

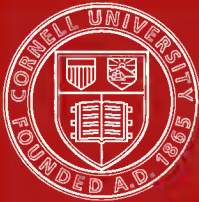
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Indian Culture and Social Life

At the time of
The Turkish Invasions

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CONTENTS

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FOREWORD

1. The Puzzle of the Ghorian Conquest	1
2. Categories of Hindu Thought	6
3. Sanskrit Literature	25
4. Popular Hinduism	39
5. Hindu Nationalism	60
6. The Brahmins	65
7. The Kshatriyas	81
8. The Masses	83
9. Dress and Manners	49
10. Laws and Customs	98

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INDIAN CULTURE AND SOCIAL LIFE AT THE TIME OF THE TURKISH INVASIONS

I. The Puzzle of the Ghorian Conquest

The last decade of the twelfth and the first decade of the thirteenth century in India were marked by the clash of two degenerate and decaying social systems—the Turkish and the Rajput. In this clash the former proved itself to be decisively superior; for in war, as in peace, success depends upon comparative efficiency. The Ghorians were defeated by the Khwarazmians, and the larger part of Afghanistan passed into the hands of Alauddin Khwarazmshah. But the weakness of the Khwarazmian Empire was patent to all keen observers long before it was extinguished by Chengiz Khan; lack of morality among the people led to lack of *morale* in the administration and the army, and two good Mongol campaigns were sufficient to expose the hollowness of Turkish power in Central Asia and Persia. And yet in this very period of moral and spiritual decay in Muslim Asian countries, the Turkish race, soon to be crushed and humiliated in its own

homelands, subdued the whole of northern India. Between the defeat of Shahabuddin at the first battle of Tarain in 1191 and the retreat of Bakhtiar Khilji from the banks of the Brahmaputra in 1205, there intervenes the brief period of thirteen or fourteen years. It sufficed not only for the conquest but also for the consolidation of Turkish rule in the Punjab, Sind, Oudh, Doab, Bihar, Bengal and a part of Rajputana. The rapidity as well as the permanence of the Turkish conquest stands in sharp contrast with the slow, uphill progress of British rule in India, specially if it is remembered that the Turkish generals, as compared with the great British Pro-consuls, had no superiority (apart from military organisation) over their Rajput opponents; no navy to place their communications beyond the enemy's reach, no artillery-parks which the enemy could not match and above all no home-government with its practically unlimited resources. The regime of the Turkish slaves of Shahabuddin Ghorî was completely annihilated by Alauddin Khilji in the early years of his reign but the Empire of Delhi, founded with such rapidity, lasted with varying fortunes till the middle of the eighteenth century and was not formally extinguished till after the Mutiny of 1857. And never, if we except the Khilji Revolution, had the Delhi Empire to face any extensive movement that even belated communalism or patriotism can consider religious or national. The oddest part of the Turkish conquest was its general acceptance by the country—acceptance temporarily of the Turkish bureaucracy and permanently of the centralised government of the Empire of Delhi which they

had inaugurated. It is one of the most puzzling facts of Indian history.

Alexander, the Great, retired sulkily to his tent after leading the most heroic expedition in the history of mankind because his war-worn veterans refused to follow him further east in the Panjab. Mahmud of Ghaznin, in spite of twenty-six years of brilliant campaigning—and for sheer military genius our country has never seen anything like them—never attempted to annex any territory beyond the Ravi. It was left to Shahabuddin Ghorî, the hero of the three stupendous defeats—Gujrat, Tarain and Andkhud—to achieve what the Greeks and the Kushans, the Hunas and the Ghaznevîdes had hardly dared to dream of. The Ghorian conquest of India might have been dismissed as a fable were the evidence for it not so absolutely convincing and complete. On the face of it the thing seems palpably absurd. The Ghorian dynasty had lost its power in Central Asia and even its homelands had been trampled by hostile troops; nevertheless its Turkish slave-officers succeeded in establishing one of the greatest empires of the middle ages. The economic resources of the Ghorian state even at the height of its power—about the year 1202—could hardly have been equal to those of a second rate Indian *raja* whose state covered five or six districts. The territory of Ghor and Gharjistan, though equal in area to an Indian province, is a bleak wilderness of rocky mountains, swept by a bitterly cold north-wind, where the snow lies thick on the ground for more than half the year; its reputed valleys

of a 'thousand springs' are only charming to eyes that have seen nothing better.¹ The comparatively fertile regions to the south and east of Ghor—Bamian, Kabul, Zabulistan, Nimroz, Sijistan, etc.—annexed by Ghiasuddin and Shahabuddin in the earlier years of their reigns had been thoroughly ransacked and plundered by the Ghazz Turks. Ghaznin, shorn of its earlier glories, had become a small city of mud houses all traces of which have now disappeared. The resources of the Ghorian state in man-power were equally meagre. Counting both Turks and non-Turks, the Ghorian brothers may have ruled at the most over a million families, possibly less, certainly not more. Unlike Mahmud, Shahabuddin could enroll few recruits, volunteers or professionals, from outside his territory. He was intensely unpopular in Persia, specially in Khorasan which he had repeatedly ravaged. Khwarazm (the Trans-Caspian region), Mawaraun-Nahr and Turkistan were in the hands of hostile powers. Nor was meagreness of resources compensated by the extraordinary ability of those in command. Shahabuddin had, undeniably, that sort of genius which Carlyle defines as 'the infinite capacity for taking pains', but nothing more. As a general he was industrious but incompetent. A resolute foe could always drive him away from the battle-field; in the face of a competent strategist, like Alauddin Khawarazmshah or Taniku Taraz, he completely lost his nerve and became panicky, confused and muddle-headed. Nor do the recorded achievements of his

¹ Hence probably the name *Hazara* (thousand) by which Ghor is now known.

principal generals show any remarkable strategic capacity—apart from their bull-dog capacity for persistent endeavour in the face of repeated defeats—which might explain their undeniable success. They were brave, but not braver than most men brought up in the profession of arms.

Nor had Ghor any of those moral or constitutional virtues which have enabled small states, like Rome, Medina or England, to establish extensive dominions. The hold of the Ghorian monarchy over its subordinate officers was very weak; in the hour of trial and gloom, most generals of Shahabuddin proved untrue to their master, and after his death they proved even more faithless to his legitimate successor and to each other. The victorious Ghorian state was rotten with intrigues to the core. That was the primary reason for its collapse. Shahabuddin himself had set the example of chicanery and fraud in the realm of diplomacy. He never hesitated to break his plighted word whenever it suited his plans. Like many of his contemporaries in that demoralised age, he seems to have considered the assassination of political opponents a justifiable, if not a commendable, measure of public policy. His generals, needless to add, improved upon his example. Add to it, while the Shansabania Dynasty of Ghor represented a stock of respectable Turkish hill-chiefs, the officers of the state were Turkish slaves purchased in the market. Whatever the strength of their loyalty to their master so long as he was strong enough to command them, they had no loyalty to the Ghorian Dynasty, and proceeded

to appropriate, or misappropriate, the dominions of Shahabuddin to the exclusion of Shahabuddin's legitimate heirs.

The Ghorian conquest of northern India, when all factors are kept in mind, can be explained by one fact only—the caste-system and all that it entails; the degeneration of the oppressor and the degeneration of the oppressed, priest-craft, king-craft, idol-worship with its degrading cults, the economic and spiritual exploitation of the multitude, the division of the people into small water-tight sub-caste groups resulting in the total annihilation of any sense of common citizenship or of loyalty to the country as a whole.

II. Categories of Hindu Thought

Indian historians have often deplored the lack of historical material after the death of Harshavardhana. Competent experts may, with the advance of time, be able to piece together a more consecutive narrative than we have at present on the basis of copper-plates and coins. So far as Muslim records are concerned, a flood of light is thrown on the condition of Sind by the *Chach Nama* (or *Tarikh-i Hind wa Sind*), the Arabic original of which, there is every reason to believe, was compiled on the basis of government records and personal investigations by no less a person than Mohammad ibn-i Kasim's *Qazi* of Multan. The Arab travellers in India have left records of their impressions, some of which were translated by Sir Henry Elliot in the first volume of his *History of India*, and later scholars have improved upon Elliot's

work. But the Arab travellers were neither Sanskritists nor trained observers; their primary business was import and export, and they very often completely misunderstood the significance of what they saw. On the other hand, the great scientific works of the Gupta era, specially the *Brahma-Siddhanta* (known as the *Sind-Hind*), became current in Muslim countries and were widely used by Muslim scientists along with Greek treatises on astronomy and mathematics. But the translations were inaccurate to start with; and after several generations of incompetent copyists had added to the errors of the translators, the manuscripts became a sheer jumble of nonsensical figures and diagrams, which no assiduity on the part of a mere Arabic scholar could put into form and order. Lastly, as we can well understand, owing to that innate tendency of human nature to misunderstand and misrepresent one's opponents, the wildest and the most impossible stories about India were current in Muslim lands. Abu Rihan Alberuni, the greatest Muslim scholar whom India has seen, protested against all this and after years of patient investigation produced the *Kitabul Hind*¹, 'a simple historic record of facts'. For us the great importance of the *Kitabul Hind* or *India* depends upon its methodology—a fine modification of the dialectical system of Socrates, in which Alberuni had been trained at Khwarazm, to suit the subject-matter of his inquiries. He gives us a unique survey, unsurpassed by anything yet written

¹ *Alberuni's India*, translated and edited with notes by Professor E. S. Sachau; Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., London, 1910.

in its comprehension of general sociological and philosophical principles as well as minute scientific details, of the achievements of Hindu thought in ages gone by, specially the Gupta period. During his 'internment' in India he associated extensively with Hindu *pandits*, whose habitual contempt for the *mlechcha* changed ultimately to one of deep reverence for Alberuni personally. It was, apparently, his habit during these discussions to drive his *pandit* friends by repeated examinations and cross-examinations, conducted after the manner of Socrates, to the most consistent statement of the basic doctrines of their faith. Though intimately acquainted with the works of Plato, Alberuni has (very wisely) not given us a record of his discussions but only brief, lucid and remarkably accurate definitions of the 'fundamental categories of Hindu thought'—the *weltanschauung* or world-outlook of the educated upper-classes of his day. "The main and most essential point of the Hindu world of thought is that which the Brahmans think and believe, for they are specially trained for preserving and maintaining their religion. And this is what we shall explain, *viz.*, the belief of the Brahmans." Critical scholarship, however, necessitated a careful comparison of the faith of the educated classes with the sacred texts on the one hand and with the 'silly notions of the multitude' on the other. A student of comparative religion and philosophy was further bound to put the thought of various peoples side by side. All this comes within the compass of Alberuni's work. "I shall mention in connection with them similar theories of the Greeks in order to show

the relationship existing between them..... Besides the Greek ideas we shall only now and then mention those of the *sufis* or of some one or other Christian sect, because in their notions regarding the transmigration of souls and the pantheistic doctrine of the unity of God with creation there is much in common between these systems."

A careful examination of Alberuni's *India* leaves upon one the impression that the philosophical, religious and scientific ideas of the educated classes were all they could have been; that the mass of the people wallowed in mud and mire, raising the dirtiest, filthiest and crudest fancies of the day to the dignity of religion and enshrining that religion in temples none too clean; that educated Brahmans of the better sort were horrified at this degradation of their beloved faith but were too weak or too disorganised to make an effective protest; that less scrupulous Brahmans not only earned their livelihood but established their authority by preying upon the weaknesses and the fears of the multitude; and that the *rajās* or chiefs, instead of joining the reformers, consciously promoted many vicious institutions for the benefit of their government and their treasury. And, consequently, the governing classes, willy-nilly, were dragged down to the moral and intellectual level of the governed.

First as to the categories of contemporary Brahmanical thought which Alberuni regards with such tender reverence:—

1. **Idea of God**—"The Hindus believe with regard to God that he is one, eternal, without beginning

and end, acting by freewill, almighty, all-wise, living, giving life, ruling, preserving, one who in his sovereignty is unique, beyond all likeness and unlikeness, and that he does not resemble anything nor does anything resemble him." This assertion is supported by quotations from the *Patanjali* and the *Gita*.¹ "This is what the educated believe about God. They call him *Isvara*, i.e., self-sufficing, beneficent, who gives without receiving. They consider the unity of God as absolute, but that everything besides God which may appear as a unity is really a plurality of things. The existence of God they consider as a real existence, because everything that exists, exists through Him. It is not impossible to think that the existing beings are *not* and that He *is*, but it is impossible to think that He is *not* and that they *are*." "If we now pass from the ideas of the educated people among the Hindus to those of the common people, we must first state that they present a great variety. Some of them are simply abominable, but similar errors also occur in other religions. Nay, even in Islam, we must decidedly disapprove of the anthropomorphic doctrines, the teachings of the Jabriyya sect, the prohibition of the discussion of religious topics, and such like."² "The educated among the Hindus abhor anthropomorphisms of this kind, but the crowd and the members of the single sects use them most extensively. They go even beyond all we have hitherto mentioned, and speak of wife, son, daughter, of the rendering pregnant and other physical processes, all in connection with God."³

¹ *Alberuni's India*, edited by Sachau, vol. I, p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. I. p. 39.

2. **Noumena and Phenomena.**—Hindu ideas on this question are difficult to interpret, but Alberuni's account may be summarised as follows. The whole creation is a unity; and the totality of 'the twenty-five' elements, called *tattva*, may be classified into the soul, *purusha*; the general matter, called *avyakta*, i.e., absolute matter; *vyakta*, i.e., concrete matter; *ahankara*, or nature; *mahabhuta* or five elements—heaven, wind, fire, water and earth; *pancha matras*, i.e., five qualities or the functions of the senses; *indriyani* or the five senses; *manas* or the will; and *karmedriyani*, i.e., the sense of action or the five necessary functions. "Therefore Vyasa, son of Parasara, speaks, 'Learn the twenty-five (elements or agents) by distinctions, definitions and divisions, as you learn a logical syllogism, and something which is a certainty and not merely studying with the tongue; afterwards adhere to whatever religion you like, your end will be salvation'.¹ The Hindus are not decided among themselves on the question of the cause of action; they attribute action to different causes like nature, the soul, or time but the truth is that action belongs to matter, for the latter binds the soul, causes it to wander about in different shapes and then sets it free; so the *Vishnu Purana* says, 'Matter is the origin of the world.' All Indian systems, except Buddhism, admit the existence of a permanent entity variously called *atman*, *purusha* or *jiva*. As to the exact nature of this soul there are, indeed, divergences of views. But all agree in holding that it is pure and unsullied in its nature. According to Vasudeva, the soul is 'something stable and cons-

¹ *Alberuni's India*, by Sachau, vol. I, p. 44.

tant'. The soul, in pursuit of knowledge, unites itself with matter by means of the 'spirit'; and matter, on its part, seeking perfection, carries its pupil, the soul, through all stages of vegetable and animal life. The soul gives life to matter, and action is thus derived from the latter.

3. **Reincarnation.**—The distinctive feature of Hinduism or, to be more exact, of all Indian cults, is not belief in one God, which is found in all faiths, but the peculiar path of salvation prescribed. Alberuni's statement of the doctrine of metempsychosis or reincarnation deserves to be carefully considered: "As the word of confession, 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet', is the shibboleth (basis) of Islam, the Trinity that of Christianity, and the institute of the Sabbath that of Judaism, so metempsychosis is the shibboleth of the Hindu religion. Therefore he who does not believe in it does not belong to them, and is not reckoned as one of them. For they hold the following belief:—

"The soul, as long as it has not risen to the highest absolute intelligence, does not comprehend the totality of objects at once, or, as it were, in no time. Therefore it must explore all particular beings and examine all the possibilities of existence; and as their number is, though not unlimited, still an enormous one, the soul wants an enormous space of time in order to finish the contemplation of such a multiplicity of objects. The soul acquires knowledge only by the contemplation of the individuals and the species, and of their peculiar

actions and conditions. It gains experience from each object, and gathers thereby new knowledge.

“However, these actions differ in the same measure as the three primary forces differ. Besides, the world is not left without some direction, being led, as it were, by a bridle and directed towards a definite goal. Therefore the imperishable souls wander about in perishable bodies conformably to the difference of their actions, as they prove to be good or bad. The object of the migration through the world of reward (*i.e.*, heaven) is to direct the attention of the soul to the good, that it should become desirous of acquiring as much of it as possible. The object of its migration through the world of punishment (*i.e.*, hell) is to direct its attention to the bad and abominable, that it should strive to keep as far as possible aloof from it.

“The migration begins from low stages, and rises to higher and better ones, not the contrary, as we state on purpose, since the one is a *priori* as possible as the other. The difference of these lower and higher stages depends upon the difference of the actions, and this again results from the quantitative and qualitative diversity of the temperaments and the various degrees of combinations in which they appear.

“This migration lasts until the object aimed at has been completely attained both for the soul and matter; the *lower* aim being the disappearance of the shape of matter, except any such new formation as may appear desirable; the *higher* aim

being the ceasing of the desire of the soul to learn what it did not know before, the insight of the soul into the nobility of its own being and its independent existence, its knowing that it can dispense with matter after it has become acquainted with the mean nature of matter and the instability of its shapes, with all that which matter offers to the senses, and with the truth of the tales about its delights. Then the soul turns away from matter; the connecting links are broken; the union is dissolved. Separation and dissolution take place, and the soul returns to its home, carrying with itself the bliss of knowledge as sesame develops grains and blossoms, afterwards never separating from its oil. The intelligent being, intelligence and its object, are united and become one."

Thus stated the doctrine of metempsychosis leaves little to be desired. It is the best theory of salvation mankind has yet found. The *pandits* with whom Alberuni associated must have been singularly free from superstitions and spiritual weaknesses. The theory had begun to influence Muslim thought more than a century before Alberuni. And one question was inevitably asked: Cannot *nirwana*, *moksha* or *fana* be attained in the course of a single life—or, even, in one moment of thought? If so, why this needless wandering from form to form? If God, the ultimate Reality, is immanent in all things—if 'He is the First and the Last, the Appearance and the Reality'—why this senseless and tiresome story of transmigrations? Abu Said Kharraz, after

careful consideration, defined *fana* or *nirwana* in terms that make no reference to metempsychosis.¹ "If a man turns towards Allah and attaches himself to Allah and lives near to Allah and forgets his own self and everything except Allah—then if you ask him, 'Wherefrom are you and what is the object of your desire' there will be no answer for him except, 'Allah'." But opinions differed. "The same doctrine (of metempsychosis)," says Alberuni, "is professed by those *sufis* who teach that this world is a sleeping soul and yonder world a soul awake, and who at the same time admit that God is immanent in certain places,—*e.g.*, in heaven, in the 'seat' (*kursi*) and the 'throne' (*'arsh*) of God (mentioned in the Koran). But then there are others who admit that God is immanent in the whole world, in animals, trees, and the inanimate world, which they call *his universal appearance*. To those who hold this view, the entering of the souls into various beings in the course of metempsychosis is of no consequence." Orthodox Muslim mysticism has, nevertheless, talked of eight 'worlds' (*alams*), such as *jabarut*, *lahut*, etc. No material connotation is intended; the *alams* are really spiritual stages or spheres. The Hindu equivalent of the *Sufi's alam* is *loka*, but three *lokas* are considered enough. "The Hindus call the world *loka*. Its primary division consists of the upper, the lower, and the middle. The upper one is called *swaryaloka*, *i.e.*, paradise; the lower, *nagaloka*, *i.e.*, the world of the

¹ The *Tazkiratul Aulia* of Shaikh Fariduddin Attar, No. 45, Newal Kishore text, p. 256.

serpents, which is hell; besides they call it *naraloka* and sometimes also *patala*, *i.e.*, the lowest world. The middle world, that one in which we live, is called *maddhyaloka* and *manushyaloka*, *i.e.*, the world of men. In the latter, man has to earn, in the upper to receive his reward; in the lower to receive punishment. A man who deserves to come to *swaryaloka* or *nagaloka* receives there the full recompense of his deeds during a certain length of time corresponding to the duration of his deeds, but in either of them there is only the soul, the soul free from the body."

"For those who do not deserve to rise to heaven and to sink as low as hell there is another world called *tiryagloka*, the irrational world of plants and animals, through the individuals of which the soul has to wander in the metempsychosis until it reaches the human being, rising by degrees from the lowest kinds of the vegetable world to the highest classes of the sensitive world."¹

4. **Moksha.**—Hindu and Muslim mystics have again and again tried to define *nirwana*, *fana* or *moksha*. The task is difficult for, as Shaikh Sadi points out, those who speak do not know and those who know do not speak. And even if the latter spoke, they could not succeed in making themselves intelligible to the public. The real character of *moksha* can only be explained by a man who has attained it to another man who has been equally fortunate. But in that case no explanation would be necessary. Be this as

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 59.

it may, Alberuni attempts the following definition of *moksha* with profuse quotations from the *Patanjali* and the *Gita*. "If the soul is free from matter, it is knowing; but as long as it is clad in matter, the soul is not-knowing on account of the turbid nature of matter. It thinks that it is an agent, and that the actions of the world are prepared for its sake. Therefore it clings to them, and it is stamped with the impressions of the senses. When, therefore, the soul leaves the body, the traces of the impressions of the senses remain in it, and are not completely eradicated, as it longs for the world of sense and returns towards it. And since it in these stages undergoes changes entirely opposed to each other, it is thereby subject to the influences of the *three primary forces*.¹"

And further: "According to the Hindus, liberation is union with God; for they describe God as a being who can dispense with hoping for a recompense or with fearing opposition, unattainable to thought, because He is sublime beyond all unlikeness which is abhorrent and all likeness which is sympathetic, knowing Himself not by a knowledge which comes to him like an accident,... And this same description the Hindus apply to *the liberated one*, for he is equal to God in all these things except in the matter of beginning, since he has not existed from all eternity, and except this, that before liberation he existed in *the world of entanglement*, knowing the objects of knowledge only by a phantasmagoric kind of knowing which he had acquired by absolute exertion, whilst the object of his knowing

¹ Alberuni: *India*, vol. I, p. 53, quoting Vasudeva.

is still covered, as it were, by a veil. On the contrary, in the world of liberation all veils are lifted, all covers taken off, and obstacles removed. There the being is absolutely knowing, not desirous of learning anything unknown, separated from the soiled perceptions of the senses, united with the everlasting ideas.Therefore, at the end of the book of *Patanjali*, after the pupil has asked about the nature of liberation, the master says : 'If you wish, say, Liberation is the cessation of the functions of *the three forces*, and their returning to that home whence they had come. Or if you wish, say, It is the return of the soul as a knowing being into its own nature.'¹ The similarity of Hindu and Muslim thought on this matter could hardly escape the notice of a scholar like Alberuni. "The doctrine of *Patanjali*," he says, "is akin to that of the *sufis* regarding being occupied in meditation on *the Truth* (*i.e.*, God), for they say, 'As long as you point to something, you are not a *monist* ; but when *the Truth* seizes upon the object of your pointing and annihilates it, then there is no longer an indicating person nor an object indicated.' Abu-Bekr ash-Shibli says : 'Cast off all, and you will attain to Us completely. Then you will exist ; but you will not report about Us to others as long as your doing is like Ours.' Abu-Yazid al-Bistami once being asked how he had attained his stage in sufism, answered : 'I cast off my own self as a serpent casts off its skin. Then I considered my own self, and found that I was He, *i.e.*, God'².

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 81.

² Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, pp. 87-88

5. **The Nine Commandments.**—Those who wish to tread the path of liberation must lead a life of renunciation, virtue and meditation. Hence the nine commandments, thus summarised : “This goal is attained either in a *single shape*, *i.e.*, a single stage of metempsychosis, or in *several shapes*, in this way, that a man perpetually practises virtuous behaviour and accustoms the soul thereto, so that this virtuous behaviour becomes to it a nature and an essential quality.

“Virtuous behaviour is that which is described by the religious law. Its principal laws, from which they derive many secondary ones, may be summed up in the following nine rules :—

- (1) A man shall not kill.
- (2) Nor lie.
- (3) Nor whore.
- (4) Nor steal.
- (5) Nor hoard up treasures.
- (6) He is perpetually to practise holiness and purity.
- (7) He is to perform the prescribed fasting without any interruption and to dress poorly.
- (8) He is to hold fast to the adoration of God with praise and thanks.
- (9) He is always to have in mind the word *Om*, the word of creation, without pronouncing it.

“The injunction to abstain from killing as regards animals (No. 1) is only a special part of the general

order to *abstain from doing anything hurtful*. Under this head fall also the robbing of another man's goods (No. 4), and the telling of lies (No. 2), not to mention the foulness and baseness of so doing.

“The abstaining from hoarding up (No. 5) means that a man is to give up toil and fatigue ; that he who seeks the bounty of God feels sure that he is provided for ; and that, starting from the base slavery of material life, we may by the noble liberty of cogitation attain to eternal bliss.

“Practising purity (No. 6) implies that a man knows the filth of the body, and that he feels called upon to hate it, and to love cleanness of soul. Tormenting oneself by poor dress (No. 7) means that a man should reduce the body, allay its feverish desires and sharpen its senses. Pythagoras once said to a man who took great care to keep his body in a flourishing condition and to allow it everything it desired, ‘Thou art not lazy in building thy prison and making thy fetter as strong as possible’.”¹

6. **Human equality.**—At a time when the caste-system was developing with rapidity, the better type of Hindu thinkers continued to believe in the doctrine of human equality defined not from the view-point of citizenship but from the view-point of salvation. “The Hindus differ among themselves as to which of these castes is capable of attaining to liberation ; for, according to some, only the Brahmana and Kshatriya are capable of it, since the others cannot learn the Veda,

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, pp. 74-75.

whilst according to the Hindu philosophers, liberation is common to all castes and to the whole human race, if their intention of obtaining it is perfect. This view is based on the saying of Vyasa : ' Learn to know the twenty-five things thoroughly. Then you may follow whatever religion you like ; you will no doubt be liberated.' This view is also based on the fact that Vasudeva was a descendant of a Sudra family, and also on the following saying of his, which he addresses to Arjuna : ' God distributes recompense without injustice and without partiality. He reckons the good as bad if people in doing good forget him ; he reckons the bad as good if people in doing bad remember him and do not forget him, whether those people be Vaisya or Sudra or women. How much more will this be the case when they are Brahmuna or Kshatriya'¹.

7. **Hindu Science.**—Hindu popular tradition about the creation of the world from the Brahmanda, about Mount Meru and the seven seas and the seven islands is well-known. It is described by Alberuni in some detail. But the astronomers thought otherwise. "The religious books of the Hindus and their codes of tradition, the *Puranas*, contain sentences about the shape of the world which stand in direct opposition to scientific truth as known to their astronomers. By these books the people are guided in fulfilling the rites of their religion, and by means of them the great mass of the nation have been wheedled into a predilection for astronomical calculations and astrological predictions and warnings. The consequence is

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 104.

that they show much affection to their astronomers, declaring that they are excellent men, that it is a good omen to meet them, and firmly believing that all of them go to paradise and none to hell. For this the astronomers requite them by accepting their popular notions as true, by conforming themselves to them, however far from truth most of them may be, and by presenting them with such spiritual stuff as they stand in need of. This is the reason why the two theories, the vulgar and the scientific, have become intermingled in the course of time, why the doctrines of the astronomers have been disturbed and confused, in particular the doctrines of those authors—and they are the majority—who simply copy their predecessors, who take the bases of their science from tradition and do not make them the objects of independent scientific research”.

“We shall now explain the views of Hindu astronomers regarding the present subject, *viz.*, the shape of heaven and earth. According to them, the heaven as well as the whole world is round, and the earth has a globular shape, the northern half being dry land, the southern half being covered with water. The dimension of the earth is larger according to them than it is according to the Greeks and modern observations, and in their calculations to find this dimension they have entirely given up any mention of the traditional seas and *dvipas*, and of the enormous sums of *yojana* attributed to each of them. The astronomers follow the theologians in everything which does not encroach upon their science, *e.g.*, they adopt the theory of Mount Meru being under the north pole, and that of the

island, Vadavamukha, lying under the south pole. Now, it is entirely irrelevant whether Meru is there or not, as it is only required for the explanation of the particular mill-like rotation, which is necessitated by the fact that to each spot on the plane of the earth corresponds a spot in the sky as its zenith. Also the fable of the southern island, Vadavamukha, does no harm to their science, although it is possible, nay, even likely, that each pair of quarters of the earth forms a coherent, uninterrupted unity, the one as a continent, the other as an ocean (and that in reality there is no such island under the south pole). Such a disposition of the earth is required by the law of gravitation, for according to them the earth is in the centre of the universe, and everything heavy gravitates towards it. Evidently on account of this law of gravitation they consider heaven, too, as having a globular shape.”¹ And further on he quotes the *Brahma Siddhanta*: “Several circumstances, however, compel us to attribute globular shape both to the earth and heaven, viz., the fact that the stars rise and set in different places at different times, so that, e.g., a man in Yamakoti observes one identical star rising above the western horizon, whilst a man in Rum at the same time observes it rising above the eastern horizon. Another argument to the same effect is this, that a man on Meru observes one identical star above the horizon in the zenith of Lanka, the country of the demons, whilst a man in Lanka at the same time observes it above his head. Besides, all astronomical calculations are not correct unless we assume the globular figure of heaven

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, pp. 264, 265 & 266.

and earth. Therefore we must declare that heaven is a globe, because we observe in it all the characteristics of a globe, and the observation of these characteristics of the world would not be correct unless in reality it were a globe. Now, it is evident that all the other theories about the world are futile'.¹

The law of gravitation had been very definitely grasped. Varamahira says, "Mountains, seas, rivers, trees, cities, men, and angels, all are around the globe of the earth. And if Yamakoti and Rum are opposite to each other, one could not say that the one is low in its relation to the other, since the low does not exist. How could one say of one place of the earth that it is low, as it is in every particular identical with any other place on earth, and one place could as little fall as any other. Every one speaks to himself with regard to his own self, 'I am above and the others below', whilst all of them are around the globe like the blossoms springing on the branches of a Kadamba-tree. They encircle it on all sides, but each individual blossom has the same position as the other, neither the one hanging downward nor the other standing upright. For the earth attracts that which is upon her, for it is 'the below' towards all directions, and heaven is 'the above' towards all directions."

As the reader will observe, these theories of the astronomers were based on a correct knowledge of the laws of nature but, at the same time, they practised a little deceit upon their traditionalists and theologians.²

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 268.

² *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 272-273.

It is not necessary for us to follow Alberuni into astronomical details. On a question which perplexed contemporary Muslim thinkers, and even led to occasional persecutions—the indestructibility of matter—the Hindus took a bold view. *If matter has a real, objective existence, then it must be presumed to be eternal.* So we say, on the plane of common sense and of science, that matter can be neither created nor destroyed. Physical science (at least in the Newtonian sense) is not possible except on the presupposition of the indestructibility of matter. “The Hindus believe matter to be eternal. Therefore they do not by the word ‘creation’ understand a formation of something out of nothing..... By such a creation, not one piece of clay comes into existence that did not exist before, and by such a destruction not one piece of clay which existed ceases to exist. It is quite impossible that the Hindus should have the notion of creation as long as they believe that matter existed from all eternity.”¹ “The doctrine of the First Cause,” Dr. Hoffding remarks in his *History of Philosophy*, “is like a nun—philosophically sterile but of religious significance.” The Hindus are to be congratulated for having thrown this doctrine overboard; its extensive use by Muslim philosophers and theologians could result in nothing except palpable antinomies.

III. Sanskrit Literature.

“The various forms of the institutions of the Hindus, both political and social, their knowledge of mathematics, especially of astronomy, their systems of

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 322.

metaphysics and ethics ; all of these had long ago made the people of India famous far beyond their own borders ; while the renown of Hindu philosophers had reached even Europe.”¹ The literature of ancient India on astronomy, mathematics, arts, crafts and poetry was excellent and highly advanced. The literature of the middle ages may be divided into three parts—Sanskrit literature ; Prakrit Bhasha, the common languages of the people, *viz.*, Bengali, Hindi (Eastern and Western), Punjabi, Gujrati and Marathi and the literature of the South in the Tamil, Telugu, Malyalum and Kenari languages.² The question naturally arises—How far was this literature, the priceless heritage of earlier generations, within the reach of a scholar in the eleventh century ? First as to the *Vedas* : “The Brahmins teach the Veda to the Kshatriyas. The latter learn it, but are not allowed to teach it, not even to a Brahmin. The Vaisya and Sudra are not allowed to hear it, much less to pronounce and recite it. If such a thing can be proved against one of them, the Brahmins drag him before the magistrate, and he is punished by having his tongue cut off.”³ Afraid that the sacred texts may be lost for ever, a Hindu scholar of Kashmir, Vasukra by name, who seems to have flourished a little before the time of Alberuni, took the revolutionary step, from which others had recoiled, of writing down the sacred texts. Though Alberuni describes in a general way

¹ From the Preface of Abbe J. A. Dubois : *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*.

² *Indian Civilization in the Middle Ages* (Urdu), by Pandit Gauri Shankar, Ojha, pp. 83-84.

³ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 125.

the contents of the four *Vedas* and the manner of reciting them, he does not seem to have studied them, and never refers to them in the course of his discussions. Perhaps for even a *mlechcha* of Alberuni's distinction access to the *Vedas* was not possible. He never refers to the *Upanishadas*. It was not, in fact, till the time of Dara Shikoh, the only Indo-Muslim scholar to whom one can refer in the same breath as to Alberuni, that the Mussalmans, and through them the outer world, obtained a knowledge of Vedic philosophy. The *Puranas*, being human compositions, were within Alberuni's reach. He gives us two lists, one read out to him from the *Vishnu Purana* and the other compiled by personal inquiry. But he admits that he had only seen portions of the *Matsya*, *Aditya* and *Vayu Puranas*; the rest were mere names to him. A bold list of twenty *Smrites*, composed by the 'twenty sons of Brahman,' is given. How far Alberuni studied them we do not know, but there is good reason for believing that copies of the more popular *Smrites* were not difficult to obtain. Besides he tells us, "The Hindus have numerous books practically on all the different branches of knowledge,.... The Hindus have books about the jurisprudence of their religion, on theosophy, on ascetics, on the process of becoming god and seeking liberation from the world, as, e.g., the book composed by Gauda, the anchorite, which goes by his name; the book *Samkhya*, composed by Kapila, on divine subjects; the book of *Patanjali*, on the search for liberation and for the union of the soul with the object of its meditation; the book *Nyayabhasha*, composed by Kapila, on the Veda and its interpretation,

also showing that it has been created, and distinguishing within the Veda between such injunctions as are obligatory only in certain cases, and those which are obligatory in general; further, the book *Mimamsa*, composed by Jaimini, on the same subject; the book *Laukayata*, composed by Brihaspati, treating of the subject that in all investigations we must use the apperception of the senses as well as tradition; and the book *Vishnu-dharma*. The word 'dharma' means reward, but in general it is used for religion; so that this title means 'the religion of God,' who in this case is understood to be Narayana. Further, there are the books of the six pupils of Vyasa, viz., Devala, Sukra, Bhargava, Brihaspati, Yajnavalkya and Manu. The Hindus have numerous books about all the branches of science. How could anybody know the titles of all of them, more especially if he is not a Hindu, but a foreigner?"¹ The *Bharata* (*Mahabharata*) is referred to as consisting of 100,000 *slokas*, divided into eighteen books, and also the *Harivamsa Parvan*, which followed it and was believed to contain 'passages, which like riddles, admit of manifold interpretations'.

The following extract from Pandit Gauri Shanker Ojha's *Indian Civilisation in the Middle Ages* supplements the information we get from Alberuni: "In the middle ages different works of Sanskrit poetry such as *Karatarian*, *Amroshatak*, *Sheopal Budh*, *Nalavaday* and *Raghopandvay* were composed. Short stories and novels were written by Buddhist and Jain scholars. The famous *Panch-Tantra* and *Barhat Katha* were completed and translated into several languages.

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 132.

March Katka of Maharala Shodrak; *Ratnavati* and *Parya Darshaka*; *Mali Madho* (representing love and romance); *Mahabir Charat* (representing bravery and heroism); *O'r Ram Charat* (a tragedy), *Hanuman Natak* by Damodar; and *Budh Chandar Vaday* by Krishna Misr Koi were the more important dramas of the age.¹

"The Hindus had books on grammar and metrics, called *Vyakarna* and *Chandas* respectively. It was essential for a Pandit to be well-equipped in *Vyakarna*. In 662 A.D. Jayadatya and Bamu supplemented a commentary to the *Vyakarna* of Panini; Bhartri Hari wrote many valuable works on the subject and Chandra Goman wrote his *Chandra Vyakarna*. In the 9th century, however, *Vyakarna* was rearranged by Shaktain.² A chapter of the *Brahma-Siddhanta* treats of metrical calculations. Then there are books on rhetoric and figures of speech, *Kavia Prakesha* as completed by Alakh Suri; *Dhun Aluk* by Gobardhan Acharya; *Kavia Anoshasan* by Himchandraka; the same by Bag Bhat; *Kavia Alankar Sangrah* by Rodrat and *Sarsoti* by Bhoja require special mention. *Amarkosh* by Amar Singh, *Harvali* by Parsatoma Deo, *Abhic Dhan Ratan Malik* by Halacbah, *Abhi Dhan Chinta Mani* by Him Chandra and *Nana Vath Sanklan* by Kesho Swami were the important dictionaries of the age³.... Literature on other subjects, like politics, law, education, music and dancing, was

¹ *Indian Civilization in the Middle Ages* (Urdu), by Pandit Gauri Shanker, pp. 86 to 95.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

not wanting in the middle ages. *Shanti Parab* of the Mahabharata is rightly regarded as the best book on politics ; but the *Arthshastra* of Kautalya, *Naiti Sar* by Kamandak, *Naiti Vakyamarat* by Deo Suri, *Dash Kumar Charat*, *Kavatar Jan* and *Mudra Rakshas* are the next important authorities on the subject.¹ In the domain of law, *Manusmiriti* was supplemented with commentaries like *Magathathi* and *Kobind Raj* ; the book *Yagia Valkiya Smiriti* with its commentary by Vigyaneshar, *Smiriti Kalptru* by Lakshmi Dhar were also published.”²

To return to Alberuni : “The number of Hindu sciences is great, but the science of astronomy is the most famous and the most cherished of all. Astronomical literature consists of the *Siddhantas* (called *Sind-Hind* by the Muslims) and less important works called *Tantra* or *Karana*.³ The *Siddhantas* are derived from the book *Paithamaha*—so called from the first father, *i.e.* Brahman of the five *Siddhantas* enumerated by him.” Alberuni says he could, till the time of writing, only obtain the works of Brahmagupta and Pulisa ; but Vramahira is quoted in the later chapters of his work. The *Brahma Siddhanta*, he says,

¹ *Indian Civilization in the Middle Ages* (Urdu), by Pandit Gauri Shanker Ojha, pp. 157-158.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

³ An Indian astronomer was invited to the court of Al-Mansur to give instruction in Indian astronomy. The Indian system was then adopted by the Arabs and the name *Sind-Hind* was given to one of the Indian works, which appears to have been Brahmagupta's *Siddhanta*. This book, by command of the Caliph, was used as a guide by the Arabs in matters pertaining to the stars. (See *Hindu Astronomy* by W. Brennand, p. 92.)

contains twenty-four chapters on different subjects like the nature of the globe and the figures of heaven and earth, the revolution of the planets, the moon, eclipses, conjunction and latitudes of the planets, and arithmetic, etc., Astrological literature consisted of the *Samhitas*, books on fortune-telling and palmistry, and *Jatakas* or books of nativities.¹ "The book *Cavaka* is the best of the whole literature on medicine and it has been translated into Arabic."

The Hindus, unlike other nations, went beyond the thousand in their arithmetical terms, and extended the order of number to the 18th, called *parardha*, for religious reasons. According to some *bhuri*, the 19th order, is the limit of reckoning, while according to others the *koti*.² The Hindus were far advanced in numerical notations, and if a word did not suit a metre, they easily changed it for a synonym. "Hindu Algebra contains," in Mr. Strachey's opinion, "a great deal of knowledge and skill, which the Greeks had not, such as the use of an infinite number or unknown quantities and the use of arbitrary marks to express them; a good arithmetic of surds; a perfect theory of indeterminate problems of the first degree; a very extensive and general knowledge of those of the second degree; a perfect acquaintance with quadratic equations, etc."³ Their knowledge of mensuration was also remarkable; they held that the circumference of a

¹ Alberuni: *India*, vol I, pp. 157-158.

² *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 174 to 176.

³ Dr. Huthons in his *History of Algebra* as quoted by W. Brennand in his *Hindu Astronomy*, p. 99.

circle is thrice its diameter but according to Brahma-gupta $3\frac{1}{7}$ times the diameter.¹

Cosmology was an important branch of Hindu science. The Hindus enumerated the planets in the order of the week-days, and unlike the Mussalmans, they held that day and night follow each other without having a separate dominus. The names of the sun and the moon were many, and the names of the month were related to those of the lunar stations. The signs of the Zodiac were named corresponding to the images which they represented. "The Brahmanda (*i.e.*, the totality of all spheres) is a globe comprehending the eighth or so-called Zodiac sphere, in which the fixed stars are placed and the two spheres touch each other."² "The Hindus, unlike the ancient Chinese, had not the ambition of making a catalogue of all the stars which were visible to them. They had a more important object in view, namely the study of the motions of the sun, the moon, and the planets, and other astronomical phenomena, primarily for the purpose of computing time, and of constructing and perfecting their calendars.... They accordingly confined their attention to those stars which lay in the moon's path, immediately north or south of the ecliptic-stars, which are liable to be occultated by the moon, or which might occasionally be in conjunction with it and with the planets."³ The Hindus had also 'rules for the calculation of the various phases both of lunar and solar eclipses, the times of beginning, middle, and end as set forth in

¹ Alberuni: *India*, vol. I, p. 168.

² *Ibid.*, p. 225.

³ *Hindu Astronomy* by W. Brennand, p. 38.

their various astronomical works, chiefly the *Surya Siddhanta*.’

One of the works mentioned—the *Pancatantra*—along with the game of chess had a unique history in Muslim lands. There is an oft-repeated tradition to the effect that the *Pancatantra* and the game of chess were sent as a present by a Hindu raja to Anushirwan, the Great. The Persian Court suspected that these presents were inspired by a spirit of intellectual arrogance—the conviction that all human affairs could be controlled by human wisdom—unbecoming mere mortals ; and Anushirwan’s famous Vazir, Buzurchemehr, replied by sending to the Hindu raja the game of *nard*, which depends entirely upon chance or the throw of the dice. Be this as it may, the *Pancatantra*, owing to its popular character, received a cordial reception in foreign lands and suffered from the misfortunes such popularity generally brings. “I wish”, says Alberuni, “I could translate the book *Pancatantra*, known among us as the book of *Kalilar and Dimnah*. It is far spread in various languages—in Persian, Hindi, and Arabic—in translations of people who are not free from the suspicion of having altered the text. For instance, ‘Abdallah Ibn Almukaffa has added in his Arabic version the chapter about Barzoya, with the intention of raising doubts in the minds of people of feeble religious belief, and to gain and prepare them for the propagation of the doctrines of the Manichæans. And if he is open to suspicion in so far as he has added something to the text which he had simply to translate, he is hardly free from suspicion

in his capacity as translator."¹ The later history of the book is summarised by Ferishta; in its present Persian form, the *Kabila and Dimna*, known as the *Anwar-i Suhaili*, is the work of Waizul Kashifi, author of the *Rushhat*, a friend of Maulana Jami, who emigrated from Herat to the Deccan. The Hindu game of chess was very different from the game as we have it to-day. It was played not by two persons but by four and the moves depended upon the throw of the dice.²

In estimating the intellectual achievements of Hindu India, a modern critic should not forget some of the difficulties which confronted the scholars of those days. Paper was brought to India by the Mussalmans, who had learnt the art of making it from Chinese captives. Early Muslim Arabs had used bones, hide or prepared leather (vellum). At a later age they began to use the papyrus (*charta*, the *qirtas* of the Quran); it had one advantage over both paper and vellum; the writing could not be erased without the destruction of the material, and the papyrus was, therefore, extensively used for the *firman*s of the Caliphs. Hindu religious ideas did not permit the use of hide or vellum; papyrus was not obtainable. In southern India the leaves of a tree of the palm species, the *Borassus flabelliformis*, were extensively used. They

¹ Alberuni: *India*, vol. I, p. 159.

² I leave it to persons conversant with the subject to decide whether the old Hindu chess is worth reviving. It is to be hoped that some enterprising Indian firm will take the matter in hand and manufacture the chess-boards necessary. The following description of Alberuni should enable an intelligent chess-player to reconstruct our ancient national game of which the whole world is now seized :—

were about one to two inches broad and sometimes even a yard in length. They had, of course, to be

“They play chess—four persons at a time—with a pair of dice. Their arrangement of the figures on the chess-board is the following:—

Tower (<i>ruk</i>)	Horse	Elephant	King			Pawn	Tower
Pawn	Pawn	Pawn	Pawn			Pawn	Horse
						Pawn	Elephant
						Pawn	King
King	Pawn						
Elephant	Pawn						
Horse	Pawn			Pawn	Pawn	Pawn	Pawn
Tower	Pawn			King	Elephant	Horse	Tower

“As this kind of chess is not known among us, I shall here explain what I know of it.

“The four persons playing together sit so as to form a square round a chess-board, and throw the two dice alternately. Of the numbers of the dice, the five and six are blank (*i.e.*, do not count as such). In that case, if the dice show five or six, the player takes one instead of the five, and four instead of the six, because the figures of these two numerals are drawn in the following manner: so as to exhibit a certain likeness of form to 4 and 1, *viz.*, in the Indian signs :

6 5
4 3 2 1

properly rubbed, oiled and polished. A fine and hard-pointed needle was used for writing instead of a pen; dry cowdung (or some similar material) was spread thinly over the surface of the leaf and then rubbed off, leaving the indentations of the needle darker in

“The name *Shah* or *king* applies here to the queen (*firzan*).

“Each number of the dice causes a move of one of the figures.

“The 1 moves either the pawn or the king. Their moves are the same as in the common chess. The king may be taken, but is not required to leave his place.

“The 2 moves the tower (*rukh*). It moves to the third square in the direction of the diagonal, as the elephant moves in *our* chess.

“The 3 moves the horse. Its move is the generally known one to the third square in oblique direction.

“The 4 moves the elephant. It moves in a straight line, as the tower does in our chess, unless it be prevented from moving on. If this is the case, as sometimes happens, one of the dice removes the obstacle, and enables it to move on. Its smallest move is one square, the greatest fifteen squares, because the dice sometimes show two 4, or two 6, or a 4 and a 6. In consequence of one of these numbers, the elephant moves along the whole side of the margin on the chess-board; in consequence of the other number, it moves along the other side on the other margin of the board, in case there is no impediment in its way. In consequence of these two numbers, the elephant, in the course of his moves, occupies the two ends of the diagonal.

“The pieces have certain values, according to which the player gets his share of the stake, for the pieces are taken and pass into the hands of the player. The value of the king is 5, that of the elephant 4, of the horse 3, of the tower 2, and of the pawn 1. He who takes a king gets 5. For two kings he gets 10, for three kings 15, if the winner is no longer in possession of his own king. But if he has still his own king, and takes all three kings, he gets 54, a number which represents a progression based on general consent, not on an algebraic principle.” (Vol. I, pp. 183-185.)

colour. A hole bored on one side of the leaves enabled them to be tied into a book by a chord or a metal fastener; when required for reading, the book was spread out like a fan. In central and northern India, the bark of the *tuz* tree, called *bhurja*, was used. It was larger in size, about one yard in length and seven or eight inches in breadth¹. Leaves were used for writing in India long after the introduction of paper had made them superfluous and cumbersome. In spite of this unpromising writing material, the better class of leaf-manuscripts, which have survived in large quantities, show a high standard of calligraphy and drawing. Mediæval Persian literature is full of the complaints of the authors against the errors of the copyists. Sanskrit literature fared no better. The cost and the paucity of writing material and the errors of the copyists must have caused a lot of useless labour and mental strain on both pupils and teachers. Add to it, a number of different scripts were used in the country, all closely allied but, nevertheless, entailing a good deal of labour when a book written in one script had to be rewritten for use in another region. Some of these scripts are mentioned by Alberuni. The *Siddha-ma'rika* alphabet, the most generally known, was used in the town of Varansi (Benares) and Kashmir—‘the high schools of Hindu sciences’—as well as in Maddhya desa (middle country) and Aryavarta (the territory of Kannauj). The *Nagara* script prevailed in Malwa and the *Ardha nagara* (half-*nagara*, compounded of the first two) in Bhatiya and some

¹ Alberuni, p. 171; also Abbe Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*.

parts of Sind. Other scripts known to our author were—*Malwari*, used in Malwashan, in southern Sind and on the sea-coast; *Sindhava* in Brahmanava (Brahmanabad) and Almansura¹, *Karnata* in Karnata desa (Carnatic), *Andhri* in Andhra desa; *Dirwari* (Dravidi) in the Dirvara desa (Dravida desa); *Lari* in Lara desa (Lata-desa); *Gauri* in Purva desa (Eastern regions); and *Bhaikshuki* used by the Buddhist in Udunpur in Purva desa.

The greatest shortcoming of Sanskrit literature (I say this with great diffidence) is the paucity of good prose. Versified books are easier to remember, and so long as the sacred and secular texts were not reduced to writing, there was good reason for putting everything into verse—from the hymns to the gods to the method of calculating longitudes. But by the tenth century, A. D., all important books had been written down. Nevertheless the method of composing *slokas* on all subjects continued. The astrolabe not being known in India, Alberuni composed a treatise on the subject for the sake of his Indian friends and they immediately proceeded to put the whole of it into Sanskrit *slokas*. Now in versification the exigencies of rhyme and metre have naturally to be considered. So that if the word 'two' will not give you the rhyme and metre necessary, you have to say the sun and the moon—or the reverse. In order to eliminate personal idiosyncracies in the matter, elaborate canons of interpretation had to be laid down, so that natural prose-thought may be converted into

¹ Almansura and Brahmanabad are not two names for the same town, as is sometimes supposed.

impossible verse and impossible verse be reconverted into intelligible prose-thought. All ancient languages suffer from this sort of artificiality. But the Sanskrit language surpasses all others. Nothing increases our respect for the Hindu scientists so much as a contemplation of the extremely difficult conditions under which they worked¹.

IV. Popular Hinduism.

Though the India of the eleventh century had fallen far from the cultural standards of the era of Harsha, not to mention the Golden Age of the Guptas, it may be safely affirmed that no single country even in that age, with the possible exception of Persia, could boast of a finer culture. But while in Persia the culture of the Achemenian and the Sassanian periods had entirely perished, India had, in spite of foreign invasions and internal wars, preserved the continuity of her traditions. The researches of Alberuni prove beyond doubt that Hindu philosophy and science, though not so progressive as in the preceding centuries, were living and vital. Even a solitary scholar, like Alberuni, could collect the material necessary for reconstructing the metaphysical and scientific achievements of the past. *This glorious heritage, however, was not the heritage of the Indian people but only of a very small section of the bourgeoisie classes. The overwhelm-*

¹ "In all metrical compositions there is much misty and constrained phraseology merely intended to fill up the metre and serving as a kind of patch work, and this necessitates a certain amount of verbosity. The metrical form of literary composition is one of the causes which make the study of Sanskrit literature so particularly difficult." (*Alberuni*, vol. I, p. 19.)

ing mass of the people were intentionally, purposely and maliciously left to wallow in degrading superstitions by 'the preconcerted tricks of the priests'.¹ This can be best illustrated by a review of popular beliefs concerning those 'categories of thought' which we have already noted.

1. Polytheism and Idolatry.—The Vedic gods, if gods they may be called, were merely poetical personifications without images or temples. The origin of idol-making among the Hindus does not concern us here. But it is significant that Alberuni, who spared neither money nor pains in obtaining instruction from the best Hindu teachers, repeatedly declares that educated Hindus had faith in God alone. "*We shall now mention their ludicrous views; but we declare at once that they are held only by the common, uneducated people. For those who march on the path of liberation, or those who study philosophy or theology, and who desire abstract truth, which they call 'sara' are entirely free from worshipping anything but God alone, and would never dream of worshipping an image manufactured to represent Him.*"² And again: "Such idols are made only for the uneducated, low-class people of little understanding; the Hindus (*i.e.*, the educated Hindus) never made an idol of any supernatural being, much less of God. *The crowd is kept in thralldom by all sor's of priestly tricks and deceits.*"³ When the ignorant crowd get a piece of good luck, by accident or something, at which they had aimed, and when with this, some of the preconcerted tricks of the priests are brought into connection, the

¹ *Alberuni*, vol. I, p. 123.

² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

darkness in which they live increases vastly, not their intelligence." Our author found the whole of India studded with idols and proceeds to give, on the basis of the *Samhita* of Vṛāmahira, an account of the principal idols his reader is likely to meet—Ram, Vishnu, Baladeva, Bhagvati, Sambha, Brahman, Skanda, Indra, Mahadeva, Buddha (sitting on a lotus ' with a placid expression as if he were the father of creation,' or as *Arhaub*, a naked youth with a fine face, beautiful, with the figure of *Sri*, his wife, under his left breast), Ravanta, Yama, Kubera, the Sun (Aditya), and the Seven Mothers. This list picks out the most popular idols of the day. But Alberuni confesses that he could find no Buddhists in India. On the other hand, he speaks of Magians in the country; they were the special devotees of the Sun-god who was 'dressed in the style of the Northerners', *i. e.*, he wore a *pyjama* instead of a *dhoti*. "The worshippers of the Seven Mothers kill sheep and buffaloes with their axes (*katara*) that they may nourish themselves with their blood." Some of the idols were famous and are noticed by our author in detail—the *Linga* of Siva at Somnath, the statue of the Sun-god at Multan, of Vishnu at Thaneswar, and of Sarada at Kashmir. The India of Alberuni was predominantly Vaishnavite. Saivism, at the time, seems to have been more or less, a southern creed.

The more famous temples drew crowds of pilgrims and gathered fabulous wealth owing to the devotion of the rich and the poor. The pilgrimages, whether obligatory or not, had undoubtedly the effect of bringing the people of distant parts together and thus creating

a common religious and national spirit.¹ They were also centres of business and industry, and in some cases, particularly Nagarkot, the Brahmans had good reputation as bankers. Alberuni like Abbe Dubois, who wrote eight centuries later, asserts that the moral atmosphere of many temples was not clean. An Arab traveller had made the preposterous remark: "The Hindus regard fornication as lawful and wine as unlawful." The reference was, of course, to the *devadasi* girls, so plentiful in the temples of those days. On this count, however, Alberuni does not blame the Brahmans. "People think with regard to harlotry that it is allowed with them.... In reality the matter is not as people think, but it is rather this, that the Hindus are not very severe in punishing whoredom. The fault, however, in this lies with the kings, not with the nation. But for this no Brahman or priest would suffer in their idol-temples the women who sing, dance and play. The kings make them an attraction for their cities, a bait of pleasures for their subjects, for no other but financial reasons. By the revenue which they derive from the business both as fines and taxes, they want to recover the expenses which their treasury has to spend on the army."²

Corresponding to the material idols, there was, of course, a spiritual, or rather spiritualistic, pantheon—first, the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, the three primary forces, Vishnu being often given the superior

¹ See Mahatma Gandhi: *Hind Swaraj*, reprinted as *Indian Self-government*.

² "An adulteress is driven out of the house of the husband and banished." (*Alberuni*, vol. I, p. 162.)

place as the unifying element ; secondly, eight classes of spiritual beings, *devas*, *daitya*, *danava*, *gandharva*, etc.; lastly, *pitaras* (ancestors), *bhuta*, *siddha*, etc. Totalling up, they counted some 330,000,000 beings. It is not necessary to go into further details. Unfortunately, the Brahmans while disbelieving in all *devas* and proclaiming with no uncertain voice that the human rishi was inferior to God alone, manufactured innumerable stories about the gods. "They represented the *devas* as eating and drinking, cohabiting, living and dying, since they exist within matter, though in the most subtle and most simple kind of it.¹ They allow them all sorts of things, some perhaps not objectionable, others decidedly objectionable." It is unnecessary to give instances. The stories to which Alberuni refers are only too prominent a feature of that low-grade literature, falsely called religious, to which alone the Brahmans admitted their low-caste coreligionists. *The Greek gods were no better—that is Alberuni's consolation.*

Whatever the origin of idolatory or the justification of it in earlier days, there can be no doubt that by the eleventh century—long after the foundation of Christianity and Islam and at a time when, had the Brahmans so desired, the principles of the *Gita*, the *Patanjali* and the *Upanishads* could have been published broadcast—the system of idolatory had developed into 'a foul and pernicious abuse'. The real objection to idolatory is not that it is a false doctrine, for we have to believe in many things—time, space, causation, etc.,—which are obviously untrue, but that

¹ *Alberuni*, vol. I, p. 92.

it degrades and demoralises the human mind. The psychological effect on the people at large of inculcating for generations and centuries the cult of immoral gods, and enshrining it in temples designed for this purpose, can be more easily imagined than described.

2. Reincarnation, Metempsychosis.—The doctrine of reincarnation, the *sine quo non* of Hinduism, as explained by the best Indian thinkers and accepted by some of the best Muslim thinkers, is essentially a doctrine of human dignity and human freedom. It is also the most rational explanation, though not based on authority of any sort, yet offered of man's place and man's duties in this universe. Divested of all needless technicalities, it means that man can only annihilate the phenomenal world (*maya, hijab*)—*first*, by a virtuous life which removes the veil between him and his fellowmen and thus annihilates the individual consciousness by enlarging it into the social consciousness; and, *secondly*, by contemplation (*mushahida, dhiyan*) which enables the individual consciousness to be absorbed into the Ultimate Reality which can only be the Supreme Consciousness; for Reality without Consciousness is meaningless and Consciousness alone can be considered Real. Minor differences in interpretation do not change the substance of the doctrine; for example Shaikh Shahabuddin, out of regard for Muslim orthodoxy which contemplates only two lives, one here and one hereafter, gets round the difficulty by declaring that the next life consists of many progressive stages. Salvation thus contemplated has no need of paradise or flowing-lawns or crystal wine-cups or alluring *huris*; it needs the Lord alone. "The *sufis*,

too," to quote Alberuni once more, "do not consider the stay in paradise a special gain for another reason, for there the soul delights in other things but the Truth, *i.e.*, God, and its thoughts are diverted from the absolute Good by things which are not the absolute Good."

"We have already said," continues Alberuni, "that the soul exists in these two places without a body. But this is only the view of the educated among them, who understand by the soul an independent being." The lower classes took, or were induced to take, a materialistic view of the doctrine. "They cannot imagine the existence of a soul without a body." Hence the agony of death—a terrible thing for the onlooker—was attributed to the fact that the soul had nowhere to go to and had, consequently, to stick to the decayed and useless body. Prayers were necessary and payments to the Brahmans so that a tabernacle might be obtained for the soul of the dying relative. Popular tradition, moreover, postulated that every soul, regardless of its virtue or *karma*, had to put up for a whole year in a hastily prepared body—the *ativahika*—in which it abode for a year (as a minimum period) "with the greatest pain, no matter whether it has deserved to be rewarded or punished." The last qualification was necessary, otherwise many people would have remained satisfied with the conviction that their dead relations were reaping the reward of their good life. According to a tradition mentioned by Ferishta, all these 'probationary souls' came to Somnath. Be this as it may, 'the one-year probation theory' made it necessary for the heir of the deceased to perform a series of rites during the

year, and enabled the Brahmans to levy 'Death Duties' on all who were in a position to pay them, regardless of the virtues and vices of the deceased. The tradition must have been very strict and universal; for the custom of *fatiha* for the dead—ten days, forty days, six months and one year after death (or rather burial)—has persisted among the Indian Mussalmans though six or seven centuries have passed since their conversion. After this year is over, the mind of the Muslim heir, though he is even ignorant of the term, *ativahika*, feels definitely relieved.¹

¹ In Chapter LXXII devoted to Inheritance, Alberuni again returns to the subject and summarises the duties of a legitimate heir to the soul of the deceased. On a projecting shelf before the door of the house, it was his duty for ten successive days to put a vessel of water and a dish of cooked food. 'Possibly the spirit of the deceased has not yet found its rest, but moves still to and fro around the house, hungry and thirsty.' On the tenth day he was expected to spend 'in the name of the deceased' as much food and cold water as his means permitted; thereafter, for the whole 'mourning-year' he was to send food for one person along with a copper coin (*dirham*) to the house of a Brahman. Further, he was to give *sixteen* banquets in all at which the guests received both dinner and alms—on the 15th and the 16th day after death; then once every month, the banquet of the sixth month being more splendid than the others, and, finally, on the last but one and the last day of the 'mourning-year'. 'With the end of the year the duties towards the deceased have been fulfilled.' The heir, if a legitimate son, was also expected to spend the year in mourning dress and to refrain from intercourse with women. (*Vol. II, pp. 165-166.*) It must not be forgotten that apart from the *ativahika-legend*, these banquets were a means by which the heir asserted his right to the property of the deceased, and the sub-caste or *biradari* to which he belonged, by accepting his invitation, acknowledged his right. Hence the wide prevalence of these 'death-banquets' among both the Hindus and the Mussalmans of India down to the present time.

3. Popular Cosmology.—A man's outlook on the problems of practical and even spiritual life is very much conditioned by his conception of the material universe. The belief that matter, and human life so far as it is materially conditioned, is determined by scientific laws has certainly tended to eliminate superstition. People who believe the world to be round will, inevitably, attempt to navigate it. The conception of a flat earth, washed by an unlimited sea—or of islands within islands and seas within seas—will induce a people to shrink more and more within itself. The Sanskrit treatises, known as *Siddhantas*, incorporated the greatest advance made in the realm of astronomy, mathematics and allied subjects before the advent of modern science. 'There is always darkness under the lamp,' says an Indian proverb. It is tragic that while the labours of Brahmagupta and his Indian fellow-workers enabled the people of Khwarazm and Khorasan and Baghdad to obtain a healthier and saner idea of the physical universe which surrounded them, the popular 'world-out-look' of the Indians was left untouched. Early Arab cosmology, unlike Indian cosmology, was based not upon any venerable traditions but upon the immediate sense-experience of an unscientific people. Among the Mussalmans, as among the Hindus, traditional astronomy was considered a part of religion, and any attempt to question it was regarded as heretical and suppressed either with the persecutor's sword or the universal hostility of popular opinion. But, fortunately, mathematics in all its branches is considered, and has always been considered, a perfect science; its truths were the only certain

truths and even dogmas of the theology had to be given up, or explained away, when they came into conflict with the principles of mathematical logic. So after the first heat of conflict in the ninth and tenth centuries, a Muslim astronomer could pursue his scientific studies without any great fear of persecution by public opinion or the state. In India it was otherwise; the principles of science had to be explained away to suit the fantasies of the masses or misrepresented for the purpose of exploiting them.

4. False Sciences.—This brings us to 'the false sciences' which 'preyed upon the multitude'. By far the most popular of these sciences was astrology. Man's life on earth is inevitably reckoned by the revolutions of heavenly bodies as he perceives them, and his religious practices from the earliest days have become attached to their changing but recurrent phases. In this there is nothing mysterious. But the union of wicked theology and false science brought astrology into existence—a hybrid child. There is good reason for believing that India is the original home of 'scientific astrology' if this contradictory term may be permitted; it was certainly very popular among the Mussalmans who had borrowed it from the Greeks and the Indians¹. But the influence of astrology among

¹ Alberuni was not, as is sometimes supposed, an astrologer. A careful examination of his *Tafhimun Nujum*, a popular work on astronomy which he wrote for his daughter, Raihana, leaves little doubt that he had no faith in astrology; but his detailed discussion of the methods of Hindu astrology shows beyond doubt that this science was extremely popular. He expresses a regret that Muslim knowledge of Hindu astrology does not go beyond the *Sind-Hind*.

the Mussalmans must not be overrated. A resolute Mussalman—like Babar before the battle of Khanwa—could tell the astrologer to go and hang, and direct his steps by his faith in God and in secular reason. Also the average Muslim consciousness throughout the middle ages regarded astrology as something dark, forbidden, irreligious; it came into sharp conflict with his faith and his reliance in Divine Omnipotence. The world is governed by Allah directly, not by the angels or the stars. “And when He intends anything,” says the Quran, “He says, Be, and it is.” In India, on the other hand, astrology became the basis of popular religion; it was the lever by which Brahmanical scholars controlled and exploited the multitude and, incidentally, earned their own livelihood. If man’s fate, his sacrifices and his prayers depended upon the stars—and the stars could only be studied by years of careful training in technical sciences made even more technical by an artificial methodology, the esoteric characters of Brahmanical learning could be preserved without danger. Fortunately for the Brahmans, the mass of mankind are utterly incompetent for the study of mathematics. The *Siddhantas* and the *Jatakas* were not sealed books like the *Vedas*. But they were unintelligible to the uninitiated and the untrained.

The matter is best examined by reference to a concrete question—the eclipses. Hindu scientists had by the fourth century A.D. proved by a series of irrefutable deductions that the solar and lunar eclipses were due respectively to the interposition of the moon between the sun and the earth and of the earth between the sun

and the moon. Centuries of careful observation had also enabled them to predict the cycle of eclipses with remarkable accuracy and to assure themselves that this recurrent phenomena entailed no danger to anybody. Nevertheless the people of India were thrown into ungovernable panic again and again from fear that ahu, the terrible Head, would swallow up the Sun and the Moon; and the astrologers were beseeched by the people with prayers, alms and gifts to prevent an untimely termination of the history of mankind. Needless to say, they always succeeded. Alberuni suggests, following a hint of the *Brahma Siddhanta*, that the eclipse should be regarded not as the *reason* but the *occasions* for prayer—just as the Mussalman prays before the dawn (or omits his prayer) without the slightest fear that the sun will fail to rise. But such an admission would have annihilated the influence of the Brahmans, and the scientific explanation of the eclipses was never popularised. Alberuni's remark on the topic is significant. "The scholars"—and we are bound to add Brahmanical scholars more than others—"are well aware of the use of money, but the rich are ignorant of the nobility of science." In Muslim countries the scientists, regarded as protagonists of heresy, were helplessly dependent upon the charity and the patronage of princes, from which soon after Alberuni's days they were effectually excluded by the mullas and poets¹. In India the practice of astrology and allied sciences enabled the scholars to control the princes as well as the multitude. But this was poor compensation for a wide-spread and undeniable evil.

¹ Alberuni's: *India*, Vol. I, p. 152.

Similarly five centuries after the phenomena of the tides had been satisfactorily explained as due to the revolutions of the moon, we find the temple of Somnath being built and popularised on the basis of a significant legend. The Moon being married to the lunar stations, the daughters of Prajapati, began to love one of his wives, Rohini, more than the others. Thereupon Prajapati, worried by the complaints of his other daughters, cursed the Moon and it became leprous. The Moon repented, but Prajapati's order had been given and could not be recalled. He, however, promised to veil the Moon from the eyes of men for half the year provided the latter worshipped the *linga* of Shiva properly. This *linga* at first was on the sea-coast, about three miles from the point where the Saraswati then fell into the gulf of Cutch, and was washed by the tidal wave. About a century before Mahmud, the idol was removed from the sea-side and the famous temple was built.¹ The nature of the legend shows

¹ The general belief that the original Somnath temple was on the southern coast of Kathiawar is not correct. (1) Alberuni's description leaves no doubt about its exact situation. The river Saraswati is in Gujrat and fell into the Gulf of Cutch. (2) The remarkable ebb and flow of the tides, which the legend postulates and which accounts of Sultan Mahmud's invasions confirm, are not possible on the open sea-coast of Kathiawar but were then possible in the Gulf of Cutch. (3) Somnath was an important sea-port for which the Gulf of Cutch was the only possible place. (4) Sultan Mahmud, according to Ibn-i-Asir, reached Somnath after marching from Patan or Anhilwara for two days and a half; this would not have been possible if Somnath had been then (as now) on the southern sea-board of Kathiawar. (5) A new Somnath, as Barni tells us, was built after the destruction of the first Somnath by Mahmud, apparently at its present site. The

that the people who invented or popularised the cult of Somnath (Moonlord, Siva) were well aware of the nature of the tides; the phenomenal growth of the temple in popularity and wealth shows the rapid rise of Siva worship and the extraordinary influence of the Brahmans devoted to him¹. The Ganges-water with which the *linga* was washed everyday was guaranteed to cure persons of all diseases. The influence of Somnath probably helped in popularising the cult of the *lingum*. Alberuni tells us that the *linga* was often found in the temples of south-western Sind².

Other sciences which 'preyed on the ignorance of the multitude' also deserve a passing mention. Alchemy, though not unknown, was not so popular as among the Mussalmans. On the other hand Rasayana—the art of restoring old men to youth and of prolonging life—was extremely popular. All sorts of herbs and concoctions were tried. Apparently this mediæval science of 'rejuvenation' or 'regeneration' led to much evil owing to the greediness of the Hindu princes. About a hundred years before Alberuni, a native of Daihak, near Somnath, Nagarjuna by name, wrote a precious treatise on the subject. "The greediness of the ignorant Hindu princes for gold-making does not know any limit. If any one of them wanted to carry out a scheme of gold-making, and people temple was obviously built once more (*i.e.*, for the third time) after its destruction by Nusrat Khan. (See Habib: *Mahmud of Ghaznin*, and *Campaigns of Alauddin Khilji*.)

¹ Alberuni: *India*, vol. II, p. 104.

² *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 104.

advised him to kill a number of fine little children, the monster would not refrain from such a crime; he would throw them into the fire ¹."

Then, as now, India was reputed abroad for all things strange from the tricks of her jugglers to the God-compelling *mantras* of her priests. The topic is as long as it is frivolous and the modern critic may be permitted to dismiss it with Alberuni's veiled derision. "I, for my part, do not know what I am to say about these things since I do not believe in them²."

5. Cults and Sects.—A critic anxious to declaim against Hinduism will find enough material in Abbe Dubois and other missionary writers. That, of course, is not our task. But about Hindu sects of the time two things deserve to be noted: *First*, there was a constant tendency towards degeneration. The spiritual comprehension of the religious movements was often lost and vulgar stories did duty for spiritual truths. This was balanced by a constant effort at reform, which in its turn took the form of new cults. The same phenomena is found in other religions but perhaps not to the same marked degree. For Hinduism, unlike Islam and Roman Catholicism, is not a creed at all but 'a civilisation-process'; almost every doctrine—good, bad or indifferent, could find a place within its ample folds. *Secondly*, the most remarkable phenomena about Hindu religious movements is the almost complete absence of religious persecution. No one was prepared

¹. Alberuni: *India*, vol. I. p. 193.

². *Ibid*, vol. I, p. 194.

to kill—or to be killed—for the sake of his idols or his gods. “On the whole, there is very little disputing about theological topics among themselves; at the utmost, they fight with words, but they will never stake their soul or body or their property on religious controversy¹.” This may have been due to the doctrine of *ahimsa*, or to a genuine desire for tolerance, or to an implicit understanding among the governing classes that the more sub-divided the community, the easier it would be to govern it. Be this as it may, a wide door was left open for the propagation of degrading cults and the construction of degenerate temples for shameless forms of worship. Even the price for tolerance—one of the highest principles of our social life—may be sometimes too great. If the cult of the *lingum* had been invented in a Christian or a Muslim country, it would have been suppressed without much ado as a pure police measure; the claim that such worship could be religious would not have been entertained for a moment. But in India it went forth, north and east, west and south, gathering all sorts of associations—sometimes degraded by the grossest form of sex-suggestions and at other times sublimated by philosophical speculations that left nothing to be desired. The Turkish Muslims—and the Indian Muslims perhaps even to greater extent—were bitterly horrified by the *lingum*. The statues of Vishnu and other gods were admired aesthetically and were often merely defaced by a hammer-stroke on the nose out of a mistaken loyalty to the ‘true faith’ or *iman*. But the *Siva-lingum* was smashed wherever

¹. Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 19.

it could be found. Still too much emphasis must not be laid upon the elements of spiritual degeneration in Hindu life, though they have left undeniable impression upon the statuary of the period. The India of Alberuni, though fallen from its former high-state, was culturally alive; its political collapse is to be explained not by the existence of a few degrading cults but by the shortcomings of the best politico-social conceptions of the day.

It is generally believed that the Hindus are divided into two principal sects, the Vaishnavites and the Shivaites. This in a sense is true. But these sects have not the remotest likeness to the Shias and Sunnis among the Mussalmans or to the Roman Catholics and Protestants among the Christians. No memories of past persecutions—no martyr's memorials—embittered the relation of the two Hindu sects. Also, since Shiva and Vishnu have so many incarnations, and may, with their differently named wives, be worshipped under any number of forms, it is difficult to get to any concrete sectarian dogma with the seal of permanence upon it. The Hindus have a bad habit, as Alberuni noted, of praising one god to the skies and then hinting darkly that there is some one greater behind him. And so, whatever god the votary begins to worship, he is brought ultimately to the syllable *Om*—denoting the Supreme Being and connoting all qualities, or, possibly, none; for our human minds cannot comprehend the real nature of the Absolute Reality. All gods lead to *Om*—the logical equivalent of Allah—just as all roads lead to Rome.

The following summary from Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha's *Mediæval Civilisation* will give the reader some idea of the Vaishnavite and Shivaite cults:—

“In view of the teachings of the *Bhagvat Gita*, the priests (jadhavas) started the worship of Vasu Deva in order to popularise his cult, which came to be known as *Bhagvat* or *Satiyavat*. The arduous Vedic and other religious ceremonies prevalent at the time had alienated the minds of the people, who now welcomed the Bhagti cult cheerfully. Sometime after its origin the images of Vishnu were also made. The matter has not yet been completely explored, but the inscription of Nagri mentioned above refers to the constructions of temples for the worship of Sankara Shiva and Vasu Deva. There is no reference to an idol in any previous inscription, but in the 4th century B.C. Magesthenese asserts that the Sursena Jadhavas of Mathura worshipped Heracles (*i.e.*, Hari Krishna and Vasu Deva). Panini has also mentioned the name of Vasu Deva in his *Save'ras* and *Patanjali*, and regards Vasu Deva as a deity. It seems that the worship of Vasu Deva had already been started at the time of Panini about 600 B. C. The Bhagvat creed must, therefore, be earlier ¹.

“At first the new creed retained the sacrifices of the Vedic faith but later, on coming under the influence of Buddhism, it preferred the *ahimsa* dharma. The *Panj Raner Santha* is the authoritative book of this sect. The followers of this sect believed in five daily prayers, worship in temples, recitation of *mantras* and the attainment of Ishwar through *yoga*.

1. *Mediæval Civilisation* by Pandit Gauri Shankar, p. 18.

Then the Vaishnavites began to represent Vishnu in twenty-four incarnations, of whom ten were considered to be the highest. The inclusion of Buddha and Rishwah in the list of Hindu *avatars* makes it evident that the Hindu religion had undergone a change owing to the predominance of the Buddh and Jain creeds, and, therefore, the founders of these creeds were given a place by the side of Vishnu. It is also possible that the invention of the twenty-four incarnations was due to the adoption of the twenty-four Buddhas or the twenty-four *tirthankars* of the Jains. The Vishnu temples have existed from 200 B.C. till to-day, and a mention of the Vishnu-worship is found in inscriptions, copper-plates, and books of yore. In the Deccan, the Bhagvat sect began to rise in the 9th century A. D.; and the Alwar rajas of the Deccan were the devotees of Sri Krishna. It is strange that in spite of the fact that Ram was an incarnation of Vishnu, no temple or image of him is found till the tenth century A. D. It is extremely unlikely that the cult of Ram prevailed in ancient days like the cult of Krishna. In later days the worship of Ram was started, and festivals like Ram Nomi were observed.

“The Vedantic teachings of Shankar Acharya, however, struck a blow to the Bhagvati creed. If the *Atman* (soul) and *Brahma* are one and the same, what is then the need of *bhagti*? In order to revive the decreasing power of the creed, Ramanuj began to criticise the Vedantic teachings of Shankar Acharya.¹

¹ *Mediæval Civilisation* by Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha, pp. 10 & 20.

“The worship of Shiva began, like that of Vishnu, and his devotees, to regard Shiva as the Omnipotent Creator and Preserver. The various works on this sect are known as *Agam* and its devotees began to make numerous forms of the images of Shiva. Ordinarily the image was a small round pillar, or else the upper round part was surrounded by four heads—the round top to represent the Brahmanda, and the four faces to represent the Sun (east side), Vishnu (west), Brahma (north), and Rudra (south). Idols have also been found not with the faces but the images of these deities. It meant that Shiva was the master of the Universe, while the other deities were the manifestations of his attributes. At various places images of the trinity of Shiva have also been found, with six hands, three faces and three heads ornamented with large locks..... Such Trimurtis have been found at Elephanta, Chittor, Sirohi, etc. ¹

“The Shivaite sect was popularly known as ‘Pashopat;’ later on the ‘Lakolesh’ sect was added, which seems to have spread over the whole of Bharata. The four followers of Lakolesh—Kushk, Gurg, Mutr and Kursh—are referred to in the *Linga Purana*. It is after these disciples that the Shivaite sub-sects are known. To-day the Lakolesh sect is not found anywhere and people are not even acquainted with the name².

“The followers of the Shivaite sect believe *Mahadev* to be the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of

¹ *Mediæval Civilization* by Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha, pp. 23-24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

the universe. The Shivaites consider *yogabhyas* and the sprinkling of ashes over their bodies to be necessary; they also believe in *moksha*. The six essentials of their worship are—laughing, singing, dancing, bellowing like a bull, praying prostrate on the ground and reciting on the rosary; there are also other similar customs. They believe that man reaps the fruit of his life according to his *karma*. Life (*jiva*) is eternal; when life is released from the delusion of *maya*, it becomes Shiva, but does not become omnipotent like the Mahashiva. These people pay great attention to recitations (*jap*) and *yogsadhan*, holding of breath. The other two sub-sects are Kapalak and Kalamakh who worship Shiva in his manifestation as Bhiru and Rudra. There is no difference between them. They have 6 symbols—*mala*, ornaments, *cundal*, *ratan*, ashes and *janiva*. They believe that man can attain to salvation through the *sadhus* (mystics). The followers of this sect eat out of human skulls; they rub the ashes of *shamshan* over their bodies and eat it also. They keep a staff and a cup of wine, and regard them a means of salvation both in this world and the next. Their *sadhus* lead a dreadful and nefarious life. The sect consists of *sadhus* exclusively; there are no lay-followers. Now such *sadhus* are seldom found.¹

“The Shiva sect also flourished in Kashmir..... There Aspand Gupta wrote a book known as *Aspand Shastra*, according to which it is believed that God does not stand in need of man’s *karma*, but creates

¹ *Mediæval Civilization* by Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha, p. 26.

the world according to His own will without the intermediation of matter. ¹

“When the Vishnu Dharma, with *ahimsa* its new doctrine, reached the Andhra and Tamil lands, and the opposition to the Shivaite cult was spreading in the eastern region, at that very time a new Shivaite cult arose in the Karnatic..... In the 12th century A.D. a Brahman, named Basu, started a new creed known as ‘Lingayat’ in order to wipe off the Jain religion. The Raja of the place, Bajal by name, patronised him and spent large sums of money in popularising the new creed. Though the deadliest enemies of the gainis, they laid emphasis on the doctrine of *ahimsa*, but did not believe in castes or sub-castes. Basu taught that a person, even if he be a *sannyasi*, must earn a livelihood, and begging was forbidden. The *linga* was the special sign of this sect, and its members used to wear the *linga* of Shiva in a silver casket round their necks. It was their creed that *Shiva* had divided his soul into two parts, the *linga* and the body. ²

“The Shivaite sect was very strong in the Tamil province. Here they were deadly opposed to the Jains and the Buddhists. The principles of their religion have been compiled in eleven volumes at different times.” ³

V. Hindu Nationalism.

There were many elements of Hindu thought, the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

² *Mediæval Civilisation* by Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha, p. 29.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

doctrine of *nirwana*, for example, or the doctrine of non-violence, with which a non-fanatical Mussalman of the eleventh century felt himself in close kinship, whether he acknowledged it publicly or not. It was otherwise with the Hindu social system. To-day after the two religions have lived side by side for eight or nine hundred years, the Hindus and Mussalmans of the country—partly owing to the mutual influence of the two religions but primarily owing to the persistence of Hindu outlook and modes of thought among the Muslim converts—are children of a common culture, however much communalists may ignore, or reformers lament, the fact. In the eleventh century the two systems stood in sharp and apparently irreconcilable contrast for the intermediate link between them—the Indian Mussalman—had not yet appeared.

Hindu nationalism—and there can be no other name for it—was aggressive and violent. “All their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them—against all foreigners. They call them *mlechchha*, *i.e.*, impure, and forbid having any connection with them, be it by intermarriage, or any other kind of relationship, or by sitting, eating or drinking with them, because thereby they think they would be polluted.¹” No conversions to Hinduism were permitted. “They are not allowed to receive anybody who does not belong to them, even if he wished it or was inclined to their religion. This, too, renders any connection with them quite impossible, and constitutes the widest gulf between

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, pp. 19-20.

us and them..... In all manners and usages they differ from us to such a degree as to frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs, and as to declare us to be devil's breed, and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and right." Needless to say the Indians thought they had a monopoly of philosophy and science, art and culture. "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no sciences like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited and stolid. They are by nature niggardly in communicating what they know, and take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their people, still much more, of course, from any foreigner. According to their belief there is no other country on the earth but theirs, no other race of man but theirs, and no created beings besides them have any knowledge or science whatsoever."¹ As they never went beyond the frontiers of their own country as in earlier days, it was impossible for them to observe the progress made in other lands. A grudging recognition was extended to the *Yavanas* or Greeks, and Alberuni quotes a remark of Varamihira, 'a self-lauding fellow who gives himself airs as doing justice to others': "*The Greeks, though impure, must be honoured, since they were trained in sciences and therein excelled others.* What, then, are we to say of a Brahman, if he combines with his purity the height of science."² From the Mussalmans even this condescending

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 23.

² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

patronage was withheld. No Hindu would acknowledge that they were anything but barbarians. "*Their haughtiness is such that if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khorasan or Persis, they will think you both an ignoramus and a liar.*"¹

Now nationalism, whether cultural or political, is not a peculiar feature of the Hindus or the Indians; we see in the twentieth century its most fanatical developments in spite of an extensive diffusion of knowledge and all kinds of cultural contacts. Alberuni's sane advice is, therefore, worth remembering: "*We must confess, in order to be just, that a similar depreciation of foreigners not only prevails among us and the Hindus but is common to all nations towards each other.*"

There were, however, a number of political and other causes which contributed to increase the Indian's dislike of foreigners. Alberuni's analysis of these factors is worth re-interpreting in the light of modern knowledge.² The labours of Asoka and Kanishka and the Buddhist missionaries, who in their desire to proclaim the sacred gospel were not afraid of crossing the salt-water or the land-frontiers of India, had spread the Buddhist creed in many Asiatic lands. "In former times, Khorasan, Persis, Irak, Mosul, and the country up to the frontier of Persia was Buddhist." Though the Buddhist disliked the Brahmans, the two sects were, after all, offshoots of a common creed and the Mahayana interpretation of Buddhism brought it

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

² Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 22.

closer to Brahmanism. Its architectural remains, as well as the sectarian and religious movements of Persia and the adjoining countries in Islamic days, are a sufficient proof of the profound influence Buddhism exercised in those countries. But, unfortunately, it came into conflict with the reviving Persian (Sassanian) Empire, and the Persian Emperors made Zoroastrianism the obligatory state-religion for Persis (Persia, Faris) and Iraq.¹ As a consequence, the Buddhist were banished from those regions and had to emigrate to the countries east of Balkh. This set-back, decisive in its political effect, may have led the Indians to give up the idea of travelling abroad.

Secondly, the advent of Islam crushed all Indian cults in northern Afghanistan (Balkh), Mawaraun-Nahr and Turkistan. There was constant friction on the frontier, which ultimately led to Mohammad-bin-Kasim's invasion of Sind. He marched to the frontier of Kashmir and was planning a campaign against Kannauj at the time of his fall. The young general was tolerant in religious matters, and the *Chach Nama* and Alberuni both assure us that 'he left the people to their ancient faith.' But one great Hindu state was pulled down with surprising rapidity and others had been threatened; and at a time when the land-route to India through the north-western desert was extremely difficult, Muslim travellers and missionaries found a foot-hold in Sind. Later on Subuktigin built good roads through the north-western frontier and they were utilised by Mahmud for his invasions.

¹ Alberuni attributes this to Gurshasp; Alberuni, vol. I, p. 21.

No Muslim was in a better position to estimate the effect of these invasions on the Hindus than Alberuni: "Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed those wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares, and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment both from political and religious sources¹."

For the moment, it seemed that even peaceful association in trade and barter which had continued between the Indians and foreign nations—Arabs, Persians and Turks—for centuries would come to a standstill. Fortunately for India, Mahmud's central Asian empire crumbled to pieces ten years after his death, and the way to India was left open to other and better people, the Muslim mystics.

VI. The Brahmans

The Indian social system of the eleventh century, as described by Muslim writers, was based upon three principles, not quite consistent with each other and giving rise to contrary practices—the principle of non-violence or *ahimsa*; the principle of division of labour, caste or *varna*; and the principle of hygiene or *chhut*.

¹ Alberuni: *India*, vol. I, p. 22.

We should not, in a developed mediæval society, expect these principles in their primitive simplicity ; as very often happens in most societies at this stage of development, the fundamental principles of social life, not scientifically or critically apprehended by the multitude, were twisted out of their proper shape and extensively misapplied by the far-fetched casuistries or *tawils* of theologians. Concerning another feature of Indian society—the war-cult of the Rajputs—which is so obvious in the Persian annals of the thirteenth century, Moslem writers before the period of Shaha-buddin are silent. And this silence is not without significance.

There can be little doubt that an educated Hindu of the eleventh century, if asked to formulate the basic doctrine of his creed, would have referred to the principle of metempsychosis. Now metempsychosis or salvation (*moksha, nirwana, fana*) through a life of virtue and contemplation (*akhlaq and mushahidah, karma*) implies, first, the equality of man, for it places salvation within the reach of all, and, secondly, *ahimsa*, the avoidance of harm to all living creatures (*jiv hatya*). The doctrine of human equality (as we shall see presently) was eliminated from Indian society owing to the growth of the caste-system. It was otherwise with the doctrine of *ahimsa*. The doctrines of metempsychosis and *ahimsa* were not invented by Gautama Buddha, but the Buddhist revolt is by far the greatest and the most effective protest the moral feeling of man has yet made against the criminal methods of nature (*himsa*) which require, both among plants and animals, that the continuance of the life of

one creature should depend upon the destruction of another. The long prevalence of Buddhism in India as well as foreign countries enabled the doctrine to take very deep roots; the decline and fall of Buddhism did not eradicate (either in India or elsewhere) the attitude of mind Buddhism had created. Wherever we turn—from the Hindu avoidance of onion and garlic to the pacifist-attitude of the Muslim mystics—we see the visible and profound influence of the *ahimsa* doctrine. So far as Indian society of the eleventh century is concerned, it may be confidently stated that, in spite of notorious exceptions, the acceptance or the non-acceptance of the doctrine of *ahimsa* created a sharp and quite visible dividing line between the civilised and the non-civilised sections of the community. The cult of physical and spiritual cleanliness, a distinct conception in the earlier ages, was in the eleventh century definitely identified in many matters with the *ahimsa* doctrine. Thus meat-eating, permitted to the earlier Aryans, was by the time of Sultan Mahmud forbidden to the Brahmans and permitted to the other castes under restrictions and as a matter of necessity. Both doctrines (*ahimsa* and *chhut*)¹ were used by the Brahmans in guiding the affairs of the community as it suited their class-needs or the principles of their religious sects.

The caste-system of India, as formulated in the classical literature from which it drew its intellectual sustenance, has often been described by mediæval and modern writers and a detailed account will be found in Alberuni. We are here only concerned with the system as it actually worked.

Religion had become the exclusive monopoly of the Brahman class. It was not to be expected that all the members of a large, hereditary class would be able to perform the extremely onerous duties that tradition required of them. "The Brahmans recite the Veda without understanding its meaning, and in the same way they learn it by heart, the one receiving it from the other. Only few of them learn its meaning, and still less is the number of those who master the contents of the Veda and their interpretation to such a degree as to be able to hold a theological disputation¹."

¹ No feeling of modesty or hesitation born of religious doubt restrained the Brahman's claim to supreme pre-eminence. Thus (*Manu*, Chap. I):

- "87. But in order to protect this Universe, He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet.
- "88. To Brahmans he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).
- "93. As the Brahmana sprang from (Brahma's) mouth, as he was the first-born, and as he possesses the Veda, *he is by right the lord of this whole creation.*
- "95. What created being can surpass him, through whose mouth the gods continually consume the sacrificial viands and the manes the offerings to the dead ?
- "98. The very birth of a Brahmana is an eternal incarnation of the sacred law ; for he is born to (fulfil) the sacred law, and becomes one with Brahman.
- "99. *A Brahmana, coming into existence, is born as the highest on earth, the lord of all created beings, for the protection of the treasury of the law.*

In this there is no matter for surprise or regret. The Quran has, similarly, been recited without understanding in all non-Arab countries and there was throughout the middle ages a grave objection to its translation into the languages of the multitude. *The exclusion of low-grade intellects from the field of theological disputations is not a matter to be deplored.* The records of Mohammad bin Kasim leave upon one the impression that, apart from the Brahmans who dedicated their lives exclusively to religion or acted as *purohits* for well-to-do families, the rest of the community obtained

- “100. *Whatever exists in the world is the property of the Brahmana; on account of the excellence of his origin the Brahmana is, indeed, entitled to it all.*
- “101. The Brahmana eats but his own food, wears but his own apparel, bestows but his own in alms; other mortals subsist through the benevolence of the Brahmana.
- “105. He sanctifies any company (which he may enter), seven ancestors and seven descendants, *and he alone deserves (to possess) this whole earth.*

Chap. X :

- “1. Let the three twice-born castes (*varna*), discharging their (prescribed) duties, study (the Veda); but among them the Brahmana (alone) shall teach it, not the other two; that is an established rule.
- “3. On account of his pre-eminence, on account of the superiority of his origin, on account of his observance of (particular) restrictive rules, and on account of his particular sanctification, the Brahmana is the lord of (all) castes (*varna*).

(The *Laws of Manu*, edited by F. Max Muller, pp. 24-26 & pp. 401-402.)

No post-war dictator, in spite of the modern cult of “blood and soil”, has made a more daring and a more preposterous claim for his chosen race on the ground of mere birth.

its livelihood by service in the government departments as tax-collectors and clerks or by helping society in managing its business or civil affairs through its almost exclusive knowledge of the three Rs. There is good reason for believing that its functions in the eleventh century were substantially the same. The highest office in the state—that of the Raja—was still within the reach of the Brahmans, and had not become the exclusive monopoly of the Rajputs. “The Brahman (*i. e.*, the religious Brahman) lives by what he gathers on the earth or from the trees.” For the ‘secular Brahman’ there were privileges denied to members of other communities, the most important being exemption from state-taxes and dues. Mohammad bin Kasim had very wisely confirmed this exemption from taxes which the Brahmans had enjoyed under Raja Dahir, and most Muslim statesmen of the middle ages, anxious to win over the religious leaders of the Hindu community, followed his example. “The Brahmans”, Alberuni tells us with reference to his own time, “are not, like other castes, bound to pay taxes or to perform services to the kings¹.” Such an exemption, without necessary restrictions, was bound to create abuses; fictitious transfers of land and business, capital could prevent the state from collecting its legitimate dues, and the Brahman community would have deprived the other castes of all profitable ventures. “The Brahman may try his fortune in the trade of cloths and betel-nuts, but it is preferable that he should not trade himself, and that a Vaishya should do the business for him. Further, he is not

¹ Alberuni *India*, vol. II, p. 132.

allowed continually to busy himself with horses and cows, with the care of the cattle, nor with gaining by usury." It is difficult to say how far the public opinion of the country or of the Brahman community itself, which must have resented any degradation of its status, prevented the less scrupulous members of the community from exploiting for their selfish personal purposes the general respect in which the community was held and the privileges which were extended to it by the state. The stray glimpses we get show that the relations between the Rajas and the Brahmans were not always cordial.

Alberuni's account of the ceremonies appertaining to consecration or the second birth, the investment of the *yajnopavita* or the sacred cord and the *pavitra* or the seal-ring and of the rites of bathing, dining, etc., show that the external ceremonies prescribed by the Brahmanical texts were followed. Scrupulous care had to be observed in eating and drinking. Every Brahman was required to have his separate drinking vessel and eating utensils; if another man used them, they were broken. "I have seen," says Alberuni, "Brahmans who allowed their relatives to eat with them from the same plate but most of them disapprove of this." To a Mussalman two things were the symbols of equality and brotherhood—standing shoulder to shoulder at the congregational prayers before the God who has created us all, and eating promiscuously from the same dishes and at the same table-cloth.¹ Neither of these things

¹ Two other insignia of equality—intermarriage without any regard to tribal or national restrictions and equality of political opportunities—though permitted by the letter of the law were more honoured in the breach than the observance.

were tolerated in India. When Brahmans dined together—inter-caste dining was out of the question—a separate square table-cloth was prepared for each guest ‘by pouring water over a spot and plastering it with the dung of cows.’ Meat, as has been already explained, was prohibited to the Brahmans and five vegetables—“onions, garlic, a kind of gourd, the root of a plant like the carrots called *krnen*, and another vegetable that grows round their tanks called *nali*.”

Alberuni does not tell us anything of the sub-castes into which the Brahman community was probably divided. But he tells us that the individuals of all the four castes got a second name according to the work they did. Hindu law allowed the Brahmans to marry women of other castes. But the privilege was not utilised. “In our time,” Alberuni tells us, “the Brahmans, although it is allowed to them, never marry any woman except of their own caste¹.”

The four stages of the life of a Brahman, who had dedicated himself to religion, have been described by Alberuni, probably from personal observation though he refers to *Vishnu Puran* as giving a different age for the various stages². Two centuries after Alberuni wrote, the great orders of the Muslim mystics organised the lives of their disciples in detail

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, p. 156.

² The *Vishnu Puran* gives the fiftieth, the seventieth and the ninetieth years as the end of the first, the second and the third stage. Alberuni objects to these demarcations as not practicable in view of our present short span of life.

on lines very similar to those of the Brahmans and the Shamaniyyas (Buddhists). Alberuni's observations, made at a time when the Muslim mystic orders were not even contemplated, deserve to be noticed in some detail.

1. The first stage, that of the disciple (*Brahmacharya*) extended from the eighth year, the period of consecration, to the twenty-fifth year. "His duty is to practise abstinence, to make the earth his bed, to begin with the learning of the Veda and of its explanation, of the science of theology and law, all this being taught to him by a master, whom he serves day and night. He washes himself thrice a day, and performs a sacrifice to the fire both at the beginning and the end of the day. *After the sacrifice he worships his master*¹." The worship of fire, according to Alberuni, was the holiest of devotions. "No other worship has been able to draw them away from it, neither the worship of idols nor that of stars, cows, asses or images..... He fasts a day and he breaks fast a day², but he is never allowed to eat meat. He dwells in the house of the master, which he only leaves in order to ask for a gift and to beg in not more than five houses once a day, either at morn or in the evening. Whatever alms he receives he places before his master to choose from it what he

¹ Very similar to the doctrine of *fana-fish-Shaikh* (annihilation in the Shaikh or Pir) of the Naqshbandi mystics. And the translator of Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi in the *Misbah-ul-Hidayah* invites us to believe in the following tradition. "The *Shaikhs* (*sufi* teachers) are the brides of Allah on this earth."

² Cf. the *Roza-i-Daudi* of the Mussalmans.

likes. Then the master allows him to take the remainder. Thus the pupil nourishes himself from the remains of the dishes of his master¹.”

The *Misbah-ul-Hidayah*, the Persian summary of the famous *Awarif-ul-Maarif* of Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrwardi composed in the twelfth century A.D., will give the reader some idea of the relation of the Muslim Shaikh (*guru* or *pir*) and the disciple (or *murid*). “The disciple must have a firm belief in the Shaikh as being the best of all preceptors and divines, and must remain firm in his service. Further, he must submit to the Shaikh’s control over his life and property and be prepared to do as the Shaikh orders. In no case may he find fault with his Shaikh ; and if ever he falls into doubts regarding the Shaikh’s behaviour or actions, he must attribute this to his own ignorance. At the same time, he must remain submissive to the Shaikh in all his worldly and spiritual affairs, and he is forbidden to engage himself in anything without the Shaikh’s explicit permission. Being a firm believer in the Shaikh’s virtues and attainments, the disciple should never indulge in such matters as are against the will of the Shaikh. The disciple must turn towards his Shaikh for an interpretation of his revelations in dreams. He must anxiously await the sayings of his Shaikh, for the latter is always in direct communion with God. He must lower his voice in the presence of his Shaikh. He must not as a rule, either by words or deeds, become familiar with the Shaikh, and whenever he wishes to

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, p. 131.

talk to him, he must first find out if the Shaikh is free from his worldly and spiritual anxieties. He must in no case lose sight of his position, and while putting questions to the Shaikh, he must not go beyond his needs. Whenever the mysteries of the Shaikh are revealed to him, he must not question them, but at the same time he should not conceal his secrets from the Shaikh. He may repeat only those sayings of his Shaikh, which he understands well, but must remain silent over such matters as are beyond the grasp of his intelligence and understanding."

2. During the second stage, from the twenty-fifth to the fiftieth year, the Brahman was to live as a householder¹ (*grihastha*). "The master allows him to marry but he is not allowed to marry a woman above twelve years of age. He marries, establishes a household, and intends to have descendants." The Chishti mystics of the thirteenth century, while insisting upon the married state as the tradition of the Prophet, only permitted the disciple two means of livelihood—*zamin-i-ahya*, the produce of barren land

¹ Though the life of the world-abandoning ascetic was often applauded, it was clearly seen that the whole fabric of society depended upon the householder, *e. g.*, *Manu*, Chap. VI :

"87. The student, the householder, the hermit, and the ascetic, these (constitute) four separate orders, which all spring from (the order of) householders.

"89. And in accordance with the precepts of the Veda and of the Smriti, *the housekeeper is declared to be superior to all of them; for he supports the other three.*

"90. As all rivers, both great and small, find a resting-place in the ocean, even so men of all orders find protection with householder (*Manu*, Chap. VI., pp. 214-215).

which the mystic and his family had cultivated, and *futuh*, gifts and presents which neighbours brought to his house unasked. Begging was prohibited; service of the state was considered sinful and even private service as a teacher was deprecated¹. The Brahman of the eleventh century was fettered by rules comparatively lenient. "He gains his sustenance either by the fee he obtains for teaching Brahmanas and Kshatriyas, not as a payment but as a present, or by presents he receives from some one because he performs for him the sacrifices to the fire, or by asking a gift from the kings and nobles, there being no importunate pressing on his part, and no unwillingness on the part of the giver. Also there is always a Brahman in the houses of those people (*i. e.*, the rich) who administers the affairs of religion and works of piety²."

3. The third period, extending from the fiftieth to the seventy-fifth, was once more a period of abstinence. "The Brahman leaves his household and hands it as well as his wife over to his children, if the latter does not prefer to follow him into the wilderness." He dwells outside civilisation, and leads the same life again which he led in the first period.

4. The fourth period extends to the end of life. "He wears a red garment..... He strips the mind of

¹ The Chishti mystics and to a large extent also other *silsilahs* considered government service a sin. (Compare *Manu*, p. 142, Chap. IV):

"86. *A king is declared to be equal (in wickedness) to a butcher who keeps a hundred thousand slaughter-houses; to accept presents from him is a terrible (crime).*

² Alberuni's *India*, vol. II, pp. 131-132.

friendship and enmity, and roots out desire and lust and wrath; when walking to a place of particular merit he does not stop on the road in a village longer than a day, nor in a city longer than five days..... He has no other business but that of caring for the path which leads to salvation, and for reaching *moksha*, whence there is no return to this world¹." The achievement of Indian Brahmins in the field of asceticism, whatever its moral or spiritual worth, could not fail to draw the attention of outsiders. The following extract from Abu Zaid will give an idea of a foreigner's impressions: "In India there are persons who, in accordance with their profession, wander in the woods and mountains, and rarely communicate with the rest of mankind. Sometimes they have nothing to eat but herbs and the fruits of the forest..... Some of them go about naked. Others stand naked with the face turned to the sun, having nothing on but a panther's skin. In my travels I saw a man in the position I have described; sixteen years afterwards I returned to that country and found him in the same posture. What astonished me was that he was not melted by the heat of the sun²." A special feature of the last two stages of the Brahmin's life (specially of the third) was the spirit of *wanderjahre*. Travelling in those days, specially under the strict conditions intended to ensure that it would be sufficiently uncomfortable, was a very necessary supplement

¹ "Let him not desire to die, let him not desire to live; but wait for his (appointed) time as a servant (waits) for the payment of his wages." (*Manu*, p. 207, Chap. VI, 49.)

² Elliot and Dowson: *History of India*, Vol. I, p. 6.

to scholastic studies. It eliminated insularity and broadened the intellect. Contemporary Muslim mystics had made travelling a speciality and stern rules were laid down for this peculiar discipline¹. In the four succeeding centuries the spirit of travelling was still further developed, and the Muslim mystics became

¹ The following extract from the *Misbah-ul-Hidayah* will give some idea of the discipline prescribed for Muslim *Khanqahs* and for Muslim mystics when travelling :—

“The people of the monastery may be divided into residents and sojourners. It is the convention of the *sufis* that they make it a point to arrive at monasteries before the afternoon-prayer, but if due to some unavoidable circumstances, they reach after the specified hour, they usually take their abode in some other quarter or mosque, and visit the monastery at sunrise next day. As soon as they enter it, they offer two *rakats* of *namaz*, then shake hands with those present and make arrangements for board and lodging. Traditionally they do not stay for more than three days to accomplish their mission, and do not leave the monastery without the permission of the managers. In case they wish to stay longer, they must perform the duties (that may be allotted to them) ; as a rule, even the non-mystic guests are to be accorded proper reception and entertainment.

“The residents of the monastery may be divided into three grades—servants, associates and recluses. A ‘fresher’ may rise successively from one stage to another.

“In case the monastery is maintained by a charitable endowment, provision of food should be made in accordance with the conditions laid down in the *wakf*. If the monastery is not supported by a *wakf*, the presence of an enlightened Shaikh is essential to instruct the visitors to beg or to work in order to obtain their livelihood. So far as possible there should be concord and friendship between the residents and not discord. All frictions must be removed, and every error forgiven in order to form a wholesome society of well-wishing and well-behaving individuals.”

the spear-head of Muslim civilisation and culture in foreign lands. In India, unfortunately, the sphere of the Brahman's itinerary became circumscribed by the growing spirit of insularity and hostility to foreign lands. He was not, if Alberuni's informants were correct, even allowed to go to the extreme south. "The Brahman is obliged to dwell between the river Sindh in the north and the river Carmawati in the south. He is not allowed to cross either of these frontiers so as to enter the country of the Turk¹ or of the Karnata. Further, he must live between the ocean in the east and west. People say that he is not allowed to stay in a country in which the grass

¹ Does this mean the country directly governed by the Turkish rulers? Not likely. The frontiers of the country in which the Turks then lived (and now live) were far distant from the middle and lower Sind, *i.e.*, north of Bamian and west of the Kabul-Ghaznin valley. It must also be remembered that the first battle between Jaipal and Subuktigin was fought beyond the modern Jalalabad at some place (possibly Nimla) between the Lamaghan valley and Ghaznin. It is probable, we might almost say certain, that by the river Sind, Alberuni meant only the upper regions of the river (though they are not in the modern province of Sind) as suggested by the word 'north'. Indus, thus defined, roughly divides northern India from the territories of the Turks. "The river Sind rises in the mountains of Unang in the territory of the Turks", Alberuni tells us elsewhere (*Vol. I., p. 207*), "which you can reach in the following way: Leaving the ravine by which you enter Kashmir and entering the plateau, then you have for a march of two more days on your left the mountains of Boler and Shamilan, and Turkish tribes who are called *Bhatta-varyan*. Their king has the title of Bhatta-Shah. Their towns are Gilghit, Aswira and Shiltas, and their language is Turkish. Kashmir suffers from their inroads." The entrances to Kashmir, then one of the two principal centres of Hindu culture, were strongly guarded. Sultan Mahmud twice attempted to reach the fertile

which he wears on his ring-finger does not grow, nor the black-haired gazelles graze¹. This is a description of the whole country within the just-mentioned boundaries. If he trespasses them he commits a sin²."

valley, so full of rich and historic temples, but failed. This induced the Hindus to be still more vigilant. "In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, *particularly Jews*, but at present they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people."

Where, then, were the north-western frontiers of India, not of political India but the India of the Brahmans? The province of Balkh (Afghan Turkestan or the Mazar Sharif of modern days) and Ghor (or Hazara) were Turkish. But the Afghans, living on the two sides of the middle Indus river and, one might add, even the Tajiks, were then culturally and linguistically more allied to the Indians than to the Turks. In their form and structure both Persian and Pashto are allied to Indian dialects and are very different from the dialects of the Turks. The territory of Lamaghan (or more accurately the Lamaghanats or the fertile banks of the Kabul river beyond the Khyber Pass) had been ruled till the time of Subuktigin by the Hindu Shahi Dynasty of Waibind or Und, a city on the bank of the Indus. Kabul was ruled by another dynasty which had been converted to Islam. A Brahman could, theoretically, travel to these regions, which are studded with Buddhist remains. But it is probable that after the time of Subuktigin the country beyond the middle Indus was seldom visited by the Brahmans.

¹ Alberuni, *India*, vol. II, pp. 133-134.

² *Manu*, p. 138, Chap. III:

"61. *Let him not dwell in a country where the rulers are Sudras, nor in one which is surrounded by unrighteous men, nor in one which has become subject to heretics, nor in one swarming with men of the lowest castes.*

"79. *Let him not stay together with outcasts, nor with Candalas, nor with Pukkasas, nor with fools, nor with overbearing men, nor with low-caste men, nor with antyavasayins.*

There was, lastly, the fifth period, or rather stage, not within the reach of all—that of the *maha-atma* or the great *rishi*, who was on the threshold of *moksha* or had realised it. On such a person the restrictions of caste were not externally binding nor the Puranic rules. “He has attained to such a degree that the Brahmans and the Chandalas are equal to him. All other things are equal to him, in so far as he abstains from them. It is the same if they are allowed to him, for he can dispense with them, or if they are forbidden to him, for he does not desire them.”¹ Here we have the predecessor, or in any case the equivalent, of the *Qutbul Aqtab* of the Muslim mystics. The underlying idea and the verbal definitions are the same in both cases.

VII. The Kshatriyas.

The Kshatriya—Alberuni never uses the term ‘Rajput’—could learn the Veda but was not allowed to teach it. He was consecrated in the twelfth year with a single cord of the threefold *yajnopavita* and a single other cord of cotton.² Though not entitled to officiate as a priest, he was permitted to perform the Puranic rites. The Kshatriyas had apparently ceased to make any contribution to the progress or the preservation of Indian culture. But their political prospects were improving. “Their degree is not much below that of the Brahmana;” Alberuni tells us, “he rules the people and defends them, for he is created for this task.”³

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, p. 153.

² *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 136.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 101.

“The Hindus relate that originally the affairs of government and war were in the hands of the Brahmans, but the country became disorganised, since they ruled according to the principles of their religious codes, which proved impossible when opposed to the mischievous and perverse elements of the populace. They were even near losing also the administration of their religious affairs. Therefore they humiliated themselves before the Lord of their religion. Whereupon Brahmans entrusted them exclusively with the functions which they now have, whilst he entrusted the Kshattriyas with the duties of ruling and fighting.”¹ We must be grateful for the preservation of this item of popular tradition. But to what period is our author referring? The word ‘originally’ should not mislead us. The reference is obviously to the Brahmanical ruling families that preceded, and even followed, the Buddhist period. The rise of the Rajputs is a later phenomenon.

These were the two twice-born castes, exclusive heirs to the spiritual and intellectual achievements of Hinduism. Between them and the two remaining castes—the Vaishyas and the Sudras—there was a very sharp distinction, while the Sudras and Vaishyas were very near to each other. The duty of the Vaishya was to devote himself to agriculture, cattle-breeding and business, either on his own behalf or on behalf of a Brahman. ‘The Sudra is a servant of the Brahman, taking care of his affairs and serving him.’ The Vaishya was entitled to a single *yajnopavita* of two cords and a Sudra, at the most, to a linen one.

¹ Alberur; . *India*, vol. II, p. 162.

VIII. The Masses.

The Arab travellers of the ninth and tenth centuries, who looked at Indian society from the viewpoint of import and export merchants and were concerned more with the vocations than the castes (or religious distinctions) of the people, put the same ideas in a different form. "There are," says Ibn-i Khurdadba, "seven classes of Hindus, *viz.*, 1st, Sabkafria, among whom are men of high caste, and from among whom kings are chosen. The people of the other six classes do the men of this class homage, and them only. 2nd, Brahmans, who totally abstain from wine and fermented liquors. 3rd, Kataria, (? Kshatriya), who drink not more than three cups of wine, the daughters of the class of Brahmans are not given in marriage to the sons of this class, but the Brahmans take their daughters. 4th, Sudaria, who are by profession husbandmen. The 5th, Baisura (? Vaishya) are artificers and domestics. The 6th, Sandalia (? Chandalia) who perform menial offices. 7th, the Lahud (? musicians and jugglers); their women are fond of adorning themselves, and the men are fond of amusements and games of skill. In Hind there are forty-two religious sects; part of them believe in a Creator and Prophet (the blessings of God be upon them); part deny the mission of a Prophet, and part are atheists."¹ It is useful to keep in mind these seven vocational grades to which the Arab writers keep on referring one after another. But, substantially, it is the caste-system of Manu seen from a different

¹ Elliot and Dowson : *History of India*, vol. I, p. 16.

angle : (a) the governing classes consisting of the four *varnas*, duly graded, but subordinate politically to the royal families who till the time of Sultan Mahmud at least belonged to different *varnas*, and (b) an upper and a lower set of sub-castes which the *Manu-smriti* also contemplates. "In all these kingdoms of India," says Abu Zaid, "the nobility is considered to form but one family. Power resides in it alone. The princes name their own successors. It is the same with learned men and physicians. They form a distinct caste, and the profession never goes out of the caste."¹

Now caste-spirit, stern in the extreme, laid down three different principles, two of which were enforced ruthlessly by the power of the state. The caste-system could only have been preserved and strengthened in an atmosphere of ignorance; had the lower orders been allowed access to the sacred books, they would have undoubtedly claimed equality. For we are at a fairly advanced stage in the history of mankind—eleven hundred years after the death of Christ and five hundred years after the advent of the Arabian Prophet. Elsewhere the doctrine of equality and common citizenship had been preached in no uncertain terms. Thrones had been smashed to bits, and hereditary aristocracies and priesthoods completely overthrown. The fall of the Sassanian Empire must have caused some reverberations in this country also. It is inconceivable that the educated upper classes of India were ignorant either of the political democracy of the Greeks or the

¹ Elliot and Dowson : *History of India*, vol. I, p. 6.

social democracy of the Mussalmans. The latter, at least, had been their neighbours in Sind for at least three hundred years. But they preferred to attempt—and what governing classes would not?—a continuation of their power by further strengthening the bonds of a vicious system.

First, the doors of knowledge were closed on all persons not belonging to the twice-born castes; and any attempt to cross the barrier was severely punished. “Every action,” Alberuni tells us, “which is considered the privilege of a Brahman, such as saying prayers, the recitation of the Veda and offering sacrifices to the fire, is forbidden to him to such a degree that when, *e.g.*, a Sudra or a Vaishya is proved to have recited the Veda, he is accused by the Brahmans before the ruler, and the latter will order his tongue to be cut off.” A non-caste person committing the same offence would have doubtless met a quicker and severer punishment.¹ So, while in the rest of Asia as well as in Europe the educated classes were desperately busy in carrying light and knowledge to the multitude—while elsewhere, under the shadow of the cathedral or the mosque the sons of weavers and farmers and shopkeepers were being collected together, thanks to the munificent endowments of the rich and the more precious subscriptions of the poor, to learn whatever store of wisdom that age possessed at the feet of masters no better-born than themselves—the Brahmans of India could think of no better plan for the preservation of knowledge

¹ See Alberuni, vol. II, p. 137: Story of King Rama and the Chandala.

than preventing the spread of education. Such a policy may, or may not, have been necessary in the period of the Rig Veda. But in the eleventh century—in the generation of Alberuni, Avicenna and Sultan Mahmud—it was stupid, mad and suicidal; and the Brahmans, themselves a rationalistic and highly enlightened group, were destined to pay a terrible price for the most unpardonable of social sins.

Secondly, it was not enough to keep the lower orders in ignorance; it was necessary to divide and subdivide them to prevent their developing a corporate spirit similar to that of the Brahmans and the Kshattriyas. So the Vaishyas and Sudras were offered amenities denied to the rest.¹ They were offered the status of low but regular castes. They were allowed to 'meditate on God' whom they had to comprehend not on the basis of the Vedas or other sacred texts but through such wild Puranic tales as had filtered down to them by word of mouth. Also the Brahmans would accept their alms. Finally, they were allowed to live within the city-walls. These favours, however effective they may have been in making an insuperable distinction between the lower caste and the non-caste people, did not, as the subsequent political history of the country was to show, attach them to the Brahmans and the Kshattriyas.

It was difficult then—and it is equally difficult now—to give an account of the non-caste sections of the Indian people. Lacking cultural traditions and

¹ But there were limits. "A Sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?" (*Manu*, vol. I, 326)

uniformity of organisation, they must have varied from district to district. They had only one thing in common—they were not allowed to live within the city-walls, and could only enter, presumably after due notice, to carry on that work without which the city could not exist. According to Alberuni, whose remarks can only be considered generally correct of that part of the country which he had seen, the non-caste people were broadly divisible into sections—an upper or more fortunate section, called Antjaya, and a lower section without recognised organisation or status. “These guilds live near the villages and towns of the four castes but outside them. There are eight classes (guilds), who freely intermarry with each other, except the fuller, shoe-maker and weaver, for no others would condescend to have anything to do with them. These eight guilds are—the fuller, shoe-maker, juggler, the basket and shield-maker, the sailor, fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and of birds, and the weaver.”¹ The lowest people are enumerated as the Hadi, Doma, Chandala, and Bhadatau.² “They are occupied with dirty work like the cleansing of villages and other services. They are considered as one sole class, and distinguished only by their occupations. In fact, they are considered like illegitimate children; for according to general opinion they descend from a Sudra father and a Brahmani mother as the children of fornication; therefore, they are degraded out-castes.....

¹ Alberuni, vol. I, p. 101.

² “A Chandala, a village pig, a cock, a dog, a menstruating woman, and a eunuch must not look at the Brahmanas while they eat.” (*Manu*, Chap. III, p. 119.)

All other men, except the Chandalas, in so far as they are not Hindus, are called *mlechcha*, i.e., unclean, all those who kill men (i.e., hangmen) and slaughter animals, and eat the flesh of cows.”¹

Thirdly, the fearful doctrine of *chut*, ‘theological contamination,’ to which we have already referred, was invoked to strengthen the fabric of the caste-system.² Alberuni is right in declaring that ‘everything, which

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, p. 137.

² The following *shlokas* of *Manu* will give some idea of the orthodox view-point about the lower orders; and it may be safely assumed that in this matter the tide of public opinion among the ruling classes was running strongly in favour of Manu’s doctrines :—

- “4. The Brahmana, the Kshatriya, and the Vaishya castes (*varna*) are the twice-born ones, but the fourth, the Sudra, has one birth only; there is no fifth (caste).
- “5. In all castes (*varna*) those (children) only which are begotten in the direct order on wedded wives, equal (in caste and married as) virgins, are to be considered as belonging to the same caste (as their fathers).
- “6. Sons, begotten by twice-born men on wives of the next lower castes they declare to be similar (to their fathers, but) blamed on account of the fault (inherent) in their mothers.
- “7. Such is the eternal law concerning (children born of wives one degree lower (than their husbands); know (that) the following rule (is applicable) to those born of women two or three degrees lower. (*Manu*, Chap. X, pp. 402 & 403.)
- “25. I will (now) fully enumerate those (sons) of mixed origin who are born of Anulomas and of Pratilomas, and (thus) are mutually connected.
- “26. The Suta, the Vaidehaka, the Chandala, that lowest of mortals, the Magadha, he of the Kshatri caste (*gati*) and the Ayogava.

falls into a state of impurity, strives, and quite successfully, to regain its original condition, which was that of purity'. The sun cleanses and fresh air, and salt in the sea-water prevents the spreading of corruption.

- "27. These six (Pratilomas) beget similar races (*varna*) on women of their own (caste), they (also) produce (the like) with females of their mother's caste (*gati*), and with females (of) higher ones.
- "28. As a (Brahmana) begets on (females of) two out of the three (twice-born castes a son similar to) himself (but inferior), on account of the lower degree (of the mother), and (one equal to himself) on a female of his own race, even so is the order in the case of the excluded (races, *vahya*).
- "29. Those (six mentioned above) also beget, the one on the females of the other, a great many (kinds of) despicable (sons), even more sinful than their (fathers), and excluded (from the Aryan community, *vahya*).
- "30. Just as a Sudra begets on a Brahmana female a being excluded (from the Aryan community), even so (a person himself) excluded procreates with (females of) the four castes (sons) more (worthy of being) excluded (than he himself).
- "31. But men excluded (by the Aryans, *vahya*), who approach females of higher rank, beget races (*varna*) still more worthy to be excluded, low men (*hina*) still lower races, even fifteen (in number).
- "40. These races, (which originate) in a confusion (of the castes and) have been described according to their fathers and mothers, may be known by their occupations, whether they conceal or openly show themselves.
- "41. Six sons, begotten (by Aryans) on women of equal and the next lower castes (Anantara), have the duties of twice-born men; but all those born in consequence of a violation (of the law) are, as regards their duties, equal to Sudras.

But for this, life on this planet would have been impossible. But the Brahmanic conception of 'theological contamination' in the thirteenth century was only remotely connected with the principles of hygiene, which is necessary for physical health, or with that conception of *tabu*, which modern investigators have found so prevalent in primitive races. It was a pseudo-

- "43. But in consequence of the omission of the sacred rites, and of their not consulting Brahamnas, the following tribes of Kshatriyas have gradually sunk in this world to the condition of Sudras :
- "44. (*Viz.*) the Paundrakas, the Kodas, the Dravidas, the Kambogas, the Yavanas, the Sakas, the Peradas, the Pahlavas, the Kinas, the Kiratas, and the Daradas.
- "45. All those tribes in this world, which are excluded from (the community of) those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs, and the feet (of Brahman), are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the Mekkhas (barbarians) or that of the Aryans.
- "51. *But the dwellings of Chandalas and Shwapuchas shall be outside the village, they must be made Apapatras, and their wealth (shall be) dogs and donkeys.*
- "52. *Their dress (shall be) the garments of the dead, (they shall eat) their food from broken dishes, black iron (shall be) their ornaments and they must always wander from place to place.*
- "53. *A man who fulfils a religious duty, shall not seek intercourse with them; their transactions (shall be) among themselves, and their marriages with their equals.*
- "54. *Their food shall be given to them by others (than an Aryan giver) in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in villages and in towns.*
- "55. *By day they may go about for the purpose of their work, distinguished by marks at the king's command, and they shall carry out the corpses (of persons) who have no relatives; that is a settled rule.*

spiritualistic conception, expressed in one thousand and one detailed regulations intended to preserve the separateness and the predominance of the governing classes. The food of a Mussalman may or may not be considered unclean. That is a matter of opinion. But what about his fire? How can that be unclean? If a Brahman's house catches fire, it is purified by the flames thereof. But if that fire spreads to a Mussalman's

“62. *Dying, without the expectation of a reward, for the sake of Brahmanas and of cows, or in the defence of women and children, secures beatitude to those excluded (from the Aryan community, vahya).*

“64. *If (a female of the caste), sprung from a Brahmana and a Sudra female, bear (children) to one of the highest caste, the inferior (tribe) attains the highest caste within the seventh generation.*

“65. (Thus) a Sudra attains the rank of a Brahmana, and (in a similar manner) a Brahmana sinks to the level of a Sudra; but know that it is the same with the offspring of a Kshatriya or of a Vaishya.

“66. If (a doubt) should arise, with whom the pre-eminence (is, whether) with him whom an Aryan by chance begot on a non-Aryan female, or (with the son) of a Brahmana woman by a non-Aryan.

“67. The decision is as follows: “*He who was begotten by an Aryan on a non-Aryan female, may become (like to) an Aryan by his virtues; he whom an Aryan (mother) bore to a non-Aryan father (is and remains) unlike to an Aryan.*

“73. *Having considered (the case of) a non-Aryan who acts like an Aryan, and (that) of an Aryan who acts like a non-Aryan, the creator declared, “Those two are neither equal nor unequal.” (Manu., Chap. X, pp. 402-418.)*

Even such amelioration of the caste-system as Manu had allowed disappeared in the ten succeeding centuries.

house, the flames themselves become unclean, and you may not (if you are a Brahman) use them to light your hearth. Now the conception of theological impurity or *chhut* is an old idea and persists till to-day. But it seems to have reached its high-water mark in the eleventh century. The food of the *mlechchas*, as well as foreigners, and their water and their fire were considered unclean. The lower orders were thus prevented from associating with the twice-born castes and driven beyond the city-walls. The life of a caste-Hindu, and specially of the majority who were probably inclined (like the majority of men everywhere) to take a mechanistic view of religion, may well have been one long struggle to avoid the physical contamination of their fellow-men. Later ages, from necessity if not from choice, were compelled to adopt artificial means of cleansing (*e.g.*, bathing in the Ganges) from imaginary impurities like the accidental touch of a Mussalman's water-bucket. But in the eleventh century this was not allowed. A person or a thing contaminated was damned for all eternity. "The Hindus never desire that a thing that has once been polluted should be purified and thus recovered."¹ The principle is best explained by an extreme and tragic case. What happened to a Hindu warrior, high or low, who, having been captured by the Mussalmans, of necessity partook of their food and drink, and then returned to his native land? Society, one might imagine, would have received the hero with open arms. No! He had lost caste. Though physically alive, he was legally and theologically dead. To the mother

¹. Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 20.

who had nursed him, he was now filth and dirt; the son, whom he had cherished, would succeed to his property and shut the door of his own house on his father; his relations and friends, if he happened to meet them in one of the few streets on which he was allowed to walk, would turn away their faces. Such things indicate, to use Alberuni's phrase, 'an innate perversity of character'. "I had been told that when Hindu slaves (*i.e.*, prisoners of war in Muslim countries) escape and return to their country and religion, the Hindus order that they should fast by way of expiation, then they bury them in the dung, stale and milk of cows for a certain number of days *till they get into a state of fermentation*. Then they drag them out of the dirt and give them similar dirt to eat, and more of the like. I have asked the Brahmans if this is true, but they deny it and maintain that *there is no expiation possible for such an individual, and that he is never allowed to return into those conditions of life in which he was before he was carried off as a prisoner*. And how should that be possible? If a Brahman eats in the house of a Sudra for sundry days, he is expelled from his caste and can never regain it." The captives, as we know for a fact, seldom cared to return to the land of their birth. Since they had ceased to be Hindus owing to their reckless courage on the battle-field, was there any alternative for them but to accept the faith and the social equality offered to them by their conquerors? For while the Brahmans strove to prevent the mass of their countrymen from taking the road to Heaven, the Mussalmans were only too anxious to drive the multitude heaven-ward with the tongue

and the whip and (though not very often) also with the sword.

IX. Dress and Manners.

Foreigners have very often misunderstood the institutions of our country. But sometimes they have noticed things—generally, it must be admitted, of an obvious and blatant type—which our own historians have failed to record. We may well start with the list of strange customs given by Alberuni.¹

It was not to be expected that in a country, where three months of intense dry heat are followed by three months of monsoon, people would cover themselves as profusely as in Khorasan or Khwarazm. The majority of the people went about in a *langot*, the rest of the body being left uncovered on account of the heat. In a country like ours it is, perhaps, the best thing to do. The upper classes 'wore turbans for trousers'. The phrase requires some explanation. It is strange what wonders an oriental nation, specially its women, will work with a plain piece of cloth. In Arabian lands the cloth was wound round the head as a turban; in India it was wound round the loins as a *dhoti* by men and round the body as a *sari* by women. Trousers, though they are found in the surviving statues of foreigners, were not in use, but Alberuni's statement seems to show that during winter some people wore huge trousers stuffed with cotton, the string or *izarband* of which was fastened at the back. The *kulah* or hat was Turkish and early mediæval Persian literature shows that there was considerable

¹ Alberuni: *India*, vol. I, Chap. XVI.

prejudice against its use by the Mussalmans, though it was ultimately adopted. In India hats (meaning by that any kind of head-dress) were not worn, but people grew long hair to protect themselves from the rays of the sun. There seems to have been nothing equivalent to the modern shirt or *gamees*. Men in winter-time covered their bodies with a *chadar*. The women, however, wore a *kurti* or blouse with slashes on both sides. The shoes or slippers, instead of coming up to the calf, as in foreign countries, terminated below the ankle.¹

The following account of the dress and ornaments of the time is given by Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha in the Urdu version of his *Medieval Civilisation*: "Some scholars think that the art of sewing was not invented in India till the time of Harsha, and quote a statement of Huien Tsang in support of their assertion. But the statement is wrong. India is a continent of diverse climates. From early ages, all sorts of clothes were worn according to climatic needs, and the word 'needle' (*sochi* or *baishi*) is mentioned in the *Vedas* and *Brahman-grantha*. The *Taittiriya Brahmanas* refer to three sorts of needles, *i.e.*, of iron, silver and gold. The *Rig Veda* describes scissors as

¹ The interpretation of Alberuni's sentences is not free from difficulties. "The *sidar* (a piece of dress covering the head and the upper part of the breast and neck) is similar to the trousers, being also fastened at the back by buttons. The lappets of the *kurtakas* (short shirts from the shoulders to the middle of the body with sleeves, a female dress) have slashes both on the right and left sides. They keep the shoes tight till they begin to put them on. They are turned down from the calf before walking (?) (*Vol. I, pp. 180-181*).

bhora, and *sushrut Samhita* mentions 'sewing with thin thread'. The silken cloth was known as *tarpiyah* and woollen *kurtah* as *shamole*. *Drapi* was also a sewn cloth—a dress about which Sain says that it was worn in battle. Not only cloth but leather was also sewn, and leather-bags are referred to in the Vedic age. We are referring to a period much earlier to prove that the art of sewing has existed in our country from ancient times.

"At the time under review, women used to wear *antriya* or *sari*, half tied round the legs and half wound round the shoulders. An *utriyah* or *dopatta* was wrapped round it outdoors. A skirt (*lahnga*) was worn at the time of dancing. The statute at the Kankli-mount at Mathra shows a *rani* and her maid-servant. The *rani* wears a skirt (*lahnga*) and *chadar* round her shoulders. The people of the Deccan used to wear two *dhotis*, one round the loins and the other round the shoulders. The *dhotis* had often ornamented borders. The people of Kashmir used to wear half-pants (*janghia*). Colour, beauty and decency were the chief features of such dresses. The Kshatriyas used to wear long beards as is shown by a life-like description of *Bana*. Most people did not wear shoes. Smith in his book gives the painting of a relief-work in which a Jain idol is seen standing with two or three companions. All the three women are wearing *lahngas*, and the *lahngas* are the *lahngas* of to-day. In the Deccan, where *lahngas* are not usually worn, the women put it on when dancing. Women used to wear calico cloth also, as is shown by the painting of a black women standing with a child

in her arms in an Ajanta cave painting. The woman is wearing an *angiya* (blouse) with short sleeves from the waist upwards. Merchants used to wear cloaks stuffed with cotton and *kurtas*.

“All sorts of decorations and ornaments were common; both men and women were fond of them. Huien Tsang states that ‘even rajahs and nobles used ornaments, costly pearl necklaces, rings, bangles, *malas* and arm-rings studded with gold and silver.’ *Kundals*, plain or ringed, were often worn. Women sometimes had their ear-lobes pierced at two points to enable them to wear strings of gold and pearls, and images of women with ears so pierced are found in many museums. The use of ear ornaments was common. Ornaments, plain and with bells (*ghunghru*), were also used round the legs, bangles of inlaid ivory round the wrist, various types of bracelets round the arms, and beautiful and valuable necklaces round the necks. The breasts were either left open or tied with a breast-band or covered with a bodice. The rich and well-to-do persons used to hang garlands of fragrant flowers round their necks. In short, there were no restrictions, and all persons used ornaments according to their status and income. Nose-rings (*nath* and *bulaq*) are not referred to in old books; possibly these ornaments have been borrowed from the Mussalmans.”

Pan-chewing was a national habit; then as now and the red teeth of the Indians were not considered a pleasant sight by foreigners. The growing of moustaches was not, probably, a wide-spread habit, but Hindus who grew their moustaches wanted them

to be long and pointed, unlike the Mussalmans who are recommended to shave their moustaches or to keep them short. Among other Indian habits, not necessarily universal, the following struck Alberuni as odd : growing long nails (like modern ladies of fashion) as they were useful for scratching the head and for catching lice ; wasting the remainder of a meal ; drinking wine before meals ; smearing the body with cow-dung as a disinfectant ; use of female ornaments—cosmetics, ear-rings, arm-rings, etc.—by men ; consulting women in emergencies ; preference of younger children ; sitting cross-legged at public meetings ; grasping the convex side of the hand at a hand-shake ; spitting, blowing the nose and cracking lice in the presence of seniors and elders ; and the use of black tablets (*takhtis*) by school children on which they wrote from right to left along the length and not the breadth of the tablet.¹

X. Laws and Customs.

An intelligent Hindu of the age realised that the laws by which he lived had greatly changed. The practice of polyandry, though the Pandu brothers had one wife in common, had disappeared except among some backward tribes like the Gakkhars. Hindu public opinion frowned upon the practice, once legal, which allowed a husband to connive at his wife begetting a son from a stranger so that the family may be continued. This practice was prevalent among the heathen Arabs, and doubtless survived among a few Indian

¹ The habit of Muslim school-children was and is exactly opposite in these respects.

social groups, that had been left untouched by Aryan culture. "The Hindus say that many things which are now forbidden were allowed before the coming of Vasudeva, *e.g.*, the flesh of cows. Such changes are necessitated by the change in the nature of man." Custom, slowly changing, perforce adapts itself to new conditions. But there was no authority in the eleventh century empowered to change the laws consciously and for the public good—in other words, no sovereign power in the Austinian sense existed. "No law can be replaced or exchanged for another, for they simply use the laws as they find them."

It is to be greatly regretted that our knowledge of the actual laws and customs of the middle ages, as distinct from prescriptions of the sacred texts and their interpretations by the priest, which were respected but not necessarily enforced, and the processes of litigation and adjudication is so very meagre. Among the Mussalmans there was a constant complaint that the sacred law as interpreted by the text-books of the *faqih*s was overridden by the constitutions or *firman*s of the secular state. This was specially the case with criminal law, which as expounded by the *faqih*s did not cover all crimes and failed to recognise indirect evidence; also the punishments prescribed being too severe even for the conscience of the *faqih*, the only possible remedy was to prevent the proof of the crime by making the laws of evidence extremely stringent. Thus with the unprovable crimes on the one hand and impossible punishments on the other, the *faqih*, though he would not acknowledge it, had left the door open for state interference and secular reason.

The same change had taken place in India by the time of Alberuni. "The penal code is exercised under the control of the kings, not under that of the scholars." Expiations and fasts, as prescribed by religion, had become a matter for the private conscience of the individual. The two higher castes were exempt from capital punishment under all circumstances¹. But the *rajās*, generally speaking, confiscated the property of a Brahman or a Kshatriya who had been guilty of murdering a Brahman (*Vajrabrahmanā hatya*) or killing a cow or drunkenness or incest, and drove him out of their country. Members of other castes who committed the same crimes were put to death.²

Punishment for theft varied according to the value of the thing stolen. In minor cases exposure to 'public shame and ridicule' was considered enough.

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, p. 162. So I interpret the words 'but besides the king inflicts upon him a punishment in order to establish an example'.

² For the Hindu theory of punishment or social discipline, it would hardly be possible to improve upon *Manu* :—

"18. *Punishment alone governs all created beings, punishment alone protects them, punishment watches over them while they sleep; the wise declare punishment (to be identical with) the law.*

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

"22. *The whole world is kept in order by punishment, for a guiltless man is hard to find; through fear of punishment the whole world yields the enjoyments (which it owes).*

In extreme cases the criminal, if a Brahmana, was blinded and mutilated by the dismemberment of the left-hand and right foot or of the right-hand and left foot, a Kshatriya was mutilated but not blinded; and criminals of other castes were put to death. An adultress was driven from the house of her husband—and, presumably, took to the streets. The Muslim and Jewish punishments of adultery were notoriously more severe. The attempt to treat adultery as a crime during the middle ages was never anything but a farce and a humbug. Most cases of the offence were not detected; suspicion, when aroused, was more likely to fall upon the innocent than the guilty; prevention of collusion was impossible; the public punishment of the guilty partner inevitably disgraced the innocent spouse; and, at best, the law for the punishment of adultery only brought to book those who have been careless and inefficient in their misdeeds. Hindu outlook on the question was, on the whole, more sensible and sane than the stern laws which the Mussalmans and the Christians tried to enforce.

Purdah was not known to Hindu India, but there was segregation of sexes varying from community

- “23. The gods, the Danavas, the Gandharvas, the Rakshasas, the bird and snake deities even give the enjoyments (due from them), only if they are tormented by (the fear of) punishment.
- “25. *But where punishment with a black hue and red eyes stalks about, destroying sinners, there the subjects are not disturbed, provided that he who inflicts it discerns well. (Manu., Chap. VII, pp. 219-220.)*”

to community. *Manusmriti* lays down some important precepts on the matter :—

352. Men who commit adultery with the wives of others, the king shall cause to be marked by punishments which cause terror, and afterwards banish.
353. For by (adultery) is caused a mixture of the castes (*varna*) among men ; thence (follows) sin, which cuts up even the roots and causes the destruction of everything.
354. A man formerly accused of (such) offences, who secretly converses with another man's wife shall pay the first (or lowest) amercement.
355. But a man, not before accused, who (thus) speaks with (a woman) for some (reasonable) cause, shall not incur any guilt, since in him there is no transgression.
356. He who addresses the wife of another man at a *tirtha*, outside the village, in a forest, or at the confluence of rivers, shall suffer (the punishment for) adulterous acts (*sangrahana*).
357. Offering presents (to a woman), romping (with her), touching her ornaments and dress, sitting with her on a bed, all (these acts) are considered adulterous acts (*sangrahana*).
358. If one touches a woman in a place (which ought) not (to be touched) or allows (oneself to be touched in such a spot), all (such acts done) with mutual consent are declared (to be) adulterous (*sangrahana*).
359. A man who is not a Brahmana ought to suffer death for adultery (*sangrahana*); for the wives

of all the four castes must always be carefully guarded.

360. Mendicants, bards, men who have performed the initiatory ceremony of a Vedic sacrifice, and artisans are not prohibited from speaking to married women.
361. Let no man converse with the wives of others after he has been forbidden (to do so); but he who converses (with them), in spite of a prohibition, shall be fined one *suvarna*.
362. This rule does not apply to the wives of actors and singers, nor (of) those who live on (the intrigues of) their own (wives); for such men send their wives (to others) or, concealing themselves, allow them to hold criminal intercourse.
363. Yet he who secretly converses with such women, or with female slaves kept by one (master), and with female ascetics, shall be compelled to pay a small fine.
364. He who violates an unwilling maiden shall instantly suffer corporal punishment; but a man who enjoys a willing maiden shall not suffer corporal punishment, if (his caste be) the same (as hers).
365. From a maiden who makes advances to a (man of) high (caste), he shall not take any fine; but her, who courts a (man of) low (caste), let him be forced to live confined in her house.
366. A (man of) low (caste) who makes love to a maiden (of) the highest (caste) shall suffer corporal punishment; he who addresses a maiden (of) equal (caste) shall pay the nuptial fee, if her father desires it.

367. But if any man through insolence forcibly contaminates a maiden, two of his fingers shall be instantly cut off, and he shall pay a fine of six hundred (*panas*).
368. A man (of) equal (caste) who defiles a willing maiden shall not suffer the amputation of his fingers, but shall pay a fine of two hundred (*panas*) in order to deter him from a repetition (of the offence).
373. On a man (once) convicted, who is (again) accused within a year a double fine (must be inflicted); even thus (must the fine be doubled) for (repeated) intercourse with a Vratya and a Chandali.
374. A Shudra who has intercourse with a woman of a twice-born caste (*varna*), guarded or unguarded, (shall be punished in the following manner): if she was unguarded, he loses the part (offending) and all his property; if she was guarded, everything (even his life).
375. (For intercourse with a guarded Brahmani) a Vaishya shall forfeit all his property after imprisonment for a year; a Kshatriya shall be fined one thousand (*panas*) and be shaved with the urine (of an ass).
376. If a Vaishya or a Kshatriya has connexion with an unguarded Brahmani, let him fine the Vaishya five hundred (*panas*) and the Kshatriya one thousand.
377. But even these two, if they offend with a Brahmani (not only) guarded (but the wife of an eminent man), shall be punished like a Shudra or be burnt in a fire of dry grass.

378. A Brahmana who carnally knows a guarded Brahmani against her will, shall be fined one thousand (*panas*); but he shall be made to pay five hundred, if he had connexion with a willing one.
379. Tonsure (of the head) is ordained for a Brahmana (instead of) capital punishment; but (men of) other castes shall suffer capital punishment.
380. *Let him never slay a Brahmana, though he have committed all (possible) crimes; let him banish such an (offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unharmed.*
831. *No greater crime is known on earth than slaying a Brahmana; a king, therefore, must not even conceive in his mind the thought of killing a Brahmana.*
382. If a Vaishya approaches a guarded female of the Kshatriya caste, or a Kshatriya a (guarded) Vaishya woman, they both deserve the same punishment as in the case of an unguarded Brahmana female.

It is obvious, however, that these rules could, at no time, have been thoroughly enforced, except when the prestige of the upper classes was touched. And further, as to the proper relation of husband and wife, *Manusmriti* remarks:—

2. Day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control.
3. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons

protect (her) in old age ; a woman is never fit for independence.¹

10. No man can completely guard women by force ; but they can be guarded by the employment of the (following) expedients :—
11. Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils.
12. Women, confined in the house under trustworthy and obedient servants, are not (well) guarded ; but those who of their own accord keep guard over themselves, are well guarded.²

Two further problems arose owing to the conception of the family as a 'corporation', as Maine has put it, or, to be more exact, owing to the necessity of an heir for performing those rites without which the soul of a dead man could not attain to salvation. If a man died without leaving any male issue, could his widow beget a male child by another man for the performance of these necessary duties for the soul of her dead husband ? And for the same reason, was a man who, owing to a fault of his own, could not have a male issue, justified in permitting his wife to beget a child by another ?

The text of Manu leaves little doubt that in an earlier age the answer to both questions had been in the affirmative. But social development led to re-examination of the principle and to a complete

¹ *Ibid.*, Chap. IX, pp. 327-328.

² *Manu* : Chap. IX, pp. 329.

change of attitude. *First*, critics (referred to by Manu as 'great ancient sages') pointed out that such a child belonged not to the woman's husband, dead or alive, but to the man to whom she bore the child. "They (all) say that the male issue (of a woman) belongs to the lord, but with respect to the (meaning of the term) lord the revealed texts differ; some call the begetter (of the child the lord), others declare (that it is) the owner of the soil. By the sacred tradition the woman is declared to be the soil, the man is declared to be the seed; the production of all corporeal beings (takes place) through the union of the soil with the seed. That one (plant) should be sown and another be produced cannot happen; whatever seed is sown, (a plant of) that kind even comes forth. Never, therefore, must a prudent well-trained man, who knows the Veda and its *angas* and desires long life, cohabit with another's wife."¹

Secondly, was begetting such children desirable? Manu, with the more developed moral consciousness of a later age, replies emphatically in the negative. "The wife of an elder brother is for his younger (brother) the wife of a Guru; but the wife of the younger is declared (to be) the daughter-in-law of the elder.....By twice-born men a widow must not be appointed to (cohabit with) any other (than her husband); for they who appoint (her) to another (man) will violate the eternal law."² Manu makes compromises out of respect for the ancient texts. Nevertheless he has a clear conception of the

¹ *Manu*, Chap. IX, p. 333.

² *Ibid.*, Chap. IX, pp. 337-338.

incompatibility of such practices with the life of purity and marital devotion which he prescribes for the householder. "He only is a perfect man who consists (of three persons united), his wife, himself, and his offspring; thus (says the Veda), and (learned) Brahmanas propound this (maxim) likewise. 'The husband is declared to be one with the wife.' Neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released from her husband; such we know the law to be, which the Lord of Creatures (Prajapati) made of old. Once is the partition (of the inheritance) made, (once is) a maiden given in marriage, (and) once does (a man say, 'I will give'); each of those three (acts is done) once only."

"Many thousands of Brahmans, who were chaste from their youth, have gone to heaven without continuing their race. A virtuous wife, who after the death of her husband constantly remains chaste, reaches heaven, though she have no son, just like those chaste men. But a woman, who from a desire to have offspring violates her duty towards her (deceased) husband, brings on herself disgrace in this world, and loses her place with her husband (in heaven). Offspring begotten by another man is here not (considered lawful), nor (does offspring begotten) on another man's wife (belong to the begetter), nor is a second husband anywhere prescribed for virtuous women. She who cohabits with a man of higher caste, forsaking her own husband, who belongs to a lower one, will become contemptible in this world, and is called a remarried woman (*parpurva*).¹"

¹ *Manu*, Chap. V, pp. 196-197.

During the ten or twelve centuries that separated the *Manusmriti* and the *Kitab-ul-Hind*, it may be safely assumed; all such customs—whatever the high authorities that may be cited in their favour—disappeared from among the Aryan upper classes, though their existence up to a much later date among the lower orders and the backward communities is proved by undeniable evidence. All the ‘spiritualistic apparatus’ required by the soul of a man who had died without male issue could be provided for by an adopted son.

With reference to the absence of the purdah system, the following remarks of Pandit Gauri Shankar Ojha deserve to be noted, though it is difficult (in view of Manu’s injunctions) to believe that the opportunity of mixing freely with men was not the exclusive privilege of princesses exceptionally circumstanced: “At the time under review there was no pardah system, and the women of the royal household attended the court. Huien Tsang writes that after the defeat and capture of the Hun Rajah, Mahrkul, the mother of Baladitya came to see him. Harsha’s mother used to associate with the courtiers. It is stated in *Ban Kadambari* that Bilaswati used to interview the priests, the astrologers and Brahmanas and heard the *Mahabharata* in the temple of Mahrkul. Raj Shri herself met Huien Tsang. The dramas of the time reveal no trace of the pardah system. The Arab traveller, Abu Zaid, states that women used to appear before Indians or foreigners, and accompanied

their men-folk in social gatherings and amusements.¹ *Kam Sutra* mentions that women also served in the army, and accompanied the Rajahs in their *darbars*, campaigns, pleasure-parties, etc. They rode horses in arms, and some of them are reported to have been captured during the war. Aka Devi, sister of the western Solanki ruler, Vikramaditya, was very daring by nature, and was so expert in politics and administration that she ruled over four provinces of the kingdom. It appears from an inscription that she also laid siege to a fort. Other examples of the same kind can be given to prove that the purdah system did not exist. It is true, however, that common people were not allowed to enter the Rajah's palace. It was after the advent of Mussalmans that the purdah system was established in India. As the Mussalmans became predominant in northern India, the system of purdah and veil (*ghunghat*) grew there rapidly. Where the influence of the Mussalmans was less, the purdah and the veil were not established. Even to this day, no such system exists from Rajputana to the Deccan, or else only nominally."²

¹ Arab travellers were impressed by the male Indian's fondness for ornaments and the absence of the veil. Thus Abu Zaid (*Elliot*, vol. I, page 11):—"The kings of India are accustomed to wear earrings of precious stones, mounted in gold. They also wear necklaces of great value, formed of the most precious red and green stones. Pearls, however, are held in the highest esteem, and are greatly sought after... Most of the princes of India, when they hold a court, allow their women to be seen by the men who attend it, whether they be natives or foreigners. No veil conceals them from the eyes of the visitors..." See also *Al-Idrisi* (*Elliot*, vol. I, pp. 87-88).

² *History of Mediaeval Civilisation*, pp. 77-78.

The complainant at a legal trial was required to put his case in writing, a special script being used, or in the alternative to produce four witnesses—the number being the same as among the Mussalmans. The evidence of one witness was only considered sufficient if it was consistent, conclusive and complete. Indirect evidence, the *bete noire* of the mediæval jurist, was not admitted. "The Hindu Judge," says Alberuni, "does not admit prying about in secret, deriving arguments from mere signs or indications in public, concluding by analogy from one thing which seems established to another, and using all sorts of tricks to elicit the truth as 'Ilyas ibn-i Muaviya used to do.'" Plain statements on both sides supported by witnesses came first; if that was inconclusive, both parties took oaths before 'five learned Brahmans'. It was not to be expected that the oaths would reveal the truth. The presumption was that one, or probably both parties, would lie again. Trial by ordeal was condemned by the Muslim *shariat*. But it prevailed among the Christians and also among the Hindus. Six varieties of increasing severity are enumerated by Alberuni: (1) The accused was invited to quaff a drink called *Vish*; it would not injure him if he was innocent. (2) He was thrown into a deep well or a rapid stream. An innocent man would not drown and die—nor, perhaps, would a good swimmer. (3) Defendant and plaintiff are taken to the most celebrated temple of the neighbourhood. The plaintiff fasts on the first day and on the second day he puts on new clothes and takes the defendant before the idol. The Brahman pours water over the idol and

gives it to the defendant to drink. He will vomit out blood if he has not spoken the truth. (4) The defendant is weighed in the pan of a balance; then he invokes the *devas*, writes down his statement and is weighed a second time. If he has spoken the truth, his weight will have increased. (5) Butter and sesame oil in equal quantities are heated in a kettle. A gold coin is thrown into the mixture when it reaches the boiling point. The defendant, if innocent, will be able to put his hand into the liquid and take out the coin. (6) The sixth and the highest ordeal required even more honesty (or ingenuity) of the defendant. Rice-corns, still in the husk, were sprinkled over the palm of the defendant and over them was placed a very broad leaf. If he was honest, he would be able to carry a piece of iron, heated to the melting point, for full seven paces. This is obviously not a complete list of all the ordeals which the ingenuity of the Indians had devised. But they are a fair specimen and do not show the brutality of European ordeals of the same period. The success of an ordeal in sifting the false from the true depended upon the faith of the accused, the weakness of his nerves and the suggestions of the Brahmanas. An amateur would quail before even the trial had begun¹.

Hindu law of inheritance was very different from the law of the Mussalman. Women were not entitled to inheritance but they could transmit the right to

¹ The ideal law of orthodox Hinduism will be found in *Manu*, Chap. VIII. But it is difficult to say how far it was modified in practice by the customs of different castes and communities.

inheritance. The prescription of *Manu* with respect to a daughter's right, however, seems to have been observed. She got a share equal to one-fourth of her brother's; it was spent upon her upkeep and the purchase of her marriage-portion. But after her marriage she had no claims on her father's property. Among male heirs the descendants had more claims than the ascendants; the claims of collateral relations were even weaker, for they 'inherit only in case nobody has a better claim.' When there were several claimants of the same degree, the property was divided equally between them. If a Brahman died without heirs, his property was given in alms but in the case of other persons it escheated to the State. "If a widow does not burn herself but prefers to remain alive, the heir of her deceased husband has to provide her with nourishment and clothing. The debts of the deceased must be paid by his heir, either out of his share or out of the stock of his own property, no regard being had whether the deceased has left any property or not. Likewise he must bear the just-mentioned expenses of the widow." Alberuni's account of the Hindu law of inheritance is very meagre. He does not mention the joint-family system, though his remark that the heir, whether he liked it or not, inherited the debts of the deceased and was saddled with a number of other obligations, can only be explained by the theory of the family as a permanent, undying corporation. Duties were, therefore, more important than rights. Among the Romans a slave could be saddled with the debts of his master by the latter's will; in Muslim countries no one could be saddled with another man's

debts. Hindu conception of property rights was entirely different from that of foreign countries.

Most of the Vedic sacrifices had disappeared. The *Ashvamedha* sacrifice, the most famous of all, is described by Alberuni, but it had not (at least in a proper manner) been performed, by any Indian king for several centuries. Pilgrimages, on the other hand, were very popular. Visiting the shrines for the Hindus is optional or facultative—a thing meritorious but not obligatory like the *Haj* of the Mussalmans. Presents to the idol and to his Brahman devotees were necessary, and the pilgrim had to shave his head and beard.¹ There is good reason for believing that pilgrimages, including gifts and endowments to the temples, were more popular in the ninth and the tenth centuries than at any previous or later period. At a time when institutions for looking after the poor or the helpless hardly existed, much insistence was laid upon alms-giving. A Hindu householder was expected to spend one-fourth to one-ninth of his income on charity.² Accumulation of money was considered wrong, but putting by enough for three years 'to guarantee the heart against anxiety' was permissible. Contrary to the general impression prevailing in Muslim countries, usury and interest were severely prohibited.³ Only the Shudra

¹ Alberuni: *India*, Chaps. LXV & LXVI.

² Alberuni: *India*, Chap. LXVII.

³ "Neither a Brahmana, nor a Kshatriya may lend money at interest; but at his pleasure (either of them) may, in times of distress, when he requires money, for sacred purposes lend to a very sinful man at small interest" (*Manu*, Chap. XI, p. 427.)

could take interest, but 2% per annum was the maximum allowed.

The rules about food and drink had been made more and more stringent in the course of generations. "Some Hindus say that in the time before Bharata it was allowed to eat the meat of cows and that there then existed sacrifices part of which was the killing of cows. After that time, however, it had been forbidden on account of the weakness of men."¹ There must, of course, have been economic reasons also; even Al-Hajjaj, as Alberuni points out, prohibited the killing of cows when he was told that Babylonia was becoming a desert. In the eleventh century meat was totally prohibited to the Brahmans. But to the other classes (according to Alberuni) the flesh of

¹ The primary reason for the prohibition of eating meat is the sinfulness of *himsa*—it causes pain to living creatures and hardens the heart of man. Nevertheless the processes of nature, for which a divine origin may be claimed, are based on the *necessity* that one living creature can only live by depriving other creatures of their lives.

The following argument of the Code of Manu deserves a careful scrutiny; the doctrine of *ahimsa* is accepted and yet discarded... "The Lord of Creatures (*Prajapati*) created this whole (world to be) the sustenance of the vital spirit; both the immovable and the movable (creation is) the food of the vital spirit. What is destitute of motion is the food of those endowed with locomotion; (animals) without fangs (are the food) of those with fangs, those without hands of those who possess hands, and the timid of the bold. The eater who daily even devours those destined to be his food, commits no sin; for the Creator himself created both the eaters and those who are to be eaten (for those special purposes). The consumption of meat (is befitting) for sacrifices, that is, declared to be a rule made by the gods..." (*Manu*, Chap. V, pp. 173-174).

certain animals was allowed.¹ The animals had to be strangulated. The flesh of animals who had died of a sudden death or (presumably) of a natural disease was prohibited. Wine was prohibited to the caste Hindus; we are far away from the days of the Soma plant, the fermented white juice of which may—or may not—have inspired some of the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. The Brahmans of the eleventh century were a steady, stay-at-home, pedestrian people who preferred a single caste-wife, plain water, vegetarian dishes and prose *slokas*. The Sudra was allowed to drink wine provided he distilled it in his own house. The sale of wine and probably also of meat was totally prohibited.²

¹ Among animals the meat of which is permitted, Alberuni enumerates the following: Sheep, goats, gazelles, hares, rhinoceros, buffaloes, fish, water and land birds; as, sparrows, ring-doves, francolins, doves, peacocks, and other animals which are not loathsome to man nor noxious. Among the forbidden are—cows, horses, mules, asses, camels, elephants, tame poultry, crows, parrots, nightingales, all kinds of eggs and wine. (Vol. II, p. 151.)

² *Alberuni*, vol I, p. 152. Compare *Ibn Khurdadba*: "The kings and people of Hind regard fornication as lawful, and wine as unlawful. This opinion prevails throughout Hind, but the king of Kumar holds both fornication and the use of wine as unlawful. The king of Sarandip conveys wine from Irak for his consumption." The 'lawfulness' of adultery is of course an erroneous impression due to the large number of temple-girls (*devadasis*) of the period. Also *Masudi*, "The Hindus abstain from drinking wine, and censure those who consume it; not because their religion forbids it, but in the dread of its clouding their reason and depriving them of its powers. If it can be proved of one of their kings, that he has drunk (wine), he forfeits the crown; for he is (not considered to be) able to rule and govern (the empire) if his mind is affected." (*Elliot*, vol. I, p. 20.)

Marriage took place at an immature age and the match was arranged by the parents. The Code of Manu had permitted a maiden to select her own husband. "Three years let a damsel wait, though she be marriageable; but after that time let her choose for herself a bridegroom (of) equal (caste and rank). *If, being not given in marriage, she herself seeks a husband, she incurs no guilt, nor (does) he whom she weds.* A maiden who chooses for herself, shall not take with her any ornaments, given by her father or her mother, or her brothers; if she carries them away, it will be theft. But he who takes (to wife) a marriageable damsel, shall not pay any nuptial fee to her father; for the (latter) will lose his dominion over her in consequence of his preventing (the legitimate result of the appearance of) her menses.¹"

But this limited liberty was vitiated by the age prescribed for the marriage of women and the status allowed to them.

"A man, aged thirty years, shall marry a maiden of twelve who pleases him, or a man of twenty-four a girl eight years of age; if (the performance of) his duties would (otherwise) be impeded, (he must marry) sooner."² Along with all this went a thorough contempt for women as creatures of sin. "Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking) it is enough (that) he is a man, they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly. Through their passion for men, through their mutable

¹ *Manu*, Chap. IX, pp. 343-344.

² *Ibid.*, Chap. IX, pp. 343-344.

temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this (world). Knowing their disposition, which the Lord of Creatures laid in them at the creation to be such, (every) man should most strenuously exert himself to guard them. (When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. For women no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts; thus the law is settled; women (who are) destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts, (are as impure as) falsehood (itself); that is a fixed rule. And to this effect many sacred texts are sung also in the Vedas, in order to (make) fully known the true disposition (of women); hear (now those texts which refer to) the expiation of their (sins).”¹

The resultant social feeling was inevitable. A daughter was the heel of Achilles in the family corporation to be got rid of as early as possible by a legitimate, if not a suitable, marriage. “No gift (*i.e.*, *mehr*) is settled between them. The man gives only a present to his wife, as he thinks fit, and a marriage gift in advance, which he has no right to take back, but the wife may give it back to him of her own free will.”² Unhappy marriages could only be terminated by death. There was no divorce. The man, of course, could marry again. As to the number of wives a

¹ *Manu* : Chap. IX, p. 330.

² Alberuni : *India*, vol. I, p. 154.

Hindu may have, Alberuni's Brahman friends gave him conflicting accounts. At one place he says that the Hindus are allowed to have four wives and not more, though if one of the four dies, she may be replaced. But later on he adds—"Some Hindus say that the number of the wives depends upon the caste; that, accordingly a Brahman may take four, a Kshatriya three, a Vaishya two wives and a Sudra one.¹" The figure four—the Muslim maximum—makes one suspicious. Our author's Brahman instructors, one is impelled to conclude, were probably one-wife householders.

As to the forbidden degrees of marriage: (1) Inter-caste marriages were legally allowed so long as a man married a woman of a caste lower than his own; the reverse was never permitted; and the children belonged to the caste of their mother. The Brahmans, we are definitely told, did not marry except in their own caste. A Brahman, though permitted by the earlier law still extant, was gradually deprived of the privilege of marrying lower caste women; the marriage was not made invalid, but it was deprecated and a Brahman who defiled himself by such a marriage was deprived of his full religious status. Even as early as the Code of Manu we find Brahmanical public opinion frowning upon such marriages. "But he who, being invited to a Shraddha, dallies with a Sudra woman, takes upon himself all the sins which the giver (of the feast) committed."² "If twice-born men wed

¹ Alberuni: *India* vol. I, p. 155.

² *Manu*, Chap. III, pp. 111.

women of their own and of other (lower castes), the seniority, honour, and habitation of those (wives) must be (settled) according to the order of the caste (*varna*). Among all (twice-born men) the wife of equal caste alone, not a wife of a different caste by any means, shall personally attend her husband and assist him in his daily sacred rites. But he who foolishly causes that (duty) to be performed by another, while his wife of equal caste is alive, is declared by the ancients (to be) as (despicable) as a Chandala (sprung from the) Brahman (caste)."¹ "Children of a Brahman by (women of) the three (lower) castes, of a Kshatriya by (wives of) the two (lower) castes, and of a Vaishya by (a wife) of the one caste (below him) are all six called base-born (*apasada*)."²

It may be safely assumed that in practice the Brahmans by the time of Alberuni had successfully succeeded in preventing the pollution of their domestic lives by low-castes women. The same rule was probably observed by other castes also. Inter-caste marriages must have been rare. The spirit of the time was against them.

(2) In addition to the foregoing restrictions, it was not permitted to marry anyone (a) in the ascending lines (*e. g.* mother, grandmother) or (b) in the descending line (*e. g.*, daughter, granddaughter) or (c) the collaterals (aunt, niece, etc). But if the collaterals were removed from each other by five generations (? degrees), marriage was permitted but disliked. It

¹ *Manu*, Chap. IX, pp. 342-343.

² *Ibid.*, Chap. X, p. 404.

was considered better to marry a stranger within the caste, than a relative, however remote.¹ The institution of *gotra* is not discussed by Alberuni.

A widow was not allowed to remarry.² "She has only to choose between two things—either to remain a widow as long as she lives or to burn herself; and the latter eventuality is considered the preferable because as a widow she is ill-treated as long as she lives." It is curious, however, that in the Persian literature of the period references to *sati* are very rare. Probably the custom, which is obnoxious to all the sentiments of humanity, was not as common as it afterwards became. But there is good reason for believing that the widows of kings were burnt, 'whether they wish it or not.' There was a danger that their behaviour may bring disgrace to the memory of their illustrious husband; their step-son, now on the *gaddi*, was in supreme control and their ornaments were needed for charitable purposes. An exception was made, however, in the case of queens of advanced years and of queens who had children. The mother of the new *Raja* would probably not be burnt, nor the mothers of his brothers who were in a position to protect them. The rest of the harem, by a saturnalia of revolting executions, was cleared for the favourites of the new monarch³.

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, p. 155.

² "Offspring begotten by another man is here not (considered lawful), nor (does offspring begotten) on another man's wife (belong to the begetter), nor is a second husband anywhere prescribed for virtuous women." (*Manusmriti*, p. 197, V.)

³ Compare *Abu Zaid*, (*Elliot*, vol. I, p. 6). "When the king of Sarandip dies, his corpse is carried on a low carriage very near

The complicated rites concerning the principal items of life—birth, consecration, marriage and death—need not be discussed here. But the Mussalmans, who always buried their dead, naturally observed, the various methods among the Hindus about one of the most sacred human obligations—the last duty to the departed. Contemporary thought attributed the custom of cremating the dead to Narayana (Lord Krishna). But it must have been very much older, whatever date we assign to Lord Krishna. The dead body, washed and wrapped in a shroud, was burnt in as much sandal wood and ordinary wood as the family could procure. “Nothing remains. Every defilement, dirt and smell is annihilated at once.” Part of the calcined bones were cast into the nearest stream or taken to the Ganges and dropped in its sacred water. Over the spot where the body had been burnt a monument, resembling the large mile-stones of the middle-ages, was raised. The custom of throwing dead

the ground, with the head so attached to the back of the vehicle that the occupant touches the ground, and the hair drags in the dust. A woman follows with a broom, who sweeps the dust on to the face of the corpse, and cries out, ‘O men, behold! This man yesterday was your king; he reigned over you and you obeyed his orders. See now to what he is brought; he has bid farewell to the world, and the angel of death has carried off his soul. Do not allow yourselves to be led astray by the pleasures of this life,’ and such like words. The ceremony lasts for three days, after which the body is burnt with sandal, camphor and saffron, and the ashes scattered to the winds. All the Indians burn their dead. Sarandip is the last of the islands dependent on India. Sometimes when the corpse of a king is burnt, his wives cast themselves upon the pile and burn with it; but it is for them to choose whether they will do so or not.”

bodies into flowing water is attributed by Alberuni to Gautama Buddha. "Therefore his followers, the Shamanis, throw their dead into the rivers. It may be safely assumed, however, that this custom prevailed among the Hindus also ; otherwise Alberuni would not have heard of it. Elaborate ceremonies were not within the reach of the poorer classes. "Those who cannot afford to burn their dead will either throw them somewhere on the open field or into running water." By throwing on the 'open field' Alberuni probably, means casting into shallow, hastily made graves, just sufficient earth being thrown on the dead body to veil it from the eyes of the living. Suicide was condemned. Brahmans and Kshatriyas were sternly ordered not to burn themselves alive. Though public opinion seems to have condoned suicide in the case of old age and incurable disease, no members of the twice-born castes took advantage of it. There was, however, one exception. Alberuni tells us of a famous banyan tree at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamna. "Here the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas are in the habit of committing suicide by climbing up the tree and throwing themselves into the Ganges¹. Two other cases are noted by Abu Zaid², the first in the territory of the Rashtrakutas and the second (probably) among the Nairs of Malabar. "In the state of Balhara (the Rashtrakuta kings) and in other provinces of India, one may see men burn themselves on a pile. This arises from the faith of the Indians in metempsychosis, a faith which is rooted in their

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, Chap. LXXIII.

² Elliot, *History of India*, vol. I, p. 9.

their hearts, and about which they have not the slightest doubt. Some of the kings of India, when they ascend the throne, have a quantity of rice cooked and served on banana leaves. Attached to the king's person are three or four hundred companions, who have joined him of their own free will without compulsion. When the king has eaten some of the rice, he gives it to his companions. Each in his turn approaches, takes a small quantity and eats it. All those who so eat the rice are obliged, when the king dies or is slain, to burn themselves to the very last man on the very day of the king's decease. This is a duty which admits of no delay, and not a vestige of these men ought to be left." The Vaishyas and the Sudras had greater freedom in the matter of suicide, specially at sacred moments, like the period of the eclipses, when the road to heaven seemed more certain. "They hire somebody to drown them in the Ganges, holding them under the water till they are dead."¹ "When a person", says Abu Zaid, "either woman or man, becomes old, and the senses are enfeebled, he begs someone of his family to throw him into the fire, or to drown him in the water; so firmly are the Indians persuaded that they shall return to (life upon) the earth."²

Whatever the misfortunes of the mass of the people—and the power of the governing classes and the rigidity of laws intended to enforce their authority must have been extremely galling—there was at least one compensation. India was a land of

¹ Alberuni : *India*, vol. II, p. 170.

² Elliot : *History of India*, vol. I, pp. 9-10.

festivals and festivities. The life of the people was not happy (in the proper sense of the word) but it was joyous and cheerful. That grim sense of duty and atmosphere of gloom in which life was only conceived as of a traveller's inn where a man had merely to discharge his covenant (*misaq*) with the Lord and depart, which is the most striking feature of the religious circles of mediæval Islam and mediæval Christianity, is not found in India. The *jogis* who tortured their flesh were respected but not imitated. The Hindus had plenty of fasts; but they were not obligatory. Nor were they as exacting and sombre as the Ramzan of the Mussalmans. The Brahmanical system would have tottered to its foundation had it not found some means of reconciling the people to their lot; and it succeeded in doing so by eliminating foreign influences, so far as possible; by creating a cheerful outlook in the people; and by providing them with a series of fairs, fasts and festivities throughout the year. It is wonderful how song and dance and gossip will make people forget the gnawings of an empty stomach. Most of the festivals, Alberuni tells us, were primarily intended for women and children. But the spirit of gladness and good cheer must have infected the elders as well.

Mohammad Habib.

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