

Classification of Dharma.

By S. C. GUHA.

Dharma covers a very wide field. The term is derived from the root *dhr*, with the affix *man*—meaning 'that which sustains or supports the world.'

The term *dharma* is very often popularly translated as religion or faith. Religion is no doubt a *dharma*—for *Dharma* includes religion—but it may be classed under (a) *Pravṛtti-dharma* when the aim of a religion is to attain joys akin to earthly pleasures, or (b) *Nivṛtti-dharma* when the aim is freedom from all desire and bondage and consequently the attainment of Eternal Peace.

But we must first know what religion is. Seeley has defined it in a simple short sentence: "The substance of religion is culture." Comte's observation is: "Religion in itself expresses that state of perfect unity which is the distinctive work of man's existence, both as an individual and in society—when all the constituent parts of his nature, moral and physical, are made habitually to converge towards one common purpose." Bankimchandra Chatterjee observes: "If there is anybody who has perfectly understood and explained the true significance of *Dharma*, that one is the author of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*, the book wherein *Dharma* is elucidated in the clearest of terms."

The different systems of the so-called *Dharma*—such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism,

Mohammedanism, Zoroastrianism, etc.—may be judged in the light of their teachings, and classified accordingly.

But *Dharma* proper is quite a different thing from the above 'isms' or particular faiths. It is the governing principle or law, human and divine, physical and metaphysical. It sustains and keeps all—upholds everything. Literally it means 'that which prevents something from falling down'.

The sage Kaṇāda in the *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtras* defines *Dharma* as follows: 'यतोऽभ्युदयनिःश्रेयससिद्धिः स धर्मः'. That which conduces either (1) to temporal progress in the form of earthly acquisitions or heavenly joys and powers, or (2) to spiritual perfection realized as bliss or transcendent quietude is *Dharma*.

Bhagavān Vedavyāsa says:—

धारणाद्धर्ममित्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः ।
यत् स्याद्धारणसंयुक्तं स धर्म इति निश्चयः ॥

"That which sustains or holds society together is *Dharma*." He defines it clearly, in his commentary on the *Yoga-Sūtras*, thus: 'योग्यतावच्छिन्ना धर्मिणः शक्तिरेव धर्मः'. The property of an object which renders it capable of functioning is *dharma*.

We hear of various forms of *Dharma*, such as *Rāja-dharma*, *Yuga-dharma*, *Kula-dharma*, *Vyavahāra-dharma*, etc.

(2)

The *dharma* of a man is of two kinds—general and special. The

forming a part of religion, morality alone is not religion.

It is also clear from the derivation of the word that there must be three essentials in a religion, if it has to be understood rightly. There must be a yearning soul. It means that the soul must be of man. Well might a Christian say that 'the cow has no soul!' But, certainly, we Hindus do not doubt that it has a soul. Ours is the belief that teaches us that, awakened or inert, there is soul in all inanimate and animate things. In all sentient creation the soul is in the awakened state. But there are so many grades of that awakening. Even in man, the most evolved sentient creature, it is not perfectly awakened. In the majority of them it is found dozing. Such are called *Paśus* in the *Śāstras*. For this reason, man is often referred to by the Vedas as a *Paśu*. Ethics and morality are the fore-runners of religion. It is for them to mould these human brutes into men proper. No immoral man can rightly have place in the domain of religion. Religion begins with imperfect human souls that have already, with the help of ethics, perfected themselves as men and leads them to the desired union with the Perfect Whole. This Perfect Whole is thus the second essential of religion. And the journey from a human soul, perfected as man, to a Perfect Whole,—this process of union,—must, therefore, be called Religion. The Old Testament says: "Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." Here, wisdom stands for religion. For, according to the Bible, an irreligious

man can never be wise. God is the ultimate perfect Reality according to the Bible and union of some kind with Him is the end of its religion. *Brahma* is the ultimate Reality of the Vedas; *Nirvāṇa*, of the Buddhists; and so on. Thus, there is always an ultimate goal in each case, howsoever the ideas about it may differ. The science which determines the goal is called Philosophy. That which determines the method of perfection as human being is called ethics, and the process, which is, of course, different from these two ends and links them together, is called "Religion".

As Lord Tennyson has beautifully expressed it in his little poem 'A Flower in the Crannied Wall', every radical thinking must lead us back to the riddle of this Universe and its solution. Although man is not always conscious of it, it is a fact that all his activities are based upon some convictions about the existence of his own self, the nature of this Universe, and their mutual relation and origin. As it is not possible for everyone to think out these subjects, while boasting of free will and free thought, one generally appropriates or adopts these from others and, knowingly or unknowingly, his life is ruled by them. For this reason, Paul Caras has said that "the world conception a man has can only give character to the principle in his ethics" and anyone whose brain is not unsteady due to the action of the whirlwind of modern thought or paralysed by the feverish flight after sovereigns and sex-pleasures must, at last, come to the inevitable conclusion

general *dharma* is applicable to all humanity, irrespective of region or religion, caste or creed, sex or semblance. The special *dharma* is prescribed in special circumstances, for particular persons.

In the *Mahābhārata* (*Bhīṣma-Purva*) we have:—

यं पृथग्धर्मचरणाः पृथग्धर्मफलैषिणः ।
पृथग्धर्मैः समर्चन्ति तस्मै धर्मात्मने नमः ॥

“We bow to God, the embodiment of *Dharma*, whom the followers of various Dharmas adore through their different Dharmas seeking different results through them.”

In the *Gītā* the Lord hath said:

‘धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥’

“For establishing *Dharma* on a sound basis I appear from age to age.”

The formula of Buddhist ordination or *Upasampada* contains the following statement required to be made by an adherent showing his attitude of submission to *Dharma*—

‘धम्मं शरणं गच्छामि’

‘I take refuge in *Dharma*’.

In all these cases the term is evidently used in its general sense.

There were numerous writers in ancient India whose names are associated with the composition of separate codices bearing on *Dharma* in all its aspects—such as Gautama, Manu, Nārada, Parāśara, Vasiṣṭha, Yājñavalkya and others. The works left by them are called *Dharmaśāstras* or *Smṛtis*, rules of conduct that are to be followed by persons desirous

of guidance on intricate points of personal conduct.

Manu’s memorable work, which is called *Manusmṛti* or *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* after his name, ruled at a time the whole structure of society in the land of the Āryas; while many others are of equal import. *Yājñavalkya-Smṛti* has rather a minute classification of *Dharma*.

Generally speaking, these *Dharmaśāstras* deal with:

1. *Saṃskāras* (rites of purification);
2. *Karmas* and their fructification;
3. *Varṇa-dharma* (special rules to guide the four *Varṇas* or natural sections of recognized humanity);
4. *Āśrama-dharma* (special rules for the four successive stages of human life);
5. *Dāna-dharma* (rules relating to gifts), etc.

The general *Dharma* has three principal departments, viz., *Dāna*, (gift), *Tapas* (austerity) and *Yajña* (ritual). The *Gītā* has:—

‘यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ।’

There are three kinds of *dāna*: viz., the gifts of *abhaya* (shelter, happiness, etc.), of *vidyā* (knowledge) and of *artha* (worldly gifts, such as food, clothes, land and money, etc.).

Dedication (*utsarga*), consecration and endowment (*pratiṣṭhā*), *Vratas* (prescribed and periodic duties), *Tīrtha-kṛtyas* (pilgrimages and duties connected therewith), etc. may also come under *Dāna-dharma*.

All these may be grouped under three classes according to the dominant quality characterizing each—viz., *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Tapodharma is also threefold: *śārīrika*, *mānasika* and *vāchanika*—pertaining to one's body, mind and word respectively. Here also the three qualities—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—decide the category a *dharma* comes under.

Then there is the *Yajña-dharma*, which has various sections, the main divisions being (a) *Karma*, (b) *Upāsana* and (c) *Jñāna*.

(a) *Karma* is primarily sixfold :

1. *Nitya* (daily regular Sandhyās, prayer, etc.);
2. *Naimittika* (Occasional pilgrimages; fasts, etc.);
3. *Kāmya* (that which is undertaken with a view to a particular end, e. g., *Putreṣṭi-Yajña* for having a son);
4. *Ādhyātmika* (doing good to others, etc.);
5. *Āhidaiiva* (e. g., *Vāstu-Yajña*, etc.)
6. *Adhībhūta* (such as feeding or serving the poor, the Brahmans, etc.).

(b) *Upāsana-Yajña* is primarily of five kinds, according to the *Upāsana-paddhati* :—

1. *Brahmopāsana* (Worship of *Brahma*);
2. *Saguṇopāsana* (Worship of qualified *Brahma*);

3. *Avatāropāsana* (Worship of an *Avatāra*);

4. *Upāsana* of the Ṛṣis, the Devas and the Pitṛs ;

5. That of minor devas and pretas (ghosts).

According to the *Sādhana-paddhati*, however, *Upāsana* is of a fourfold character. Accordingly, there are *Mantra-yoga*, *Haṭha-yoga*, *Laya-yoga* and *Rāja-yoga*.

(c) *Jñāna-Yajña* is primarily of three kinds: *Śravaṇa* (hearing), *Manana* (intellection), and *Nididhyāsana* (meditation).

It must be remembered that each of the three divisions—*Karma*, *Upāsana* and *Jñāna*—has again to be classed according to the *guṇas* or qualities like *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

A *yajña* gains the status of a *mahāyajña* when it is performed not simply for self-interest, but primarily in the interest of others.

While distinction must be made between *Āchāra-dharma* and *Nīti-dharma*, we can place them side by side. *Sadāchāra* is always moral and fruitful both to the individual and the society, while a *nīti* may not necessarily be ethical at all; e. g., *Rāja-nīti*, *Daṇḍa-nīti*, etc. *Vyavahāra-dharma* is law pure and simple—regional, national and international.

While law-givers are teachers, Ṛṣis, sages and seers, devising means of peace for the world by providing a set of laws to be followed, the class of people specializing in the subject is called *vyavahārajīvi* (lawyer).

By *Vyavahāra-dharma*, therefore, is understood the existing law as practised in the courts and in the society or community.

The field of *Dharmaśāstra* is so vast that not only *Āchāra-dharma*, *Nīti-dharma* and *Vyavahāra-dharma*, but also the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, including the epic poems, comes under its category. *Kutumba-nīti*, *Vyavasāya-nīti*, *Dāmpatya-nīti*, prohibition of the drink and drug evil, smoking, gambling, child-marriage, polygamy, etc., reformation and uplift of any kind, establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages and other homes of service—all should come under *Dharma*. In short, the entire field of Sociology is merged in *Dharmaśāstra*.

Rules have to be followed, but there are often provided conditions under which a *dharma* may change its usual course. *Āpad-dharma* is such a deviation from the usual practice. It is a course of procedure which is not usually considered proper for an individual or a society, but is allowed in times of extreme distress or calamity.

Manu has referred to this subject of *Āpad-dharma* in Chapter I (116)

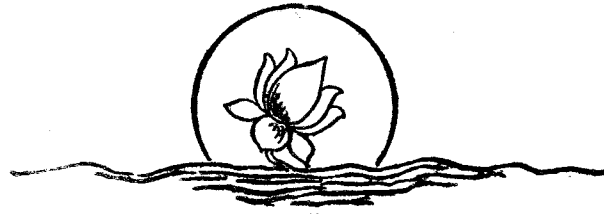
and dwelt on the same at length in Chap. X (130).

As regards *viśeṣa dharma* or special course of conduct, one can only say it varies according to the stage attained by the individual or group for whom it may be prescribed.

One must admit that there should always exist certain differences between a child and a youth, a householder and a *sannyāsī*, a man and a woman, the able-bodied and the disabled.

The ocean of *Dharma* is so deep and extensive that it is difficult to study all its qualities and significances by only having a dip into it: a complete treatment of the subject is not possible within the scope of a magazine article; and one must finally admit along with Vyāsa that the ultimate knowledge of *Dharma* lies hidden in the depth of the cave, 'धर्मस्य तत्त्वं निहितं गुहायाम्'.

What we understand, in short, is that *dharma* makes a full man, leads a man towards his full growth or perfection; and without *Dharma* man is but a beast—'धर्मेण हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः'



Religion and Socialism.

BY JAGDISH CHANDRA KHURMA.

Among the various doctrines that are ruling the hearts of the people of the modern world, Socialism or rather Marxian Socialism occupies a very important position. A consideration of this doctrine in relation to religion will not be out of place, because it is going to affect the future of mankind to a very remarkable degree. It is all the more important because this doctrine is permeating our holy land, and taking a deep root in the minds of many educated people, so much so that many of our most eminent and respected leaders in their great zeal for accepting anything that is western, in its entirety, have accepted it as a panacea for all our ills, not realizing the reaction it is going to have on our culture, civilization and philosophy, which we have striven hard to preserve through ages of conflict and confusion. Let us, therefore, take a dispassionate view of its relation with religion, which is the very foundation on which our Indian life is based.

Modern Socialism has no place for religion. Its greatest exponent, Lenin, describes religion as the "Opium of the masses". Socialists think that the rich have exploited the masses and kept a hold on them through the agency of religion. The beautiful teaching of Christ: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" has been described by the socialists as a clever diplomatic device of the rich to keep the poor contented and in subjection, and thus help them to persist in their base exploitation. Religion has been proclaimed to be the main cause of poverty and a source of many other ills, and an important factor in dividing mankind and thus promoting bloody warfare among its various units. Museums have been built in Russia to impress upon

the lay people the futility of religion and belief in God. All this is done by the Socialist in the hope of establishing an international socialistic world-order based on purely secular foundations and in which every individual would become a sort of productive machine and would equally share his profits with all. Only in this the socialists think lies universal peace. Economic appeasement has been considered to be the aim of human life and when this is achieved, the socialist's philosophy ends.

I have endeavoured to describe very briefly the conflict between socialism and religion. I have done this purposely to show that precisely similar views are held by several of our national leaders who are guiding our future destinies. To confirm this one has simply to study their writings. A very strong and important class of people is thus growing in our country which is poisoning the people,—more specially students in schools and colleges—against religion; and unless we rise to the occasion, our Hindu culture based on spiritual foundations is in great danger in their hands. Already a majority of the Hindus show little interest in the higher philosophy of life preached by our holy scriptures and this propaganda in the name of national unity is going to take away the little interest which some of us have in our religion.

It would be out of place here to discuss the political and economic aspects of Socialism, with some of which every sane-minded person must agree. The question that faces us is whether religion is the cause of all poverty and misery in this world. Should it be abolished? Is it possible to establish a socialistic