural and supernatural. The spiritual is an emergent of the natural in which it is rooted. The Hindu spirit is that attitude towards life which regards the endless variety of the visible and temporal world as sustained and supported by the invisible and eternal spirit.¹⁸

The central principles of Hindu faith are evil, error and ugliness, which must be outgrown. They are half-way marks according to the Hindus. Evil refers to the distance which good has to traverse,

¹⁷ Ainslie T. Embree, *The Hindu Tradition* (New York: The Modern Library, 1966), p. 344.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

ugliness reaches toward beauty and error is present on the road to truth. Complete castigation should be given to no man no matter how evil he is. The universe fails if one human soul fails to reach its divine destiny.

Every soul is unlike all others in the world. The destruction of even one soul, the most wicked, will create a void in God's scheme. There is no hell and universal salvation is a certainty, if the infinite love of God is not a myth. Evil and error are inevitable and we shall have error and imperfection until salvation is achieved.

In religion, Hinduism takes its stand on a life of spirit, and affirms that the theological expressions of religious experience are bound to be varied. One metaphor succeeds another in the history of theology until God is felt as the central reality in the life of man and the world. Hinduism repudiates the belief resulting from a dualistic attitude that the plants in my garden are of God, while those in my neighbour's are weeds planted by the devil which we should destroy at any cost. On the principle that the best is not the enemy of the good, Hinduism accepts all forms of belief and lifts them to a higher level. The cure for error is not the stake or the cudgel, not force or persecution, but the quiet diffusion of light.

In practical religion, Hinduism recognizes that there are those who wish to see God face to face, others who delight in the endeavour to know the truth of it all. Some find peace in action, others in non-action. A comprehensive religion guides each along his path to the common goal, as all woo the same goddess though with different gifts. We must not give supreme and sole importance to our speciality. Perfection can be attained as a celibate, or a householder, or an anchorite. A rigid uniform outlook is wrong. The saintliness of the holy man does not render the steadfastness of the devoted wife or the simple innocence of the child superfluous. The perfection of every type is divine. "Whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful and mighty, understand that it goes forth from out of a fragment of my splendour."¹⁹ Peace should be found by all—by some in action, by others in non-action. Perfection of every type is divine.

According to the law of Karma, the individual life is not a term, but a series. Until we reach the end of the journey opportunities will abound for us. Heaven and hell are higher and lower stages in one continuous movement.²⁰ Purification is accomplished through purgation. The duties of our state of life are primary. Freedom consists in making the best of what we have, our partage, our physical nature and mental gifts. Every kind of capacity, every form of vocation, if rightly used, will lead us to the centre.²¹

¹⁹ The Bhagavad-Gita X 21.

²⁰ Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

Principles underlie the caste system. Hindus feel that society is an organism of different grades and that the kinds and significance of human activities differ. No one can be perfect in all things, but his potentialities should be realized and he should pursue them. Work should be performed in a spirit of service to the common good. Class conflicts are due to the fact that a warm living sense of unity does not bind the different groups together.

Belief in *Karma* has, for long, had a profound influence on the life of the Indian people. There are two aspects of it which should be clearly distinguished. In the first place, the doctrine extends the principles of causation to the sphere of human conduct and teaches that, as every event in the physical world is determined by its antecedents, so everything that happens in the moral realm is preordained. If all that man does is thus preordained, it may be asked whether the doctrine does not become fatalistic and therefore leave no room to him for the exercise of freedom. To answer this question, it is necessary to explain what exactly is meant by "freedom." To be controlled by extraneous factors in what one does is not to be a free agent; but freedom does not therefore mean the total absence of determination or mere caprice. To act with arbitrarily shifting motives would be to act from impulse, as many lower animals do. Hence freedom should be regarded as consisting not in unrestricted licence, but in being determined by oneself. When therefore we ask whether belief in *Karma* does not result in fatalism, all that we mean is whether it does not preclude self-determination. That it does not is evident, because the doctrine traces the causes which determine an action to the very individual who acts. Since, however, those causes cannot all be found within the narrow limits of a single life, it postulates the theory of *samsara* or the continued existence of the self (*jiva*) in a succession of lives. Thus the theory of transmigration is a necessary corollary to the doctrine of *Karma*.²²

A period of many years has seen Indian philosophy develop in richness and variety. The major movements and periods of Indian philosophy have contributed much to its development.

The Vedic period, dated 2500-600 B.C., was the time that saw the establishment of India philosophy, and the fundamental aspects of Indian thought and life. Two *dharmas*, the active and contemplative, were developed and formulated in the Vedas and Upanishads, respectively. Orthodox Hindu philosophy is defined in terms of the acceptance of the Veda. True, one would have some difficulty recognizing the ideas of the Vedas and the Upanishads in most of the technical philosophies of India, but their authoritativeness prevails even today as a basic part of the tradition.²³

²² Hiriyana, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

²³ Charles A. Moore, *The Indian Mind: Essentials of Indian Philosophy and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967), p. 5.

The Epic period, dating from 500 or 600 B.C. to A.D. 200, was known as the second period and a semi-philosophical era because social customs and practices of the Hindu people seemed to evolve during this time. This is the period of the two great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, which are a combination of history, mythology, and religio-philosophical thought. Social philosophy and law, morality, material welfare, pleasure, with little or no real concern for ultimate emancipation (*moksa*) were developed. Social stability was in line with the caste system.

A few centuries before the Christian era saw the beginning of the third period. Significant at this time was the formulation and the systemization of the Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy. The tendency among contemporary Hindus is to synthesize these systems as six aspects of one unified point of view or perspective, but the basic differences among them, the sometimes vigorous arguments between the competing systems, and the fact that each system continued for centuries in its philosophical identity would tend to question that interpretation.

In conclusion we must say that it is not easy for the Christian to understand the Hindu. It would be also true to say that the Hindu will find it difficult to understand the Christian with his ideas of faith and freedom. While it may be difficult for one to understand the other, yet an appreciation of each other can develop. This will truly be the beginning of understanding and lead eventually to a better brotherhood of the Christian and Hindu people.