

**INTRINSIC PATTERNS IN THE
HISTORY OF
RELIGIOUS CHANGE
FROM EARLY HINDU TRADITIONS
TO CONTEMPORARY MAHAYANA BUDDHISM:
AN APPLICATION OF
CUMPSTY'S THEORY OF RELIGION**

by

ANN-MARIE LEATT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, *Intrinsic Patterns in the History of Religious Change from early Hindu Traditions to contemporary Mahayana Buddhism: an Application of Cumpsty's Theory of Religion*, is an application of a comprehensive theory of religion to a broad sweep of religious history and diversity. It follows development from the Indian sub-continent to Japan, and to the West. It covers the period from about 500BCE to the present. As such, it assumes in the reader some background in theory of religion, and John Cumpsty's theory in particular, as well as some knowledge of the history and traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism.

The first chapter deals with conceptual issues through a characterisation of early Hinduism, a description of Cumpsty's three ideal-types, and a discussion of the relationship between moksa and dharma. Chapter two provides historical grounding to the thesis by providing empirical evidence for the arguments made in chapter one about the "bridging-out" to the Withdrawal paradigm. It studies four orthodox responses to the paradigm, that is, the brahmanical synthesis, Saivism, the Gita, and Sankara.

The third chapter offers an analysis of early Buddhism, the development of Theravada and its academic characterisation, as an example of "allocation" as a bridging and change mechanism. Chapter four offers an analysis of the Mahayana in China and Japan. It gives reasons for its missionary success, and provides three examples of bridging symbols common to all Mahayana - the Trikāya, skilful means, and the Bodhisattva ideal. The fifth chapter discusses developments in the Mahayana. Three modes of creating correspondence between Samsara and Nirvana are described: Mādhyamika, Ch'an (Zen), and Yogācāra. It also deals with developments in the Pure Land and the move into the Secular World Affirming paradigm.

The final chapter deals with the modern period and draws together the argument of the thesis. "Socially engaged Buddhism" as a modern phenomenon in Theravada is described, and Mahayana is examined for similar moves, and an explanation is given. The chapter then goes on to describe religious transference back to the West, and explains their success. The thesis concludes with an assessment of the fruitfulness of the application of Cumpsty's theory of religion.

In terms of methodology the thesis is an application of a theory of religion to a broad sweep of religious history in the Indian sub-continent and eastwards, as well as the West. The thesis highlights situations of change in both worldview and practice, and subjects them to analysis in terms of the theory. The result is an extension of that part of the theory that is most involved in the analysis of the religious traditions concerned. In order to do this a wide range of phenomenological and sociological material has been used.

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GLOSSARY:

- anātman:** litt. no self. *ātman* is the Hindu term for the real immortal self. Buddhism denies its existence stating that there is nothing which can be designated as an independent, imperishable essence. One of the three marks of being.
- anatta:** Pali term for the above, no self.
- ānava:** egoism, or a too ridged ego.
- anicca:** litt. impermanence. One of the three marks of being, the fundamental property of everything conditioned. From it derive the other two marks of being, no-self and suffering.
- Arhat:** (Pali: *arahat*) Litt. worthy one. The Theravadin ideal and the highest level of spiritual attainment. A state in which all passions and defilements have passed away from them, the fruition of which is *nirvana*.
- artha:** One of the three religious goals of classical Hinduism. It connotes the realm of the material, especially as it pertains to wealth, status and material success.
- ātman:** Self. The Hindu doctrine of soul or immutable essence. The Upanishads made a correlation with the Self and Brahman.
- avatar:** Litt. an incarnation. Used especially where a Hindu deity is to be found in human or animal form in order to test, teach or amuse themselves. The best known of these is Krishna who is an *Avatar* of Visnu.
- avidyā:** litt. ignorance. It is one of the Buddhist "sins", and also the natural concomitant of the illusory nature of material existence. The soteriological goal of *nirvana* is to be achieved through the negation of this ignorance in various paths of spiritual training. These generally involve meditation on the four noble truths, the three marks of being and dependant co-origination.
- bhakti:** Litt. devotion. It describes the ideal relationship between a devotee and a deity.
- bhaktiyoga:** The path of devotion, and one of three *yogas* or paths in the Hindu tradition. It comprises making oneself available to the grace of the deity in order to gain salvation. *Bhakti* traditions have grown most notably around the deities of Krishna, Śiva and Kali.
- bodhicitta:** litt. awakened mind. Also the mind of enlightenment, it is viewed as a vision of the true nature of phenomena.

Bodhisattva: litt. enlightenment being. One who seeks enlightenment through the systematic practice of perfect virtues (*pāramitās*), but renounces complete entry into *nirvana* until all beings are saved. A bodhisattva provides active help, and is capable of merit transfer for the benefit of others. A Mahayana concept in contradiction to the Theravada ideal of the *arhat*.

dharma: 1. Hindu: social duty, that which is required to maintain order in the universe. 2. Hindu: used in this thesis to refer to the complex more closely associated with Cumpsty's ideal type of the nature religion paradigm. 3. Buddhist: The teachings of the Buddha. 5: Buddhist: the law as in the ordering principal of the universe. 6. Buddhist: word denoting the smallest particles of reality, as in all things are comprised of dharmas (Theravadin) or material existence is comprised of the interrelationship between non-material dharmas (Mahayana). etc.

dukkha: suffering. One of the three marks of being. The roots of the word lie in the image of a wheel that is uncentered. It is the nature of conditioned reality that suffering permeates conditioned things.

gunas: Litt. strands. From the Sāṃkhya philosophy. There are three of these strands which make up material existence, each of them has different natures and the relative mix of them describes and defines an object or being's nature and capacity. (see *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*)

honji: litt. source. From the *honji-suijaku* (source-manifestation) theory which was used to integrate Buddhist and Shinto pantheons in Japan. The *kami* in this schemata, became manifestation of the Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* who were there sources.

janashakti: collective power. Used in the Sarvodaya movement to denote the power of people in groups and in community for transformation and collective development through and with personal development.

jñāna: litt. wisdom. It relates always to knowledge of the absolute. Hindu origins.

jñānayoga: The path of wisdom, one of the three acknowledges paths to salvation in traditional Hinduism, Practically this meant the path of the Upanishads in general, and to Sankara's means of attaining knowledge through the *māhāvakyas* in particular.

kami: the Shinto term for gods or spirits. These could be either personified or not, and comprised a pantheon which was subsumed to some degree by the Buddhist one until separation in the Meiji restoration.

karma: 1. Hindu: litt. action or involvement. 2. Hindu: A theory of ethicization as in actions having consequence in future rebirths. 3. Hindu: That which is determined by past action which needs to be cleansed through the means of *yoga* in order to attain *moksa*.

karmayoga: The path of *yoga*, one of the three paths available to salvation in traditional Hinduism. Here one gains salvation through the renunciation of the fruits of one's actions or by transferring these to the deity.

kāya: litt. Body or mode. (see *trikāya*)

lingam: The symbolic representation of Śiva through the image of the erect phallus. It represents both virility and asceticism.

māhāvākya: The great sayings from the Vedas, eg. "That thou art Svetakethu". Used by Śaṅkara in his process of conceptual cleansing in that they both do and don't point to ultimate reality.

mantra: A powerful syllable or set of syllables that can invoke or manifest cosmic powers or deities or states of consciousness. Used in both Hinduism (closely allied to the power of speech itself) and Buddhism (especially in tantrism).

mikyo: Japanese: Esoteric practices and beliefs. Based largely on tantric practices and found especially in the Shingon school.

moksa: 1. Hindu: Liberation, salvation or enlightenment. 2. Hindu: Used in this thesis to point to the bridging out to the withdrawal paradigm as outlined by Cumpsty.

mukti: The word for *moksa* or enlightenment in the Śaivite tradition.

nirmānakāya: The lowest of the three bodies of the Buddha. It is the earthly body in which the Buddhas appear in order to fulfil their resolve to guide all beings to enlightenment.

nirvana: The Buddhist term for enlightenment, salvation or liberation. It is the unconditioned, un compounded and the uncreate. It is not accessible to verbal transmission, and can best be described through negation.

pāramitā: litt. perfection. There are six of these and this doctrine is only to be found in the Mahayana. They are the vehicle through which beings become bodhisattvas who undertake to train in them. They include generosity, discipline, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom.

parinirvana: The final *nirvana* of the historical Buddha. It is his death and therefore his final escape from the conditioned and the material.

parvati: 1. The consort to Siva. 2. His feminine aspect.

pudgala: A *skandha* (see entry below) suggested as the self or substance of the individual or that which transmigrates in rebirth. It is a doctrine which is clearly in contradiction with the assertion of the three marks of being, and has therefore never quite gained admission in the Buddhist cannon.

rajas: The middle of the three *gunas* (see above) which has as its nature passion and energy. It comprises the main ingredient of the Ksatriya or warrior caste.

ṛta: The ordering principal of the universe in early Hindu cosmology. It needs maintenance through the ritual of sacrifice and through the performance of the allocated roles in society.

samādhi: litt. to establish or make firm. The more usual translation is that of concentration. It is a non-dualistic state of consciousness

sambhogakāya: The "body of delight" or "bliss body" of the Buddhist *trikāya*. It is the middle realm where the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are manifested as states of consciousness and principles. It is they who populate the Buddha-fields.

samsara: 1. Hindu: The realm of dharma, the material plane. 2. Hindu: The doctrine of the web of existence that comprises both *karma* and rebirth. Together these three comprise the *dharmic* realm that needs to be escaped in the *moksa* traditions.

sangha: The Buddhist community. It is the ideal, physical and political location of the Theravadin community. In the narrow sense it comprises monks and nuns. More generally it includes all Buddhists, laymen and laywomen as well as monks and nuns.

sannyasin: A Hindu renunciate, and the fourth stage of life in the *varnasramadharma*.

sattva: The best of the three *gunas*. It is of the nature of light and intelligence and is the major ingredient of the Brahmin or priestly caste.

shākti: Female power and energy. It is believed to activate the male principle. Found most often in mythology surrounding Siva and Kali.

sila: It is the ethical part of the Buddhas teachings. Considered to be a precondition to any path of spiritual perfection. It comprises a major aspect of both the eight-fold path and the *pāramitās* (see above). This term denotes a natural morality as opposed to the specific injunctions that comprise the *vinaya* rules.

skandha: litt. group, aggregate or heap. It is a term for the five aggregates that comprise what is generally considered personality. This concept is fundamental to the *abhidarmic* conception of the human person and is found most centrally in Theravadin thinking.

śraddha: Hindu: The rites that a son must perform in order that his father have a successful rebirth. Considered to be the single most important duty of a male person in the *dharma* tradition.

stupa: Originally memorial monuments to the Buddha built to contain relics of his body and possessions. The veneration of *stupas* as sites of religious significance and sacred power has been known since the beginnings of Buddhism.

śūnyatā: litt. emptiness. The word connotes rather something that is full of potentialities and being than something devoid of the above. A central conception in the Mādhamikas and Zen (Ch'an).

sutra: Buddhist scriptures.

swashakti: personal power. Used by the Sarvodaya movement to denote the power of the individual to change and the power of the individual to affect others in interrelationship.

tamas: The third of the *gunas*. Its nature is that of darkness and weight. It is said to be the main ingredient of the lower castes and their natural inhibitor to both intelligence and spiritual advancement.

tapas: 1. Hindu: power, as in that power which is the natural result of spiritual practices of the ascetic variety. 2. Hindu: These spiritual practices themselves.

triloka: The three locations or realms. They correspond somewhat to the three bodies of the Buddha.

trikāya: The doctrine of the three bodies of the Buddha comprising *Nirmānakāya*, *Sambhogakāya* and *Dharmakāya* (see above). Central to all schools of the Mahayana.

upāya: litt. Skilful means. A doctrine which states that all teaching is provisional, extending even the declaration that Buddhism itself is only provisional and no longer necessary when its object has been met. It too is common to all Mahayana schools.

yoga: A path or method for the attainment of *moksa* in Hinduism. Three *yogas* are to be found in traditional Hinduism: *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*.

yuga: litt. age. In Hindu cosmology, the creation passes through four stages or *yugas* in its progression from creation to decay before it again begins with creation. Each *yuga* is of shorter duration and of lesser quality than the last. We are currently in the last, the *Kali Yuga*, which was begun with the Bhagavadgita, which provides a new path which is appropriate to the new conditions. This is the path of *Bhaktiyoga*, outlined by Krishna to Arjuna.

vac: litt. Speech, used as a metaphor for the unity of the cosmos in early and sacrificial Hinduism.

varnasramadharmā: the Hindu doctrine of duty according to the four castes and the four stages in life.

vijñānaskandha: The consciousness vehicle in Buddhism, suggested by some to be the *pudgala* or person, that is the container of transmigration. In classical *Abhidharma* however, it is only one of the five *skandhas* that make up the human personality, and has no particularly transcendental nature or capacity.

vinaya: The rules found in the Theravadin Pali canon that govern conduct of members of the sangha. Although other forms of Buddhism also have monastic rules, they are not quite as ridged or as important in the manintance of the tradition.

vipassanā: litt. insight, clear seeing. In Buddhist terms it means intuitive cognition of the three marks of being. In the Mahayana, insight ultimately corresponds with the perception of *śūnyatā*.

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

One of the most fruitful ways of making sense of the enormous diversity within the Indian religious traditions has been to look at it in terms of the tensions between dharma and moksa. Those scholars to follow this route include Zaehner (1966), O'Flaherty (1973, 1978, 1980), Potter (1963), Eck (1985), Larson (1972), Long (1980) and many others. What is actually meant by these two seminal terms is, however, far from clear. This chapter aims to make a contribution to the clarification of these terms in a theoretical sense, as well as to provide an overview of the ways in which they have been used. I will be using a broadly chronological sequence throughout in order to ground the theoretical perspectives.

Gananath Obeyesekere looks at the question in terms of rebirth eschatologies. He suggests that rebirth theories were most likely found in ancient Indian tribal religions and in the Vedic time. His thesis is that Indian religious philosophers transformed the "rebirth eschatology" into the "karmic eschatology", a process he labels "ethicization". (1980:138) Four eschatological features common to Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism are described. These include a theory of rebirth, which is a cyclical theory of continuity, and a theory of *karma*, which describes a state determined by an ethical past. Third in this list is a theory of the nature of existence, i.e. *samsara*, and last is one of salvation which must logically lie outside the circle of continuity. His term "karmic eschatology" refers to the complex of parts one to three above, which is both more ancient and logically prior to the fourth.

Giving anthropological evidence from both the Trobriand Islanders and the Ogbo for the rebirth eschatology, he suggests that birth transforms one from the otherworld to the visible human one, helped by rites of passage. "In the ideal model of the rebirth eschatology, there is a perfectly closed cycle: a limited pool of souls moving round and round through time in a circle". (1980:144) Wendy O'Flaherty confirms in this regard that there was no conception of rebirth in the Vedas, while the idea of re-death is in evidence. (1980.b:3) George L. Hart studying the Tamils notes that before the coming of the Aryan ideas, they did not believe in reincarnation. The oldest beliefs documented indicate ideas of spirits of the dead, who remain in the human realm to work mischief unless adequately controlled. Specific groups of people used to work with the dead, and they too were considered dangerous. There is also some evidence that there was belief in possession and some quite vague conception of a warrior's paradise. It is only in the second and third century CE. that reincarnation is first mentioned. Hart (1980:118) believes that the growth of this doctrine in the fifth century was a result of the influence of Jains, Buddhists and devotional Hinduism. Thus there seems to be a fair amount of anthropological evidence to support Obeyesekere's contentions regarding the starting point of this development.

Returning to the model; there are a number of logical possibilities in the construction of the otherworld. Either it can be only vaguely conceptualised, or it can duplicate the social structure of this world, or it can be idealised or utopian. (Obeyesekere 1980:145) This latter one is problematic because it begs the question of why these souls would return to this human world where they must encounter suffering. In this schemata, there is no religious evaluation of moral and ethical action, in other words, no ethicization. A transgression of a moral or ethical code does not imply the transgression of a religious

one, and any such transgression can be adequately dealt with by secular or authoritarian means. If not by an external authority, transgressions and the breaking of taboos would incur immediate and automatic punishment through a system of natural justice, which would include the suffering of disease or death. (Obeyesekere 1980:147) This requires no delay in the assessment, and no external arbitrator of justice, or a realm of retribution.

Obeyesekere suggests that the ethicization is a result of a highly specialised priesthood involved in speculative activities. In his estimation the period from the Upanushadic time to that of the Buddha was conducive to religious and ethical speculation. Ethicization then is the religious evaluation of moral action which involves reward and punishment, and must logically extend over the whole eschatological sphere. Therefore, where transfer to the otherworld had previously been dependant on the proper performance of the funeral rites, it now becomes dependant on the individual's past ethical action. The nature of the otherworld itself must change to accommodate this move. In particular it must be separated into at least two realms, those of retribution and reward. The actual number of realms however, is dependant on the nature of the worldly social system, and with the existence of caste, multiple stratified mythical worlds are to be found. "Thus ethicization of a rebirth eschatology, pushed to its logical extreme, links one lifetime with another in a continuing series of ethical links: which simply means that the South Asian theory of *samsara* and *karma* has fully developed" (1980:149).

Moksa or *nirvana* is not however entailed by the ethicization of the rebirth model. Again Obeyesekere points to religious specialisation and speculation as the key to the development of this. Defining salvation as "a state in which suffering has been eliminated"

he points out that it cannot take place in the otherworld, because one's stay there is never permanent. (1980:150) Therefore it must be found outside of the cycle. One must, of necessity, abolish rebirth in order to achieve salvation.

What Obeyesekere's work does is to model this complex in ways which take into account the logical structure of these conceptions. I have two points of issue however. The first is related to his chronology. He suggests that the period of speculation which gave rise to this ethicization, but not necessarily the idea of *samsara*, is that from the Upanishads to the Buddha. Textual evidence however shows that while the early Vedas can be characterised by a rebirth eschatology, by the later ones, and certainly predating the Upanishads, ethicization is taking place. What I would suggest is happening during the time he discusses is the development of the moksa aspect in some great detail. The second and more substantial criticism in a logical sense relates to the mechanisms of change. Obeyesekere refers to speculation as the source of ethicization, and specialisation and speculation as the source of the development of the *samsaric* theory. I see no logical reason why speculation, especially in the latter case, should move in that direction. The ethicized rebirth theory is a total worldview and complete in and of itself. It contains an ontology, an eschatology, an epistemology, a cosmology and ritual to integrate the system. Why then would there be this quite decisive move to create an escape from the whole system, both logically and effectively. I think that the answer of speculation and specialisation is far from sufficient.

The conceptualisation and experience of life in a general sense must have been pretty awful in order to want to escape with such effort and vigour. Moreover, the escape itself is a

difficult and often tortuous one. This I think points more clearly to the reason for the development of the soteriology of moksa - a strongly negative assessment of the totality of the world out there, resulting in speculation in the direction of escape.

I think it is clear that the development of the dharma tradition is both logically and chronologically prior to the beginnings of the moksa tradition. Moreover, the existence of the structure of the dharma tradition does not necessitate the development of the moksa elements. Logically, their only connection is that they must by definition be at odds with each other. The dharmic element is that which conceptualises that which must be escaped. The realm of moksa must be so far removed from that of dharma that, at least ideally, they cannot converse. At the most basic level, the dharma tradition can be characterised by the triad of rebirth, *karma* and *samsara*. The moksa tradition is by nature much more difficult to characterise, for as we shall see later, the language which we must use to try to describe it, is in itself part of the dharmic realm. I shall return to this later.

JOHN CUMPSTY AND RELIGION AS BELONGING:

I believe that John Cumpsty's recently published *Religion as Belonging: a General Theory of Religion* (1991), can shed some light on how to model these two world-views and their logical and sociological concomitants. He is, I think, one of few, if not the scholar who is currently working in the realm of grand theory. It would be impossible to apply the whole gamut of his theory to this issue at present, so only portions most relevant will be applied. This means however that that which is very cohesive might sometimes come out in parts. I

hope that by the end of this thesis, I will be able to pull these parts together in a complete and rich whole.

He begins in chapter five to state that the types of religious expression found across the world constitute a spectrum. While this diversity is interesting, it does not take us very far in the direction of understanding. His observation is that the most obvious and visible difference between these various religions is the way in which their adherents relate to the immediate world around them. He speaks of this as their mode of engagement. While frequently mixed in practice, three basic ones stand out, and each particular family of religions is dominated by a specific mode of engagement. For example, the Abrahamic traditions seems to be characterised by a mode of engagement with the immediate world of experience which is both an individual and a corporate taking-hold-and-shaping. (1991:116) Other religious families seem to seek disengagement with the immediate world. This may vary from the somewhat disciplined to the extremely severe on the physical level, while on the affective level it seems to be as total as possible. The third obvious mode is one of conforming oneself to patterns and rhythms in the existing order of things.

Underlying this, and asking what these adherents are trying to do with their engagement, he finds three aims: A. to seek relationship with a not yet fully present reality, B. to assume their oneness with reality while needing to realise it, and C. to assume their oneness with a present reality and seeking to maintain it. In other words with the two factors of "mode of engagement" and "relation to reality" he identifies three ideal types of religion. "These are coherent within themselves and logically mutually exclusive, although they are rarely unmixed in practice." (1991:117)

RELIGION AS BELONGING - A GENERAL THEORY OF RELIGION

THE THREE LOGICALLY COHERENT TYPES OF RELIGIOUS SYSTEM			
<i>NON-NEGOTIABLE SYMBOLS</i>	<i>NATURE RELIGION</i>	<i>WITHDRAWAL RELIGION</i>	<i>SECULAR WORLD AFFIRMING REL.</i>
EXPERIENCE OF IMMEDIATE WORLD OUT THERE is	AFFIRMED AS OF THE REAL	NOT AFFIRMED AS EXPERIENCE OF THE REAL	AFFIRMED AS OF THE REAL BUT NOT ULTIMATE
REALITY is	MONISTIC	MONISTIC	DUALISTIC
CHANCE AND DETERMINISM	CHANCE EXCLUDED	CHANCE EXCLUDED	CHANCE, new beginnings
BELONGING TO ULTIMATELY REAL is	ASSUMED must be maintained or repaired	ASSUMED needs to be realized individually	to be SOUGHT individually
NATURE OF ULTIMATELY REAL is	without rigid distinction between personal and impersonal		PERSONAL
TIME is	CYCLICAL biological, maybe astral	CYCLICAL rhythmic aeons	LINEAR
TEST OF QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE is	TEXTURE ONLY	TEXTURE ONLY	GOALS AND TEXTURE
GROUND OF MEANING is	GRAND DESIGN (pattern)	GRANDEUR	GRAND DESIGN (purpose)
MODE OF ENGAGEMENT WITH WORLD OUT THERE	FIT INTO	WITHDRAW FROM	TAKE HOLD AND SHAPE
SOCIAL FEATURES			
1 INDIVIDUAL or COMMUNAL	COMMUNAL centered	INDIVIDUAL universal	COMMUNAL solidary
2 SOCIAL COHESION	BEHAVIOR PATTERN	BEHAVIOR PATTERN	BELIEF PATTERN
3 SOCIAL COERCION	"LOVE" "FEAR"	n/a	"LOVE" "GREED"
SOURCE OF ETHICS is	HARMONY, INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE	REALIZATION, ONENESS	THE END, THE ABOVE
THE MODELLING OF SURVIVAL	ANCESTOR	REINCARNATION	TO HEAVEN
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE is	WISDOM	DISCOVERY OF A PATH	REVELATION

The Three Ideal Types: Description

A: Nature Religion

Here, immediate experience is monistic and real. Therefore the environment or significant parts thereof are considered to be divine and eternal, or as given, without a beginning and without a destiny. Examples which most closely approximate this ideal type include the great majority of the religions of the pre-literate peoples, those of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley and the continuing Hinduism of the common people. Also included are the religions of China where they have not been significantly influenced by Buddhism, and the traditional religions of Africa.

There are no significant differences between the gods or powers-that-be and the other entities which comprise the world of experience. All are part of the one monistic reality. It is apparent in this type more than any other, that the nature of the ultimately-real and its relation to the human must depend very directly upon the immediate experience of the community involved. Therefore they have aspects of creativity and preservation on the one hand, and destructiveness on the other, with the necessary degree of capriciousness attached. This is certainly due to the fact that they are drawn rather directly from nature, which shows such characteristics. Amongst nomadic peoples both sides are needed, the benevolent aspect for themselves, and its opposite for their enemies. When a people becomes more settled and agricultural, their experience, needs and thus gods change. The destructive and creative aspects tend to be separated into different deities, while both receive worship. Despite this, the emphasis now goes to creative and sustaining deities and

upon order. "Fertility is now a central concern and there is a discernible tendency to move from the militant masculine deities to female fertility deities." (1991:119)

The world out there being given, without beginning or destiny, means that time is not fashioned linearly, but in cycles. Change is experienced as flux and rhythm. The ideal person then is one who contributes to the maintenance and, if necessary, the restoration of harmony both with others and with nature itself. Social coercion, perhaps extending to accusations of witchcraft, is brought to bear on those who threaten harmony. Because the system is monistic and therefore closed, neither chance nor new beginnings are possible. "There is an explanation for all that happens and every action must have an effect." (1991:120) The world-out-there is itself the ultimately-real and is monistic, therefore a person can secure their life through maintaining relationship with the people and things that are immediate, including the recently dead. Therefore, there is great importance attached to rites of passage. In nature religion in a general sense, belonging is maintained through entering into the rhythms of nature.

B. Withdrawal Religion:

Here the immediate environment is regarded as real but deceptive. The adherent therefore seeks to withdraw from it, both physically and affectively, seeking instead the reality which lies behind the appearance. "Reality remains monistic, so that it can be sought in the depth of one's own being, or by seeking to peel away the structures imposed upon the way humans see or feel about experience as a whole." (1991:121) Religions closest to this ideal

type are the developed forms of those cradled in India, Vedanta, Hinduism and Buddhism, but are also found elsewhere in various forms of mysticism.

Cumpsty suggests that the development of this type out of nature religion was "almost certainly the result of a search for meaning in the face of a deep pessimism about the natural order and a pre-existing belief in reincarnation." (1991:121) In a life-affirming environment, reincarnation seems a most attractive idea. Within a pessimistic situation, it is the ultimate threat. Not surprising is it that the founders of both Buddhism and Jainism came from the military Ksatriya class. "To be members of the officer class of a people who have ceased to conquer and have settled as the dominant group on a well-watered plain, protected to a large extent by sea and mountains, is to have a question mark set against life's meaning." (1991:122)

Withdrawal religion is inevitably individualistic, and creates only the minimum social structure for existence. Groups such as the Sangha, are a collection of individuals supporting each other in their individual quests for enlightenment. Therefore there is very little in the corporate nature for this kind of ideal type. The monistic conception of reality remains and is more consciously emphasised than in nature religion monism, where it is usually assumed. In consequence reality is usually conceived of in impersonal terms. Time is also cyclical, but these cycles are not abstracted from direct experience, and are expressed in aeons rather than seasons. Change is not rhythm, nor is it desirable. Rather it is a mark of transience in the apparent reality from which adherents are seeking release. The ideal person therefore is one who, by whatever path, seeks personal release or enlightenment.

Concerning the mode of engagement in this ideal type, the monistic conception tied with a pessimism concerning the immediate world results in adherents denying the reality of the immediate world as experienced. "The transient manifestations can teach humankind of the infinite possibilities latent in the reality from which all comes and to which all returns, but they also constitute a temptation to humankind to value them for themselves." (1991:123)

In conclusion, relation to the ultimately real is assumed, it needs only to be realised.

It is these two ideal types of nature and withdrawal religion that will be of most concern in this thesis. The third type however has often been turned to as a way of overcoming the tensions inherent where these two co-exist. This will be evidenced in the next chapters. I will therefore also provide an overview of Cumpsty's third type, although it will be dealt with in less detail.

C: Secular World Affirming Religion:

This type affirms the environment as real but secular. The divine is transcendent, that is, something wholly other than the immediate world of sense experience. Examples of this are those religions which fall into the Abrahamic family, as well as Zoroastrianism in its more monotheistic phase.

Time is very important in this construct, and the focus that controls its conceptualisation is the future moment where this and that which transcends it come together. Transcendence logically leads to the concept of beginning, which must be a creation out of nothing, otherwise transcendence is lost. The creation, being an act of divine will must have some

purpose or destiny. Time therefore is constructed as linear, moving from creation to destiny. (1991:187) The world, because created by God must be essentially good, although its condition might be far removed at some points. The evaluation of life is very much determined by the linear nature of time in that life is not to be judged on its texture or harmony, but upon its contribution or otherwise towards the creation's destiny. Change is not a rhythm or a mark of impermanence, but a step towards or away from the divine purpose. The ideal person therefore is one who actively takes hold of this real, seeking to shape it in conformity to the divine will. (1991:124)

This type therefore holds a dualist conception of reality. There is a difference between a mode of engagement which operates in the immediate world, and a mode of belonging which only operates in relation to the ultimately real. Relation to the divine is not assumed, it must be sought. Ultimate reality must always be conceived of in personal terms, because it must be a being with will, and with volition. The human part in the interrelationship lies in seeking to co-operate with the divine in order to further God's plan. (1991:122) This responsibility involves a freedom to change the world. It is this ideal type that has been most developed by John Cumpsty. He examines various direct and indirect modes of belonging to the divine etc. For our purposes however, this is of little relevance.

Up until now the description of these ideal types have focused largely on quite external aspects of the religious worldviews. John Cumpsty then returns to the individual as the ground of both religions experience and religion expression. It is here that the paradigmatic understanding of religion must stand.

Central to his conception of religion is belonging. "Religion is concerned with belonging.

It is the quest for, maintenance or realisation of, belonging to the ultimately real, however that may be felt or conceived. The ultimately real is understood to be that which the individual most feels the need to belong in order to give meaning to, secure, or otherwise enrich his or her existence." (1991:172)

This belonging has two aspects; a felt sense of the ultimately real, together with at least a minimal conceptualisation thereof, and, a mode of belonging to the ultimately real. The latter will vary in accordance with the nature of the former. Most importantly, the sense of the ultimately real is distilled from the totality of the individual's experience. Cognitively it is the other side to the question of "Who am I?", that is; "What is all that out there?". Possible answers to the second question are not unlimited, for there are only three possible ways of modelling the nature of the ultimately real. Cumpsty believes that the only alternative response, and the only possibility for being non-religious, is to answer that all is chaos, without any integrity or meaning. In relation to this paradigmatic definition, Cumpsty goes on to look at developmental and epistemological issues in the development of religion in the individual.¹ Taking strongly from the psychologist H. C. Rümke, he also looks at reasons why an individual would fail to develop any form of religiosity or connectedness with the totality of life. While these issues are important to the development and assessment of his paradigmatic definition of religion, I will leave them aside for now, and continue with his ideal types.

¹ See Cumpsty: chapter two pp.25-55

Cumpsty states that there are three, and only three, paradigms for a reality to which one would belong. The primary response to the "what's out there" question is an uncomplicated monistic one, "this is the real". It may be experienced and modelled in different ways but it is always understood as a whole. It will remain this way for as long as the world out there can be affirmed as that to which one would belong. It will also remain as long as there are is no other possibility envisaged, even if it cannot be affirmed.

If the immediate cannot be affirmed then the quest for belonging will lead to a splitting of experience, a conceptual separating out of that which can and cannot be wholly affirmed. Cumpsty terms this a bifurcation. This can be modelled in one of two ways. Either there is a divide between reality and its appearance, or within reality itself. In the former, the problem that prevents the immediate world from being affirmed lies within the individual. It is in other words a problem of perception. Importantly though, the model of reality remains monistic. In the second form, the bifurcation is within reality, resulting in a real as well as an ultimately real.

These three are the paradigms for reality. The latter ones with bifurcation built in presume that there will be unacceptable experience. The former does not have this and thus must deal with each situation *ad hoc*, leading to immense richness in both myth and ritual.

These three paradigms for reality give rise to some necessary, that is non-negotiable, consequential symbols including a mode of belonging. They are non-negotiable in the sense that to reject them is to reject the paradigm. These paradigms give rise to sets of more flexible symbols. A tabulation of these is was given at the beginning of this section

for ease of reference. Given what has been outlined above, it should be quite self-explanatory. Two notes need to be made. The first concerns the nature of ethics in the withdrawal religion paradigm. Cumpsty defines ethics as being; "the specific rules by which the community or individual members govern, ideally speaking, their relationship with themselves, each other and the world around them." (1991:193) It therefore fills in the details of the mode of engagement in operation. In both paradigms where there is bifurcation, two sources of ethics are in operation. Obviously in the withdrawal paradigm, the individual's actions will be directed to her or his own need to achieve realisation. The paradigm, on the other hand, also affirms the unity of all things and their concomitant inter-connectedness. Therefore to diminish any aspect of reality is to diminish oneself. This leads to the two ethical norms of detachment and compassion.

The second that requires more detailed explanation relates to the modelling of survival after death. In the withdrawal religion type, the nature of the ultimately real is cyclical manifestation and dissolution. To be part of this at a simple level means to be reincarnated. At a more sophisticated level however, death, and even life, ceases to be a reality, "for the individual is all and the all is the eternal in which even the aeon cycles are negligible movements in the stillness." (1991:207)

Outside of this tabulation of the withdrawal type, Cumpsty asks what kind of questions it poses. He answers that they are: A. "What is it that causes the individual not to perceive reality as it is in itself?" and B. "How may the problem be overcome and the existing state of belonging be realised?". In the interrelationship between these two questions, it resolves to a preferred technique to achieve realisation. In this sense it is fundamentally experiential.

The techniques can provide a directory of sub-types of this paradigm, but are not logically determined in the way subdivisions are in the other paradigms. Given as it is here that the major problem in engaging belonging is one of perception within the individual, there is no possibility in this paradigm for an external control on what is perceived. Because literal discourse is based on common perception of the external world, there can be no discussion on this basis. It can also not be spoken of truthfully if spoken of directly. Knowledge of the immediate world out there can only be had in an indirect sense. "It follows that knowledge of the real-in-itself can only be affective knowledge and equally, that there can be no knowledge of an ontological self, only the experience of a stream of experience." (1991:215) Because the solution to the tension inherent in bifurcation must be affective as described above, the cognitive modelling cannot be stressed. Cumpsty therefore comes to the conclusion that there is no basis on which to further break down the paradigm.

Two things would threaten the paradigm once established. The first is anything which would suggest that the immediate world out there is the reality. In other words, the paradigm would break down if the world out there can once again be affirmed as that to which one would belong. The other threat is where there is something which would hinder the individual from reaching realisation. This would happen for example where there is a belief in degeneracy, where people are born of inherently weak faculties which cannot be the vehicle of their emancipation. The hope of salvation is of course grounded in the capacity to achieve it. Without it another solution needs be found.

This is the general outline of the three paradigmatic types as we will be using them. It has already been mentioned that they rarely if ever occur in isolation or close approximation to

observable traditions. The advantage of close approximation however, is that the mode of belonging is obvious and relatively uncomplex. The further away a tradition is from a type, the less clear is the mode of belonging. It is thus that much more difficult to achieve and/or maintain. In all dynamic situations, however, the development of bridging myths or bridging symbols are to be found. They are necessary to integrate the logically incompatible modes. "Without effective bridging, a mixed tradition cannot give rise to a clear and relatively unambiguous communal mode of engagement, let alone the details of corporate priorities." (1991:422)

The question of tradition communities is an important one. Even those that operate more or less exclusively from one paradigm, have various levels to them. These must integrate in order to hold together the sense of belonging. Complexity can be found either in the tradition or in the community. Cumpsty outlines three means of coping with diversity, and these become especially apparent where the tradition community operates with mixed paradigms. (1991:418)

"Containment is the encapsulation of intruding elements of an alien world, which would otherwise threaten a community's sense of reality, within symbolic and ritual sub-sets of the home tradition" (1991:418). This approach is really only possible where the tradition community is strongly established and integrated, and where the disturbance is minor. This mechanism will not be encountered to any significant degree in the material I will be looking at. This is the case because the Indian religious situation does not really have an organizational locus of inclusion, nor the institutional means of containment.

The second mechanism is that of allocation. This can be found where two or more traditions coexist in the same community. It is possible then that all sub-groups come to accept substantial elements of each tradition. These elements are then allocated their own life space, and have functional divisions. "This is not the case of elite and folk religions which are adhered to by different strata in the same society, but rather a single people who adhere to different traditions in different compartments of life" (1991:420). An example of this can be found in contemporary Japan, where for example, all things related to death and burial are Buddhist, while rituals of regeneracy and fertility are the realm of Shinto. The more goal oriented and dynamic a community is, the less likely it is that allocation will be found because it requires time to become habitual.

The last alternative is that of bridging. These are found in dynamic situations where containment is no longer possible and allocation is not fluid enough. In this case, myths, individuals, and symbols become appropriate means of integrating these diverse traditions. In such a situation, it is not possible to have an adequate sense of belonging without recourse to bridging. While such systems have a less secure sense of belonging and a less clear mode of engagement, their advantage is that they have an increased transformative capacity. (1991:423) They have at their disposal the resources to cope with divergence.

The problem in identifying these bridging symbols is the enormous diversity in their forms. They can be stories in which the old and new are woven together, they can be charismatic individuals who can link adherents to both traditions simultaneously. It can even be a powerful argument such as that of theodicy. I will present others in chapters four and five. It is possible that a time will come in a tradition community where the bridging symbols

are no longer appropriate or integrative. Then there needs to be the process of cleansing or discarding. If at this point the community cannot do this housekeeping, the symbols will just become confusing and divisive, or decidedly retrogressive. The more flexible the set of bridging symbols, the more able the community will be to meet change. If they are in doctrinal form, they tend to become deeply rooted in identity and may be difficult to cleanse when the need arises. (1991:426) I will show this to be the case in the Theravadin tradition at the beginning of the modern period.

Bridging does not only have to be between two well established traditions. It can also take place where the experience of life no longer corresponds with the modelling of reality. "In a situation where the existing dominant paradigm or paradigms no longer feel real, and where experience of the community puts it under the sort of pressure that would move it towards one of the other paradigms if the community were familiar with it, then bridging may take place" (1991:427). This is certainly the case in the Indian situation with the growth of the Upanushadic and Buddhist movements. This will be illustrated in the next chapter.

The use of a theory is, of course, to test it. Underlying Cumpsty's theory is the assumption that while on the one hand people under pressure can take up a symbol or symbols from market place of them, and on the other hand, people are reluctant to let go of old symbols, there is an underlying felt logic quietly at work. This logic seeks to relate such symbols into one of his three coherent types, or at least to provide the best possible bridging between the types. This quest for a coherent set of symbols may be accelerated in times of insecurity, but in general it is this "quietness" which justifies a thesis which examines, not a

narrow spectrum in great depth, but rather the changes taking place over long periods of time and, necessarily, in broad terms. In the short term there may be little but historical accident to explain shifts in commitment to an odd assortment of symbols and little to distinguish primary symbols from bridging ones. In this thesis I will be concerned mainly with identifying competition between the types and the bridging mechanisms employed in the quest for integration, but at least in two areas, the development of Saivism in India and the Pure Land in Japan, we will be able to see something of the pressure toward integration and exclusivity within a single type.

Having described these ideal types and bridging mechanisms, I can now turn to their use within the Indian religious landscape. It was said earlier that the two terms *dharma* and *moksa* are so multivalent as to be potentially useless. What I would like to suggest is that these terms generally point to the entire constructs outlined above as the nature and withdrawal religion types. *Dharma* is fundamentally a term therefore that refers to the monistic and communal system, the maintenance of which is dependant on ritual sacrifice and biological continuity. Relative to the ideal type, the Indian dharmic system is a special case which includes reincarnation as a mode of continuity within a monism. *Moksa* on the other hand points to the withdrawal paradigm. The difficulty in saying anything further about it has already been mentioned above. While the Indian traditions themselves often only talk of *moksa* and later *nirvana* in terms of negatives, the ideal type gives a good idea of the logical concomitants of this cognitively ungraspable entity.

I believe that this approach does much to clarify the various approaches to the issue that have been followed by scholars. The various empirical traditions that are found under the

rubric of Hinduism can be interpreted in terms of the two ideal types and, more importantly, the variation can be viewed in terms of bridging symbols. I think that this approach can offer more precision than any other in regard to the broad scope of history and the practice under discussion. This thesis will be looking at the traditions of and from India to see whether and how this is a fruitful approach.

Gerald Larson in "The Trimūrti of Dharma in Indian Thought" (1972) considers dharma and moksa as being two distinct value systems, "life-ethics" or "norms of conduct". In seeking to explain the dynamics of the relationship and interaction between the two he has created a tabulation of five possible kinds of interrelationship. Because the word dharma has been used in the context of moksa aims, he chooses to label the polarities "ordinary dharma" and "extraordinary dharma". It will have become apparent that the former represents what Cumpsty characterizes as nature religion and the latter tending to that of withdrawal religion.

In the first case, ordinary dharma is totally negated *in principal* by extraordinary dharma. (italics mine) Examples of this case include those of Samkhya and Yoga. The second case involves a synthesis using the analogy of genetic or biological development. "According to this type of interpretation, moksadharmā (extraordinary dharma in Larson's terms or moksa in mine) is to be pursued only after one has completed obligations arising from ordinary dharma. This, of course, would be the view of Manu and other exponents of the Dharmaśāstra". (1972:151) I will refer to this type again later as the Brahminical Synthesis of *varnasramadharmā*.

In the third case the ordinary and extraordinary exist in tension in daily life. In other words, moksa is here attainable through the performance of ordinary dharma. Larson writes that this is the most popular form and offers the Bhagavadgita as an example. In the fourth ordinary dharma is criticised through the establishments of an alternative ordinary dharma. For example the Buddhist sangha "rejects the formulations of Hindu sacredotal dharma, not in favour of complete negation of the empirical world, but rather for the belief that a new social reality may be constructed which would more accurately reflect the claims and values of extraordinary dharma" (quoted from Larson in McNamara 1985:151)

The fifth and last case offered by Larson is that in which ordinary dharma is considered to be the embodiment of extraordinary dharma on a lower level of understanding. In such a case exemplified in Nāgārjuna and Śaṅkara, we find a two-fold ontology and epistemology where there are two levels of reality, a relative and an absolute. Larson characterises this last type as the most reactionary in that there is no logical reason for social or political activity on the lower level of reality. In general, he argues that in types one and two, it would seem that the two are ultimately contradictory. The third and fourth represent ongoing paradoxes, both intellectually and culturally. Number five, as we have seen, simply refuses to answer the questions, and in that sense is pietist. McNamara in his thesis suggests that while this is a quite comprehensive tabulation, it covers only the intellectual tradition. His suggestion is that mythology has to be included too, especially where Śiva is concerned. Here we find a murgence of the paths represented by dharma and moksa through *tapas*. This happens both on a mythological as well as ritual level: "Just as in Śaivite mythology, where the two conflicting paths merge in Śiva through the extraordinary level of his *tapas*, so too on the realm of ritual, where the two paths are

proclaimed and experiences in their fullness, and the tension between them is overshadowed by the power of the rituals performed at the sacred centre". (1985:156) I would argue that this is a special case of the type number four outlined by Larson. All of these types will be revisited in more detail and in more historicity in the next chapter.

As Sister Nivedita (1994:292) writes: "The history of ideas is perhaps the only history that can be clearly followed out in India, but this is traceable with a wonderful directness."

Some of this mapping has already been done above. What is now at issue is the historical and sociological development that grounds it. It is to this, and the relationship between them that we now turn.

CHAPTER TWO:

HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL GROUNDING:

Up until this point the issues have been dealt with in a theoretical and ahistorical manner. If I am to argue that the move that bridged out from a nature religion paradigm to a withdrawal one is based on a pessimistic and negative perception of the immediate world, that needs some substantiation. I will therefore turn to the time in India during and before the composition of the Upanishads.

The main thrust of the early Vedas is that of ritual, and of sacrifice in particular. From these early times, there was a central concept of *ṛta*, the ordering principal in the universe. There are two primary metaphors for the underlying unity which make up that order, those of food and speech (*vac*). Both of them symbolically hold together and represent the monism. The important thing about this is that the role of the human is defined in relation to maintenance of the cosmic order. This is obviously the source of ethical norms. The breakdown of this human role became very complex indeed.

The importance of ritual was primary, even while the particulars changed over time. In the beginning it was a matter of supplication to the gods so that they might maintain the orderly interrelationship between the human and divine realms, which were not very far removed. At this stage, the human participation in ritual sacrifice was necessary in order to beg the various deities to be benign, and to try to curb the capricious and malevolent aspects. As the ritual developed and became more complex,

the focus of power seems to have shifted from the gods to the sacrifice itself. Sacrifice then became the means of power, that itself became the source of order in the universe, and it was through sacrifice that the universe was both formed and maintained. It was here that the metaphors of food and speech became most evident. Those that performed, or ordered the sacrifice, thereby became responsible for this maintenance. A shift was therefore found from the realm of the natural itself to that of the human, and to the individual.

Politically, we see that this shift parallels another. What had been two relatively fluid classes in the invading society became more and more rigidly and ritually separated. Where the warrior and ruling class had been ascendant in the conqueirage, the priestly class became more and more powerful and entrenched in the ensuing years. One of the ways in which this power was maintained was the development of a complex ideology of caste, based initially on the concept of *ṛta* or order. Therefore there came to be a conception of the human person whose nature and capacities were variably cosmically defined and rooted. (Zaehner 1966) This being the nature of persons, their behaviour needed to reflect this nature in order to maintain the order of the entire cosmos. The sanctions against transgression were strong, ultimately deriving sanctity from the weight of the need to maintain cosmic unity, and thus ward off chaos.

Obviously, the greater the threat of impending chaos in such a schemata, the greater the pressure to conform to the social order. One major problem however was that the conception that the stuff that persons are made of, the material of their natures, was fluid and transferable. Thus in the Samkhya system the components of *sattva*, *rajas*

and *tamas*, can be transferred at any liminal situation. In particular, it is transferred during transgression of the body's physical boundaries, in acts of eating, defecating, sexual intercourse and death. Because the various castes were defined by their composition of *gunas*, any violation by the stuff of others threatens to change and deform the person in a fundamental way. Therefore the social structure needs became more and more rigid and controlled so as to avoid such ritual defilement, and the price to pay for such was not only in terms of strong social sanction, but also in the threat of cosmic disorder or chaos. The various castes, traditionally conceived of as four but in society many, were functionally separated by an enormous body of social rules which distanced while allowing but circumscribing functional interrelationship. In Cumpsty's terms, the monism involved an assumption of belonging which needed to be maintained. The means of maintenance included the correct performance of that necessary to societal continuity, attention to caste duty etc., and also the performance of ritual which kept the universe in order.

To give some indication of the nature of these pressures we can turn to George Hart's characterisation of high class Tamil society. As we have already seen, these people did not take on the notion of moksa until quite late. He writes that "few are able to escape totally a sense of their own inadequacy at being unable to reconcile themselves to the role that society demands of them." (1980:131) In other words, the developments within the dharmic tradition of Indian society at that time, were those of greater and greater complexity of social phenomena, and a similar increase in the power of those institutions which maintained it, both politically and mythologically. There was increasing urbanisation, warfare between conflicting kingdoms, and greater social

separation. All together this lead to a conception of the immediate world as being somehow untenable and unpleasant.

As Zaehner (1966:36) writes: "with the close of the Rig-Vedic period the gods, whose importance had always been bound up with the sacrifice, were rapidly subordinated to it, and the sacrifice itself, which was conceived as being not only the ritual representation of the ordering of the cosmos, but also the necessary concomitant of that ordering, without which the cosmos itself would fall apart, lost its hold on men's (sic) thoughts." Conceptually we see a situation in which a monistic worldview is being strained through increasing complexity of the society in which it is operational. The pressure inherent within this necessitated a split or bifurcation in the conceptualisation of the world out there. Being from Indo-Aryan stock, and in contact with the various elements of a secular world affirming religion paradigm, the question is, why didn't they move in that direction. Two things prevented this possibility. The first is the existence of the concept of reincarnation. While this in itself is simply a particular variety of the nature paradigm's necessary structure of remaining in the monism, unlike the more usual conception of the ancestors, it has specific logical concomitants. In particular, there can be no conception of an afterworld that is permanent, and therefore a soteriological end in that direction. The other is that with such a negative and pressured assessment of society, it would be difficult if not impossible to assert that through it can be found the will of a god of volition in a grand sense. "Eternal life in this sense becomes a crushing burden in its endless, pointless, senseless repetitiveness; and as the twin doctrines of *karma* and *samsara* developed, the revulsion against never-ending life through never-ending death in a manifestly imperfect world became

more and more extreme" (Zaehner 1966:61). Therefore the existence of reincarnation must lead to a move into a withdrawal paradigm where the integrity of the nature paradigm is no longer possible. Therefore we can conclude that the paradigmatic shift is based on significant evidence and corresponds to the assertions made by Cumpsty outlined above. We see that from this complex cosmology which includes an eschatology, emerges a soteriology for the first time.

From this time on, various individuals and groups set forth and bridged out in the direction of withdrawal. What had previously been the aim of asceticism; to clear out bad *karma* in order to improve rebirth, turned now to the destruction of *karma* and *samsara* in a more essential sense. In general, the Upanisadic texts describe an identification of the *atman* with Brahman. Hindu theology differs greatly on the nature of this *atman* and its relationship to the ultimate and the phenomenal world. What is constant throughout is a belief that the *atman* is sullied and drawn into the phenomenal world through its involvement with the senses. This needs to be reversed through the practice of various asceticisms (*yoga*), where attachments are destroyed so as to allow realisation that the *atman* is Brahman. Thus we find the beginnings of the withdrawal traditions. Within what was later to become classical Hinduism, groups left society to live in the forests and live as hermits and ascetics. It was these who eventually authored the Upanishads. While moving in this direction they upheld the authority of the Vedas, and tried to find alternative and speculative meaning from their verses. It is quite difficult to assess the kind of numbers involved at this early stage, but there are more than enough for it to be considered a definite trend. There were also few enough that the teachings were generally secret and esoteric. There were various lineages of

teachers in this newly developing tradition, and it is estimated that there were some sixty odd groups. Only two of these can be termed unorthodox in that they rejected the legitimacy and scriptural authority of the Vedas. These were the schools of Buddhism and Jainism. Both were radical moves in the direction of the withdrawal paradigm, both were also deeply rooted in the rejection of the Indian religious tradition as it then stood, the dharmic one. In this sense, both Mahavira and Siddhartha Gautama were reformers, but only the latter founded a tradition that was eventually capable of moving out of the Indian complex that gave rise to it.

Early Buddhism:

The biography of Siddhartha Gautama is a well known one. It is also one which holds within it the logic of the development of Buddhism itself out of the Indian religious complex. His own involvement in the material and ritual life of the dharmic tradition, in caste, and the duties which are involved, proved profoundly unsatisfactory to him. Similarly, the developing forest traditions that were to comprise the Upanishadic tradition failed to satisfy his search for liberation. While this is undoubtedly the case, the ground-rules for the search were shared with the other schools. The primary doctrine propagated by the Buddha which was irreconcilable with the Vedic tradition, was that of no-soul (*anatman*). The very questioning of the nature and being of the soul or *atman* though was shared with the other schools. The biography itself, mythologised to the degree it is, aims to evidence the quality of the solution offered by the Buddha.

From this time on and for the following few centuries the development of Buddhism had a huge impact on religious innovation in India. The success of the early movement and the solution it offered to a very difficult situation proved to be a powerful one. All religious moves in India thereafter are an attempt to reconcile the Vedic tradition with that represented by Buddhism. It is only from the time of the colonial encounter that the questions change somewhat, and acquire new focus.

As we have seen in Larson's schemata, Buddhism established an alternative community to the one implicit in dharma, one that provided the best framework in which to pursue the goal of moksa, or in Buddhist terminology, *nirvana*. While Larson is, I think, quite accurate in this regard, he assesses it in terms of the interrelationship between moksa and dharma. It would be more accurate it seems to see the move as one which establishes the moksa tradition in a total way. The very popularity of Buddhism in these early times and the strength of the reaction it evoked can be ascribed to the closeness it maintains to the ideal type of the withdrawal paradigm. As was described in chapter one, this means that both the mode of belonging and the mode of engagement are clearly apparent. While it is affectively difficult to engage in such a way, the logic behind it is quite clear and therefore belonging is assured in a way which is more grounded than in any of the other solutions. As will be seen throughout this thesis, the development and existence of the ideal inherent in the paradigm becomes an important polarity in a situation of religious diversity. It is a voice that cannot be ignored, and throughout there needs to be an attempt to reconcile any other doctrinal position in relation to the Buddhist impact. The nature of this early Buddhism will be examined in later chapters, so for now I will presume its impact and turn instead to the

various ways in which the alternate and logically incompatible forms of the moksa and dharma traditions were mediated in the Indian situation.

Orthodox responses:

As already mentioned, what defines orthodoxy in the Indian context is the acknowledgement of the authority and sanctity of the Vedic scriptures. Later in classical Hinduism, the Vedas are defined to include the Upanishads, which of course introduce the idea of moksa, and identify the *atman* with Brahman in various ways. The range of orthodoxy is therefore huge, and includes an equally large range of orthopraxy. Once the notion of moksa was introduced, it was absolutely impossible to ignore. The only group to manage to do so for any significant time was the Mimāmsīkas, whose aim was the further interpretation of the Vedic sacrificial literature in terms of the nature of language and debate. It was only in the eighth century that they finally acknowledged moksa, and in this they were both anachronistic and conservative. Therefore in general it is possible to say that this enormously vital and fruitful time of religious innovation and speculation was born of the need to integrate these two conflicting and worldviews.

A. The Brahminical Synthesis:

The Brahmins were certainly the most powerful of the castes, a group whose traditional role and source of power came from their functions as priests, philosophers and educators. This ritual power also had significant impact on their political power,

and it is obvious that it was in the caste's interests to maintain the status quo regarding the castes and their duties. One of the things which was involved in the move away from the dharmic tradition was the necessary neglect of the caste structures. There was a more universalist drive to salvation. Not only were those who left society to become forest dwellers threatening to the ideological construct of the caste system, but were also generally members of the Brahmin and Ksatriya castes. In rejecting societal norms, they were also rejecting social control that could be brought to bear.

The most general response to this threat was to subsume it within a slightly reformed conception of human duty. In other words there was an attempt to subsume the search for liberation within the dharmic pursuits of the worldly. This type of response is described by Larson in his second case. He says this synthesis uses the analogy of genetic or biological development. As we have already mentioned it was considered a person's duty to perform the necessary role according to caste for the maintenance of cosmic order. It was also presumed that the nature of one's duties and roles changed throughout one's life. While obviously referring here to a normative case of a male Brahmin, there were four periods in a life which needed to be followed sequentially. It was only in the fourth in the last stages of a life that a person was to be freed from social duty and responsibility in order to unequivocally pursue spiritual liberation, which became in its own way, also a social responsibility. This idea can be summed up in the term *varnasramadharmā*, doing one's duty according to one's caste and time of life.

The first stage is that of the chaste student. During the twelve years of education prescribed, the student had to remain ritually pure as a preparation for social responsibility. It was at this time that the youngster was to receive a general education, learn about the Vedas and the sacrifice and the duties that would be his throughout his life. (It generally was presumed that religious goals were for men, and for women only in as far as they would support husbands and sons in this regard.) The second stage involved being a householder, and is really the key to the dharma aspect. In it, the legitimate goals of *artha*, *karma* and dharma were to be pursued. The maintenance of biological and social life were dependant on this phase. Here, the responsibility was to get married, have children, perform the necessary rituals, pursue a livelihood in accordance with your caste etc.

When a man or woman had completed the task of raising children, and they in turn are raising their own families, then maybe it is time to move onto the third phase, that of the forest dweller. It is possible to do this with your spouse, and the aim of this phase is to pursue the spiritual goal of moksa. The last stage in the Brahminical synthesis is that of *sannyasin*, or renunciate. They give up all connections with society, including the *śraddha* rituals which are performed by sons in order to maintain the continuity, and to see parents carefully into the next rebirth. This phase clearly describes the social concomitants of the withdrawal paradigm.

The problem with this biographical rearrangement of the dharma-moksa polarity, is that these last two stages are by no means differentiated enough to clarify the issues. In effect the last stage is not directly related to any specific time of life. It is in fact an

alternative to the other three stages, and not a continuum from them. Clearly it is not possible to produce a logical integration in this schemata. What it does manage is twofold. First it tries to bring the desire to move out of society under the rubric of the ritual and religious elite by bringing it into the life-continuum and making the attainment of liberation a legitimate and socially controllable aim. Secondly it gives those who may be interested a reason to delay the pursuit, by simply stating that it is perfectly acceptable to wish to pursue liberation, but only after the social duties have been performed. In this way, although conceptually unsatisfactory, the solution of the *varnasramadharmā* has been very successful.

B. The Mythology of Śiva and Śaivism:

I mentioned in chapter one that McNamarra suggests that the mythology of Śaivism is another way which has been used to integrate the diversities of mokṣa and dharma. I would argue that the mythology surrounding Śiva does this in one way, while the devotees of Śiva have chosen a communal format which also acts as a bridging mechanism. These two will be looked at separately.

"If he is naked what need then has he for the bow?

If armed with bow then why the holy ashes?

If smeared with ashes what needs he with a woman?

Or with her, then how can he hate love?"

(O'Flaherty 1973:6)

The mythology of Śiva is complex and multivalent. All the roles taken on by him are subsumed into one complex character. Transitions between roles occur in fairly set patterns and in response to set stimuli. These various aspects include Śiva as Supreme Lord, Destroyer, the Ascetic Yogi, the *Lingam*, and as the Erotic. Amongst devotees the Trimūrti of Hindu devotional theology is in fact overarched by Śiva in his aspect as Supreme Lord. "The universe has illusion for its material cause, the *shakti* of Śiva - that is, Parvati - for its instrumental cause and Śiva himself for its first cause." (Nivedata 1994:312) As such his activities include creation, maintenance, destruction, concealment, and grace.

Śiva being all-encompassing, he must subsume all oppositions within him, and this includes the polarity of gender. This supreme form therefore is often represented as an androgyne. Śiva participates in two dances, one being that of destruction. He is terrible and easily angered, whilst also being bountiful, a healer and the protector of cattle. This suggests a strong Dravidian or pre-Aryan aspect. (Klostermaier 1984) Wherever this is to be found, it is in close connection with salvation. It is only activated in times of need, so the danger of this aspect is almost always channelled for the general good.

In his yogic aspect, Śiva is all-powerful. He is to be found clothed in ashes, cavorting in the burial grounds, and possessed of enormous *tapas*. The ascetic being outside society and a danger to it, Śiva is often called mad. As Yocum writes: "Madness is to normality what moksa is to *samsara*" (1983:24). In this sense he epitomises liminality. In this role he is always to be found alone, without consort. The contradiction is however, that the accumulation of *tapas* through *yoga* is conducive to both fertility

and erotic appeal. It is illustrative that it is often the interruption of Parvati or the draining of his *tapas* through their love-making that either makes him stop his *yoga* or resume it. On the other hand there is a threat implied in Śiva being too involved in *yoga*, as his withdrawal from the world causes it to cease.

The other side of *tapas* is *karma*, passion. Although Śiva is said to have killed passion, he again creates and maintains it. It is this aspect that corresponds to the householder of the dharmic way, the husband and parent. Again too much involvement here also leads to the neglect of the world. Thus there is a constant change from erotic to ascetic and back, the transitions being marked by the movements of Parvati or occasionally the needs of the world. These two aspects of erotic and ascetic are intimately entwined. The role of the ascetic is erotic to those he encounters. Control of the senses through *yoga* makes him a powerful and pleasing lover. O'Flaherty also points out that Śiva reverses the order of the *varnasramadharmas*, moving from the *sannyasin* to the householder, an inversion of roles. It is in the aniconic form of the *lingam* that Śiva is most often worshipped. The *lingam* is the symbol of the generative power of the male. The erect phallus represents not only the virility and fertility, but also the seed drawn up in asceticism. While some early Western scholars attributed the diversity of the character of Śiva to a relatively late composition of the character, it is clear that the association of the erotic ascetic in the form of an ithyphallic *yogi* is of great antiquity. The evidence comes from archaeological excavations from the Harappan civilization. (O'Flaherty 1973)

O'Flaherty believes that the Śaivite myths are an attempt to show the futility of the forest-dweller lifestyle. The married ascetic, one who has a wife and yet performs *tapas*, is ultimately impossible. All the separate aspects of life can be successful in his character. Śiva can be the perfect father, lover, *yogi* and saviour, but only where the other aspects do not interfere. It is when Parvati interrupts his *yoga*, or when his *tapas* is diminished through love-making that the contradictions are brought into focus. Attempts to reconcile the lifestyles inevitably end in failure. Śiva is not regarded as a suitable husband because of his *yogic* endeavours. His appearance is disconcerting to Parvati and her family, who still hold attachment to the societal norms of the dharma tradition. He is adulterous, and once he is in the erotic mode he ignores the dharmic rules and regulations that govern sexual conduct.

Śiva brings aspects of the ascetic into marriage, where Parvati brings householder ethics into the realm of the ascetic. These two aspects fluctuate in cycles. Śiva transfers between modes, but never successfully integrates the two in any single act or persona. O'Flaherty argues that the Śaivite myths show the futility of attempting an integration of the two, which are exposed as polar opposites, irredeemably separate. As such they identify the polarity in society, expose it and ultimately show it to be absolute.

This assessment seemingly leads to the conclusion that nothing is actually achieved through them. An obvious role of the myths is that played out within the lives of the individual believers and their communities. The function it has here is that of laying bare the choices available and the nature of the contradictions found in trying to create a compromise. It warns against the very things which Śiva attempts. Even the Supreme

Lord is not wholly successful in integrating these two, how much less so will a mortal be. Zaehner takes a slightly different position, he writes "In him the finite and infinite meet, and in him all the opposites are reconciled, ... he is forever involved in *samsara* and forever unaffected by it; he is the exemplar of the human soul, both when it is fettered and when it is liberated..." (1966:82). This last part we have already seen, but the reconciliation is not easily apparent.

Another interpretation of the myths is also possible, that of the transcendence of the duality. One thing which the theistic sects promise is that salvation is open to all, irrespective of caste and sex. This transcendence of the duality is to be found not so much in the myths, as in the Śaivite beliefs concerning grace and salvation. Śaivism claims that paradise is open to all worshippers through Śiva's grace, which is easily accessible. *Mukti* (moksa) will be given to any who offer worship, because *karma* is burnt away by the grace of god. While Śaivite theology states that Śiva will give redemption without expectation of return because he is entirely without conditions, certain things are expected of the devotee. It is necessary not only to worship Śiva, but also to live a certain kind of life. It requires redemptive practices including the performance of good deeds and the recitation of *mantras* and hymns. Despite this it is seen as passive on the side of the devotee: " (the) goal is not to discover, to absorb ... but to allow his (sic) self to be discovered, to be penetrated, by Śiva in the most intimate possible personal union." (Yocum 1983:23)

Klostermaier (1984) contends that Śaivism has always been associated with asceticism and the *sannyasin*. In this sense and in popular practice it therefore weighs on the side

of the moksa traditions. The community of believers is important as an alternative to the problematic and contentious structure of society. This division is seen as corresponding to that between moksa and dharma, madness and sanity. It seeks to identify contradictions and conflicts, and as with any inversion, limits their damaging nature through being played out in reverse. By doing this it also serves to strengthen the norms of conventional society. Śiva acts as a role model with respect to grace. The ideals include a willingness to forgive and suffer selflessly for others. This is not only a role model, but is seen to be the hallmark of a morally mature person. The offer of grace and the nature of Śaivism within a community become then an alternative to the choices available. Rather than try to mediate between the options of householder and ascetic it attempts to transcend the division.

Let us turn again to the theoretical issues. O'Flaherty suggests that this is an inversion, and a way of making explicit the tensions in Indian society. It is unclear where Larson's schemata would locate Śaivism. It could be argued that it is of the third case where ordinary and extraordinary dharma (dharma and moksa) are in tension in daily life. This is accurate only in terms of the mythology which reflects this, but not in the life of the devotees. Alternately it can be considered to be of the fourth case in which an alternative community is established. Larson suggests that this community would be constructed in such a way as to better reflect the claims and values of moksa. To a degree this is certainly the case, but it is also quite clear that the community has constructed a model of moksa which is quite far removed from the original one involved in the polarity. Therefore this classification into type has very limited explanatory power. McNamara's suggestion is that the dichotomy is overcome through

tapas. This is certainly evident both in the mythology outlined above, as well as in the madness which the hymns describe. This answer however, doesn't really answer the question of power itself, how it is conceived, only speaking of how it is experienced. In other words, such an answer only relates to the affective, and ignores the cognitive.

Clearly, the establishments of an alternative community presumes a quite radical change in worldview. This community, with its affective orientation, is evidently not the same thing as the establishment of the Buddhist sangha. It is not one aimed at the provision of an environment in which the quest for withdrawal is most possible. The key to the change which has taken place here, is the use of the term grace, and the mention of the volition of Śiva which gives a clue to its movement into a secular world affirming paradigm. In short, the mythology of Śiva does not bridge the distance between moksa and dharma. On the contrary, it confirms the impossibility of holding the two together. Instead it insists on the devotees submission to the divine intervention in a volitional and planned way. The other side of the covenant, is devotion of the followers and the other acts which will fit them into the plan of Śiva. The division is therefore shifted from that of the conflict between moksa and dharma which is reified, to that between the human world, and that of the deity. The metaphor or symbol for that shift is that of *tapas*, which bridges the new transcendence gap, and establishes a relationship between devotee and Śiva. Of course the very notion of a relationship with the deity, as opposed to a merging with him, describes a position of transcendence rather than immanence as would be the case in a monistic world view. I would suggest that the emphasis on the affective, and the extremes displayed in this regard, show that this bridging is not a particularly secure one, being as it is an

incomplete move towards a new paradigm. As such, the logic of belonging must fly in the face of most of society, producing a situation high in tension. The community itself therefore functions to maintain the integrity of this new worldview, and in contradiction to those being moved away from. As mentioned in chapter one, this is an example of a community moving to exclusivity within a single type. As such it moves towards all those sociological concomitants of the secular world affirming paradigm. These include amongst others, the move to solidary community which is in competition, not only at the level of tradition, but also at the level of community.

It is interesting to note that Śaivism is most popularly found in the Tamil South, an area that we have already seen to have avoided the development of a rebirth and *karmic* eschatology. It would therefore make sense that it would be logically more possible to change to a transcendent paradigm from a monistic one if the later were no longer tenable. We might also find that the bridge in that direction would be more complete. This seems to be the case. George Hart writes in connection with devotion to Śiva "It is the function of the god of devotion to provide relief for such people, a relief that is psychologically effective because of the commitment and abasement shown to the god" (1980:131). Abasement is a very telling word. If, as in a monism, the human person is made of the same stuff as the deity, abasement of the self would also result in abasement of the deity. This would obviously be untenable. If on the other hand there is significant transcendence, the human as creation does not share of the same stuff as god, and the belittlement of one does not entail the degradation of the other. Hart also notes that suffering is not conceived of as a result of bad *karma* in Tamil India, but rather as a test from God. Again this would point to the independently

volitional nature of the deity. Zaehner suggests that "What, however, distinguishes the Tamil Śaivites from almost all the other *bhakti* cults is then an intense sense of personal guilt; man (sic), as he exists apart from God, is evil and horribly corrupt, he is the slave of his *ānava*, his egoism" (1966:132). Again this points to a radical transcendence. The "sin" or flaw in humanity according to a withdrawal paradigm is that of ignorance or illusion which must be overcome through correct perception. Here there is a case in which humans are painted as fundamentally bad in that they have not established a relationship with God, and this is a sin in a way far more familiar to the Abrahamic family of religions than to the Indian one.

C. The Solution of the Bhagavadgita:

The BG is but one small part of the great epic of the Mahābārata. Written in the third and fourth century BCE, its enormous popularity and influence points to a powerful answer to the problem of bridging. Within Indian cosmology at this time, the dance of the universe is divided into four *yugas* or ages. The Bhagavadgita opens at the dawn of the fourth age, the *Kali yuga*. Krishna, an *avatar* of Visnu, comes to deliver a new message appropriate to it. Being an age of degeneracy, people are no longer made of the best stuff, and are thus inherently less capable of attaining spiritual liberation by their own efforts. Potter (1963) outlines the three paths to realisation. The first, *karmayoga*, is the path of action. This originally meant performance of the rituals. After the BG the nature of this was to be redefined. The second, and most popular to this point was *Jñānayoga*, the path of knowledge. It was this that was followed by the *sannyasins* and forest dwellers. It comprises hearing, thinking about and meditation on

the Upanishads, and it forms a distinct path to liberation. The third path is that of *bhaktiyoga*, and is introduced most strongly in the BG itself. Potter writes that "the unifying feature of all the types of paths that have been distinguished is that they serve the function of bringing the freedom seekers attention to focus upon some aspect of things which does not arouse desires" (1963:40).

The BG then can be divided into three parts. The first, comprising chapters one to six describe the different ways in which souls may win their liberation. Because it is an age of degeneracy, people are no longer made of the stuff which is capable of following the path of knowledge. Therefore Krishna comes to deliver a message of liberation appropriate to the new and inferior age. The message of Krishna, delivered to Arjuna on the battle fields is one of *bhakti* or devotion, and it is a message suited to the householder.

This classic tells of the war in the Karuva family over a kingdom lost in a game of dice. After this loss, Yudhisthira and his brothers, including Arjuna, went into exile for thirteen years. Upon their return, Duryodhana refuses to give back the kingdom. A war between the two sides of the family is about to erupt. Krishna is present at the battle as Arjuna's charioteer. Arjuna is wracked with indecision at the opening of this battle, being unwilling to fight his family. On the surface, the story of the BG is of Krishna persuading Arjuna to fight. The arguments he uses to this end summarise all the possible options sanctioned by the society in relation to birth, ethical action and liberation. Arjuna in turn rejects each argument as it is made. This comprises the second part of the Bhagvadgita.

Ksatriya or warriors are by nature dominated by *rajas*, thus being full of energy and passion. Therefore, Arjuna, being a member of this caste is supposed to have no problem with war, on the contrary, he is supposed to revel in it. War itself should be an opportunity to display the best of his characteristics. It is in fact evidence of degeneracy that he has problems doing so. The conflict within Arjuna is one that reflects the new universalist ethics of the moksa traditions which are in contradiction to the specific duty assigned his caste. The restatement by Krishna of his duty as a warrior does not convince him that he should fight.

Arjuna therefore has a hankering after liberation. Chapter 2, verses 42-44 of the BG state: "The essence of the soul is will, - but the souls of men who cling to pleasure and power, their minds seduced by flowery words, are not attuned to ecstasy. Such men give vent to flowery words, lacking discernment, delighting in the Vedas lore, saying there is nought else. Desire is their essence, paradise is their goal, - their words preach rebirth as the fruit of works and expiate about the niceties of ritual by which pleasure and power can be achieved."

These sentiments are profoundly dissatisfying to Arjuna and he can no longer live according to those dictates. He is not motivated by a desire for earthly or heavenly riches. Arjuna is genuinely distressed and concerned about the justice of his actions. He is confused by the difference between what the dharma says he should do, and his own conscience which tells him that to fight would be wrong. Arjuna in reply to Krishna's attempt to tempt him with material rewards is "I do not see what will drive away this sorrow which dries up my senses even if I should attain rich and unrivalled kingdoms on earth or even the sovereignty of the gods." (BG 2.8)

Arjuna's nature though was not that of the renunciate. He is not capable of, or willing to, remove himself from all ties to go and live as a hermit. He is not able to follow the path to liberation through *jñānayoga*, because in this degeneracy, very few are. Krishna's argument that he should fight because it is for the ultimate good of the universe to do his duty also does not persuade him. Therefore Krishna moves on to tell him that the Self of the person does not die, it only transmigrates. This being the case it is never necessary to grieve, either for the living or the dead. Krishna says: "He who thinks that this slays and he who thinks that this is slain; both of them fail to perceive the truth; this one neither slays or is slain." (BG 2.19)

In other words, he is pointing out that death in a cycle of rebirth is a mere transition, an event with no significant ontology or inherence. The alternative then is to act, but in doing so realise that he is only the tool of Krishna. It is at this point that Krishna reveals himself in his terrifying and magnificent cosmic aspect. No longer is he the charioteer, but he is supreme. The way of getting around the trap of *karma* is then not to stop action, but to stop the attachment both to the action and the results of it. Krishna will then bear responsibility. The detachment comes at the point of intent and responsibility. In doing this he will become detached from the material world. Through the ending of desire and the detachment from the senses, Arjuna will achieve moksha. "He who's mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desire and pleasures, he from whom passion, fear and rage have passed away - he is called a sage of settled intelligence." (BG 2.56) "One who has yoked his intelligence with the divine casts away even here both good and evil." (BG 2.50)

In the sixth chapter the method or *yoga* is detailed. In it, *bhakti* gives meaning and purpose to liberation. In chapter 2 verse 71 the BG states: "The man who puts away all desires and roams around from longing freed, who does not think, "This I am", or "This is mine", draws near to peace." In *jñānayoga*, this would in itself be sufficient for liberation. Indeed, in any withdrawal tradition this would describe the state of liberation, moksa or *nirvana*. And yet here we find it mentioned as only an approximation of true liberation. Within *bhakti* however, the devotion to God is what is required to make the liberation complete.

In other words the action or *karma* should be appropriate to the *varnsramadharmas*, yet there should be a divorce of the intent from the action. There should not be attachment to the fruits of the actions that are performed in society. This system thus advocates the dharma lifestyle while the possibility of liberation within this is maintained. Hence there is no need for an alternative community of believers as found amongst the Śaivites, because the everyday dharmic lifestyle is appropriate to the goals of liberation. The solution of the BG is, more than any other, appropriate to the householder. Obviously this being the largest group of people in Indian society, it has been deeply influential.

Looking at this in terms of the theory used above, two things stand out. The first is that, like the Śaivites, there is a move towards a secular world affirming paradigm. This bridging out is not as extensive as in the previous case, extending as it does only to a sometime surrender to and love of god, in this case Krishna. It supplants this love of god over and above the less personal emphasis of the Upanishadic tradition.

Cumpsty considers the primary ground for withdrawal to be affective. Thus the aim is to maximise the withdrawal at an affective rather than physical level. Here we find almost no change in the physical conditions and behaviours of the devotees, but a real attempt at an affective withdrawal.

D. Śaṅkara:

The philosophical interpretation of the Upanishads is called Vedānta. Two early giants dominated this field. In brief, Rāmānuja provided a structured legitimation of the *bhakti* tradition, and in so doing gave it religious legitimacy and authority which it had previously lacked. The other, more powerful thinker, Śaṅkara, described a two-fold ontology that was all but Buddhist in both structure and intent. His school of thought is known as Advaita Vedānta. If we look at Śaṅkara's teachings, we see a clearly delineated two-fold ontology where the empirical and phenomenal realms are subject to radical separation, although only from an empiric perspective. Each level has its own means. Language in the empiric realm is valid, although not ultimately so. Knowledge of the Absolute can be generated from the *Māhāvākya* through a process of conceptual purification, thus resulting in the negation of the particularity of any word or phrase. Thus language itself is negated in an ultimate sense. Transmission of knowledge about this realm has to rely heavily on analogy, for this alone can allow for the occurrence of insight.

According to Śaṅkara, Brahman is both unknowable in a cognitive sense, and knowable in an intuitive one. Ordinary cognisance is dependant on sense perception

and related mental activities. Therefore any knowledge of Brahman with any cognitive or conceptual reference is qualified and provisional. The unseen in Brahman. He is also an existent and ascertainable entity which is indicated both by the testimony of scripture, and in the "universal sense of self-consciousness" (Lott 1980:67). Therefore Brahman is inconceivable, but the immediacy of awareness of self indicates its self-evident nature. There are however many misconceptions, and therefore further enquiry is necessary to make the meaning known in a self-liberating way. "The presence of the supreme Being is so subtle that both his knowability and unknowability are quite different from any normal epistemological process" (Lott 1980:68).

The move towards knowledge of Brahman is progressive and clearly delineate into stages by Śaṅkara. First the hearing of scriptures reveals a provisional description. Śaṅkara argued that the most significant statements are those which partly reveal and partly conceal the direct meaning of words, and in that sense beingness is common to both. The second stage is that of mental reflection and meditation in which the conceptual content is reflected upon and information compared. Then comes meditation on a transcendent level, in which the meditator contemplates the import within the inner self. The third stage is one in which the meditator negates certain contradictions in description, especially those of double exclusion. Śaṅkara says: "As he is accessible to speech, the knowable Brahman is defined in all the Upanishads just by the denial of all distinctions" (Lott 1980)72).

The phenomenal plurality is, in other words, born of ignorance, which can be sublated through right knowledge. The only kind of knowledge applicable to the escape from

ignorance is of the kind reached through the process described above. But, liberation is not a thing to be achieved in some future state, it is a thing which is coexistent at a higher state. It is tenseless and eternal. Therefore Śaṅkara displays a profound ambiguity towards language itself. On the one hand it is an instrument of ignorance, which on the other, one can still be liberated by a falsehood, just as one can die of fright at a rope mistaken for a snake.

This two-fold ontology brings him very close to the Buddhist position, where illusion is the product of ignorance. Śaṅkara does not claim that ignorance was brought into being by the Absolute, it is beginningless. In short, there are these two kinds of knowledge appropriate to the relative and the Absolute realms. The latter is unqualified, and cuts through the illusions operational at the relative. Śaṅkara believes that the *bhakti* tradition, in devotion to a personal and particular deity, is operating at a relative level. This needs to be transcended in order to reach highest truth.

In this sense, Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedanta comes close to the withdrawal paradigm. As we have seen in chapter one, Cumpst's description of it entails a double source of ethics, one based on withdrawal and the other on interdependence. Clearly the Advaita Vedanta position emphasizes the former over the latter. There is no discussion in his Vedanta of ethics pertaining to human interrelationships, or interaction with the natural realm. Larson in his typology notes that this, the fifth type, is most reactionary, providing no rationale for social intervention. While this is undoubtedly the case, it is interesting to note that Śaṅkara himself is an ardent Goddess devotee. He wrote emotive hymns of praise to Her, and worshipped at Her temple. This clearly must have

functioned to alleviate the obvious difficulty inherent in a solution that leaves no room for the affective and the interrelational. I would like to suggest that the move to the withdrawal paradigm in this instance must be dependant on personal grounding that will make up the compassionate and affective aspects of the paradigm. This is possible through the mechanism of allocation.

While the great debates on the definition of religion raged in response to European expansionism, two religious forms were most often noted to be non-theistic. These are Theravada Buddhism and Vedanta as presented Śāṅkara. Whilst Advaita Vedanta in itself, isolated as a system, would fit the mould, the context must supply a counterbalance. This issue will be returned to in the next chapter where I will discuss Theravadin Buddhism and its location relative to the ideal types.

CHAPTER THREE:

BUDDHISM, THE THERAVADA:

In the last chapter, Buddhism was noted to be a decisive move in the direction of the withdrawal paradigm. As such it was discussed only in relation to the impact it had on the Indian religious landscape. Now I turn to Buddhism and its many forms and changes throughout the history of South East Asia. In doing so I will concentrate on the Theravadin traditions in the South, and the Mahayana ones across China and Japan. I will not extend the analysis to the Vajrayana in Tibet and elsewhere, or to any detailed exposition of esoteric Buddhism in general.¹

Clearly, the moksa versus dharma contradiction is one that has been used many times in academic studies of Indian religious traditions. Not only is it effective in this regard, but it is also an etic classification. In introducing Cumpsty's ideal types, I hope to have brought some clarification to the meaning of these two terms and what they point to. These terms of moksa and dharma are not found in the same way in Buddhism. In particular the notion of dharma has been extended to the degree that it is no longer posited as a polar opposite to *nirvana*, the Buddhist term for liberation or enlightenment. Instead dharma comprises the whole expanse of law, the way things are, truth, the atomic particles of material and other existence, as well as the teachings of the Buddha. As such it includes descriptions of both the path towards

¹ See chapter 4, *Yogācāra*, for reasons.

enlightenment, and pointers to enlightenment itself. Therefore, the kind of analysis used with relation to the Hindu religious traditions has not been extended into Buddhism.

My hope is that, instead of using the terms moksa and dharma, the ideal types of withdrawal and nature religion can provide axes for the location of Buddhism in its various manifestations. I would suggest that these points of location can aid in the description of Buddhism in structural terms, as well as give some clarity in the broad sweep of religious innovation housed under the rubric of Buddhism.

Early Buddhism:

It is quite difficult to characterise Buddhism as it first emerged. It is really only from the beginnings of canonisation, and the various schools that contested it, that the variations in text can point to what went before. This process can be dated to some 500 years after the death of Gautama. (Conze 1967:31) Clearly we should be able to take that which is common to all of the early schools as foundational. In other words, that which is shared by the Theravadins, Sarvāstivādins, Mahāsāṅghikas and the other schools which predate the period of Abhidharmic scholasticism. (Conze 1967:32) Doctrines are far easier to reconstruct in this way than are social mores and conditions. Luckily though, much work has been done on the religious and social environment of India during this period.

Much must point to the character of the founder, Siddhartha Gautama. Mythological, it is stated that in a previous life as Sumedha, a pious Brahman, he resolved to become Buddha in a future life. As Sumedha he met the Dipankara Buddha, and practised diligently till he chose his last rebirth as Gautama. He was born to Maha Maya and Suddhodana c. 563 BCE and given the name Siddhartha, "one whose purpose has been achieved". (van Loon pp.2) At the age of 16 he married his cousin the princess Yasodhana after defeating two rivals; Ananda who was to become his most trusted disciple, and Devadatta, who was to be his most determined adversary. On the eve of his son's birth he encountered the four signs for the first time, those of old age, sickness, death and a mendicant monk. These made such an impression that the night his son Rahula, "hindrance", was born, he left home with his horse and charioteer.

First he entered the hermitage of Alara Kalami where he learnt meditation and the Vedic doctrine of the *Atman*. He then joined the sage Uddaka Ramaputta where he attained to the highest state of concentration possible under that teacher. He then left to a forest near Uruvela where he joined up with five ascetics headed up by Koudanna who had prophesied his enlightenment at his naming ceremony. (van Loon vol.1) For six years they practised austerities together in the forest, until Siddhartha realised that his body could no longer sustain his quest. It was then that he began to eat again to build strength, his fellow ascetics left him, disgusted by his action.

He was now 35 years old, and having gained his strength, made a vow to sit under the Bodhi tree until he reached his enlightenment. In the first watch of the night he experienced reminiscence of past births, in the second he gained insight into the

transformation of beings. While in the third watch he comprehended the cessation of corruptions, realising *nirvana* (*nibbana*) and became the unborn, unconditioned, uncreate and un compounded. He was tempted by Māra and his hosts, but remained seated and motionless for seven days experiencing the bliss of great deliverance.

For the next six weeks he remained in solitary retreat whilst he formulated the doctrine of dependant origination. It was then that he decided to go forth and teach, and went to find his five fellow ascetics where they were living near Varanasi, and it was there that he formulated and expounded the Four Noble Truths, the Eight-fold path and the doctrine of the middle way. After his second sermon to them on the non-existence of the soul, they all reached *nirvana* and became Arhats or perfected ones. Within two months of the enlightenment of the Buddha, there were some sixty Arhats, who were sent out to preach the dharma. From there the movement spread across the area and eventually to most of India. It began entirely through oral transmission as the Buddha ranged around the country till he was in his eighties preaching the dharma and establishing communities of monks. Obeyesekere (1972:10) writes that "there are strong textual indications that even during his lifetime the tendency to venerate the Buddha's person began to make its appearance, and that it soon developed into a popular and highly adaptable devotional cult which became a hallmark of the tradition in every area where it was established."

Conze suggests that these early communities, found mostly in the North East of India, were also strongly influenced by Sariputra who died six months before Gautama (1951:91). His influence is said to be that of shaping the teachings, emphasising some

points over others. In particular he is said to have had an analytical intellect, thus placing great influence on the Abhidharma. As a concomitant, wisdom was viewed as the highest of the virtues of faith, vigour, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

It would seem that even during the Buddha's lifetime, there were vehement disagreements about how strictly the *vinaya* rules should be applied. It was this that led Kassapa to hold the first council of Arhats to settle on an authorised version of the *vinaya*. Schisms that centred on discipline became geographically localised. Communities in the South and West were quite orthodox, unlike those in the East. Conflict led to another council some hundred years after the *parinirvana*, where the unanimous verdict of the 700 assembled elders was that the conduct of the Eastern monks was unlawful. (van Loon vol.2:1) The 10 000 defeated monks convened a council of their own in order to make a selection of *sutras* and *vinaya*, and called themselves the Mahāsāṅghikas. All in all, further breakdowns led to the development of 18 schools within 400 years of the Buddha's death. These can be broadly classified as 11 from Hinayana, of which the Theravada is the only survivor, and 7 of the Mahayana, of which the Mahāsāṅghikas were the first.

The Theravadins were the most orthodox, adhering as they do to the original sutras canonised at the first council. Their canon also includes some later material and commentaries, the most important of which is the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, written in the eighth to twelfth century CE. "Their ideal lies in the attainment of Nirvana as an Arhat by undergoing a thorough threefold training in morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and insight (*vipassana*) into the interdependent factors of existence

(dharmas) and, by the removal of *Avidya* (ignorance), to 'see things as they really are' in terms of *Anicca*, *Anatta* and *Dukkha*" (van Loon vol.2:2).

The Sarvāstivādins are virtually parallel to the Theravadins, but used Sanskrit instead of Pali, and maintained that liberation is capable of extension past the stage of Arhat to that of supreme Buddhahood. They also rejected the doctrine of instantaneous rebirth, and posited an interim period between one life and the next. The Vāsīputrīyas introduced the concept of a *pudgala* or permanent individual substance, a potential essence of the individual. The Dharmaguptikas placed great emphasis on offering gifts to the Buddha and revering relics in the *stupas*. (van Loon vol.2)

The Sautrāntikas stated that there is one particular *skandha*, the *vijñānaskandha* (consciousness vehicle) which is the "real" *pudgala*, and that it is this which transmigrates. The Mahāsāṅghikas will be discussed later, but here it is important to note that it is difficult to identify a real beginning to this movement. In its doctrines are all the essentials of later Mahayana thought. They composed a new and substantially revised canon called the *Acariyavada*. The Bahusrutiyas maintained a position similar to that of Śaṅkara regarding conventional (relative) truth and Absolute truth in the Buddha's teachings. Caityakas emphasised the meritorious value of devotional acts. The other schools, although noted in ancient sources, have not been clearly identified, nor are their specific positions known with any precision.

The Theravada:

To summarise, the Theravada is the only surviving school of what was once stigmatised as the Hinayana. While it is certainly a more archaic form of Buddhism it cannot, as has so often been done, be identified with some original or pure form of Buddhism. One of the major problems encountered by scholars in relation to the Theravadin tradition is how to characterise it, both historically and in terms of its structure. Certainly it was formed in the midst of contentions regarding the *vinaya* in particular and the Buddha's intentions and teachings in general. The Pali canon, whilst as close to the original as possible, was only composed some 500 years after the *parinirvana*.

Another quirk in the history of the academic revelation of Buddhism is the meaning read into it by a reductionist and iconoclastic Western public. As with much of the comparative study of religion, the "information" on the alien religious tradition was gleaned during a time of colonial interface. The scholastic tradition that gave it birth was one delivered from the enlightenment, and the death of god. It was in this sense that Buddhism became understood to be a philosophical rather than religious system. Much of the early information regarding Buddhism came from the theosophists and their intellectual progeny in Sri Lanka, many of whom were British civil servants. Their orientalism was mirrored by their search for personal ultimate meanings that required a godless, rational and humanist structure.

Buddhism itself in Sri Lanka was located, both ideally and politically, in the sangha, which seemed to have a clear religious and soteriological delineation. The *vinaya* rules themselves had the tendency to isolate functional roles in society and in these the sangha's were purely religious. The cannon of the Theravada in Pali is strictly defined and, unlike the Mahayana traditions, is clearly identified and available in forms accessible to comprehensive translation. To this generation of Western scholars, the nature of Buddhism was evident.

Much of the phenomenological work in contemporary religious studies has revisited these loci of religious confrontation. In this, the ways in which the assumptions of the analysts influenced their information has become clear. Many of the attempts to define religion in that age of sweeping statements had to take into account the particular nature of Buddhism as described. Here was something which instinct would call religion, and yet the theocentric definitions did not fit. Moreover, those who favoured a non-theistic definition did not like to dwell on the more magical (and therefore less "logical") elements. In other words, what Buddhism was to these people was a highly rational system, more philosophy than religion, that offered comfort and salvation. It was to be found mainly in the texts and only somewhat in the more ascetic elements of the sangha. Theravadin Buddhism along with Vedanta came to represent those forms of religion which have no reference to a God or gods of any sort. Durkheim as an influential theorist took up this argument, and gave it great validity. (Spiro 1966)

There were clearly some fundamental problems in that characterization. As I have already said, it made those who were interested blind to the more popular forms of

Theravada Buddhism. Moreover it is clear that there is no case to be found where the extremely ascetic religious forms are not found in conjunction with popular religious movements. A whole new generation of scholars are now aiming to show how essential these "little traditions" are. Leader amongst these is Melford Spiro who argues that any definition of religion which does not include the belief in the supernatural as a key is counter-intuitive. With reference to Buddhism he states that it admits no creator god, but suggests that creation is only one possible aspect or attribute of godhead. Therefore if superhuman is taken to mean more powerful than human, Theravada Buddhism contains them. (Spiro 1966) He agrees that there are atheistic Buddhist philosophies, but that these do not constitute a religious community and should not be designated normative of religion. He argues that Buddhism is always found alongside another system, and that the two function together through a division of labour. Therefore he admits that while Theravada may be atheistic, Theravadins are not.

Similarly, Orru and Wang (1992) in direct response to Durkheim argue that his claims are both ambiguous and misleading. They suggest that for Durkheim to make the claim that Buddhism is atheistic required that he put restrictive criteria on prayer, asceticism, divinity and Buddhism itself. Certainly the ambiguity is compounded by the multiplicity of doctrines within Buddhism, which include in archaic forms a *nirvana* conceptualised as supramundane and transcendental. Even within scholastic Buddhism there are to be found three classes of beings, the highest of which is the Buddha as an impersonal metaphysical principal, a supernatural potency, and a type. As such he has both power and sovereignty over the universe.

Tambiah (1970 and 1984) takes from Cantwell-Smith in arguing that the study of religion must not be restricted to that of doctrines and philosophies. He is against the "elitist thesis" which views popular forms as the "vulgarisation of high religious tenets by the dark masses". Instead Tambiah prefers to see religion as an interwoven tapestry of biographical, philosophical, mythological and cosmological strands. Buddhism, he therefore argues, can and should not be disaggregated as a religion as opposed to politics or economics as it is a total social phenomenon. As an anthropologist, Tambiah considers it his task to document contemporary religion through the practitioners understanding of intellectual, moral and affective categories. Throughout both his books he gives evidence of supernatural beings, whom, it is clear, are a central part of the life of Buddhists encountered by him.

Herbrechtsmeier in counterargument debates the position that nontheistic (or elite) forms are religious epiphenomena. While admitting that, almost invariably, popular forms are marked by reverence for superhumans, he would not agree that elite forms are therefore secondary. He notes that elites have controlled both institutions and intellectual traditions. Taking an extreme form of the above position would lead one to statements in which the Buddha is secondary, or that Buddhism itself is only secondarily a religion. Thus he argues that any adequate definition must include spiritual masters.

Certainly the nature of Buddhism itself has been an important one in debates on the definition of religion. The very need to have a structural understanding of Buddhism has been born of this issue. It is one that I will return to in the last chapter. For the

moment it is necessary to remove the debate from the ground of definition and look at it only in terms of Buddhism itself.

These two trends in scholarship about Buddhism, especially of the Theravadin variety, seem to have little place of meeting. I believe that in looking at it in terms of Cumpsty's ideal types again, some clarity may be teased out. I think that the best starting point is the statement by Spiro that there is a functional division within the Theravadin tradition. As we have seen there are two sources of ethical norms, that at one level juxtapose. The one is of the individuals quest for withdrawal, while the other is born of the interconnectedness of all things in a monistic system. The latter is codified in the doctrine of dependant origination. Emphasis on the one or the other will produce systems of practice that do not resemble each other much. It must always be kept in mind though that "Buddhist ethics is aretaic: it rests upon the cultivation of personal virtue in the expectation that as spiritual capacity expands towards the goal of enlightenment ethical choices will become clear and unproblematic" (Keown 1992:2).

Therefore we find a situation in which these two sources of ethics are experienced as producing a creative paradox that spurs one on to overcome the duality. While this is the case, at least ideally, the empiric evidence is that one or the other polarities is emphasised. One would expect that the tendency to the position of personal, physical and affective withdrawal would produce a system where personal interrelationships are functional and highly codified. In the other, the tendency would be to create community. This latter would tend to be highlighted where the withdrawal position were more closely connected with a nature paradigm orientation. The problem is really

that no matter how extreme one would want to be in the direction of withdrawal, it is only possible in any society to have a few spiritual innovators and practitioners that could embody this ideal.

Obeyesekere manages to capture this poetically when he writes: "the tension signifies a sustained awareness of the necessary interrelationship of these two wheels - one which affirms the legitimacy, indeed necessity, of the political and social and economic well-being of persons in community, and the other which points through mythology, symbolism, sacred writings, and human paradigms, to dimensions of spirit without which existence remains endless suffering" (1972:2).

If we turn to the biography of the Buddha, we find it foretold that he had a choice to turn his inherent power either to the worldly and political, or to the spiritual. In the Jataka tales, the future Buddha perfects both the virtues of kingship and those of renunciation. The pre-Buddhist figure of Cakkavati is incorporated, the Wheel-Turning Universal Monarch. The solution in the Theravadin tradition is therefore to create a balanced interrelationship between the dharma and kingship. In the earliest records the dharma refers to the sacred reality discovered by the Buddha at the point of his enlightenment. In this sense it is both the law and the truth, both source of order in the universe and salvation from it. (Obeyesekere 1972:15)

There is no evidence that the Buddha saw any conflict between dharma and monarchic forms of rule. Instead the early community actively sought royal patronage, and accepted kingship as the norm of worldly governance. While there are some in

Buddhist history who saw such concerns as meaningless, Obeyesekere contends that this was strongly opposed, especially at popular levels. Indeed the canon is consistent about the basic responsibilities of kingship; the maintenance of order and justice in society, and the ideal that rule should be in accordance with the dharma.

In India in the Fourth century BCE, there were many monastic communities which were quite sedentary and dependant on a lay community. An important development took place in the Fourth Century BCE when Asoka became a Buddhist. This was at a time when the Mauryan dynasty was at its most powerful and prestigious. During his reign, Asoka promulgated many edicts, mostly exhortations to his subjects to live in accordance with the dharma. His assimilation of Buddhism was however selective, for example there is no mention in any of his edicts of an identification between existence and suffering, or any concern with the goal of *nirvana*.

The biography of Asoka soon became a Buddhist ideal, especially in the transformation from cruelty to benevolence which is represented as paralleling the move from ignorance to dharma. Certainly it was through Asoka's imperialist efforts that Buddhism spread so far, and especially to Sri Lanka. He is presented in that country as one whose devotion to the Buddha, dharma and sangha was complete and effective. Obeyesekere states that this pattern persisted in Ceylon for over two millennia, and identifies it as being a specifically Theravadin pattern.

The important thing in this respect for our purposes is to note that upon conversion, Asoka did not relinquish power. The basic Buddhist position is that one should

renounce in order to throw off suffering, enter the sangha and pursue a religious life. This is certainly a strong ideal, and to today, there is still enormous prestige involved in becoming a forest monk in Sri Lanka. And yet, this man Asoka, who has been claimed as a Buddhist patron and innovator, was never drawn to renunciation. The issue surrounds the transformation rather than the renunciation of power. This must I think point to both the acknowledgement of the necessity of worldly interests by the Buddhist sangha in the broadest sense, and the grounding given by others in community.

The relationship between the sangha and the laity is also an important one. The sangha certainly represents the ideal life as a Buddhist, especially on the less socially engaged end of the scale. Obeyesekere writes: "though from one point of view the way of the wanderers with its emphasis on renunciation was certainly considered to be more in accordance with the Path, the whole community was bound together and the religious development of each individual was assured by the reciprocal exchange between the mendicants and the laity - the mendicants, through their example and preaching brought the Dhamma to the laity, while the laity, by the giving of material goods which itself constituted a discipline of renunciation and benevolence, made it possible for the mendicants to maintain their freedom from this-worldly involvement."

The *vinaya* rules of the Theravada preclude any involvement in either healing or divination by the monks. Therefore their main level of interaction with the lay community lies elsewhere. In the case of Sri Lanka certainly there is the almost total control of education, both religious and secular, by the monks. Also they are involved

in various rites of transformation, most notably those of marriage and death. This too goes against the characterisation of Buddhism as a somewhat starchy philosophy, made by the early Buddhist neophytes of the West.

These functions of divination and healing therefore have been filled by those who are at least officially outside of the Buddhist sangha. To call them anything but Buddhist would however miss the truth. Their position relative to organised Buddhism is structural rather than doctrinal. Another thing which is often overlooked in the debate over greater and lesser traditions is that they do not correspond neatly with other categories of elite and common in the society. Involvement in the sangha does not automatically move one into a position of the socially elite, although the tendency to greater education would push in that direction. The question at hand is then, how to characterise Buddhism relative to these three divisions, those of the sangha, the monarchy and the laity.

I would suggest that both the laity and the monarchy together perform the social concomitants of the nature paradigm in the maintenance of societal and cultural continuity. Also the Buddha, being in the Theravadin conception beyond life and death, has no power of intervention for the laity. Therefore, people who want some reward either spiritual or material must turn to another worldview for such involvement. The reliance on self-power propagated by both the Buddha and the sangha leaves little room for personal maneuver.

In wishing to maintain the spiritual purity of the sangha and the role it represents, it has had to remove itself from worldly interests to a remarkable degree. However, the fact that those concerned with these issues also call themselves Buddhist must call into question the limited reference given to the term in early Western scholarship. In terms of the ideal types, we find that the sangha represents the perfect withdrawal paradigm community, where interrelationships are strongly delineated. Yet, it must be found in conjunction with representatives of the nature paradigm, who are in agreement with the basic tenets of the withdrawal paradigm. As such they both identify themselves with Buddhism, and are recognised as such by the Buddhist sangha. They too are Buddhist, and maintain the very withdrawal of the paradigm though their concomitant activities. After all, how could a sangha exist without those who are involved with materiality in order to support them.

Clearly, what we have here is a case of allocation. The existence of the elite versus popular polarity has obfuscated this to some degree. The role of the sangha is soteriological, whereas that of the diviners and healers is grounding and communal. The role of the monarchy and the government is to maintain a balance between the two. It does so by having firm reigns on the sangha, while also seeing to the rule and, hopefully, welfare of the society. The axis on which this allocation rests is that of the *vinaya* rules. As I noted in chapter one, Cumpsty suggests that if these mechanisms of allocation are in doctrinal form, they tend to become significant in identity. (1991:426) Therefore they will be stubborn to cleansing when the need arises. The *vinaya* rules and the ways in which they have been applied in the Theravadin tradition certainly do not provide much flexibility. It would be logical then that a system like this, which is so

heavily allocated, has been stable for some time and under the control of the powerful institutions of state and sangha. It would also be logical, that such a system, put under enormous pressure, would struggle to meet the new challenges within the traditionally defined roles and institutions. I will return to this again in the last chapter.

We turn now to a very different solution to the same complex problem, the negotiation of a place that integrates the concomitants of these two ideal types. In the case of Mahayana Buddhism however, it is done through bridging symbols rather than allocation.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MAHAYANA:

In the last chapter, I looked at the beginnings of the Mahayana in terms of the split at the first council over the *vinaya* rules. This schism can be traced back to divergences some 200 years after *parinirvana*, with rivalry between the East and West leading to the first council. The two groups in contention were the Sthavira-vadins (following the doctrine of the elders) and the Mahāsāṃgikas or great assemblists, which included monks of lesser attainments, and householders. Hajime (1987) suggests that the first propounders of the Mahāsāṃgika position seem to have been homeless ascetics who did not belong to orthodox sanghas. His evidence is unclear, but he seems to suggest that it began with groups of individuals whose activities centred around certain *stupas*. Hajime writes that they moved away from the worship of *stupas* to the recitation of *sutras* which he says had more appeal to the laity. Although Hajime does not say as much, it would make sense in that this shift would make the practices more accessible to the individual in private, and accommodate more universalist values.

What is known is that a monk named Mahadeva raised five points of contention. Two of these directed criticism at the Arhats or perfected ones. He suggested that they were still capable of moral and intellectual deficiencies. The evidence for these include nocturnal emissions and a lack of omniscience. This lack of perfection being one of four major issues that became contentious, it began the long process that redefined the ideal type of person. The Mahayanist conception of an Arhat was of one who was

cramped and selfish, and the Bodhisattva became the new ideal. In terms of the double source of ethics in this paradigm, it meant a shift of emphasis from that of personal enlightenment represented by the Arhat, to that of corporate responsibility represented by the Bodhisattva.

The other issues included the Mahayanist trend to subordinate the historical Buddha to a metaphysical principal. This was taken to further degrees than had ever been the case amongst the Theravadins. At the extreme they argued that everything temporal and historical was alien to the real Buddha who is altogether supramundane. The historical Buddha then, is only the magical creation, and Buddhas are found on all realms and temporal planes, filling the entire universe and all world systems. (Conze 1967)

In the third move, empirical knowledge tended to lose all objective value, and only emptiness was considered real. As all propositions are equally unreal, "the absolute, unconditioned world of *"nirvana"*, as tradition describes it, is therefore as fictitious and unreal as the relative world of *"samsara"* (Conze 1967:198). And lastly, the term emptiness is extended. Where before it had only been used to refer to the absence of a personal self, the Mahāsāṃghikas held that both persons and dharmas are equally empty.

It is therefore possible to distinguish the Mahayana from the Theravada, not just in terms of how people have identified their allegiance, but also according to these points of divergence. On the surface it seems quite easy to define a referent for the term Mahayana and all that it encompasses. A more profound problem is to characterise it

and describe the reasons for its developments. I believe that it is possible to shed much light on this latter issue by turning again to Cumpsty's ideal types, and the bridging symbols between them.

Historically we see that the Mahayana began in the East. Moreover Buddhism's spread into China and beyond is very much a Mahayana phenomenon. It has been a much more successful missionary endeavour, both in size and scope, than the Theravadin one. What are the reasons for this? Two, I suggest, are immediately apparent. The first lies in the relaxation and reformulation of the *vinaya* rules. Where in the Theravadin cannon, the rules prohibited the changing of robes, the practice of medicine and divination etc., the monks of the Mahayana were under no such restrictions. Therefore there was a far greater fluidity of structure that allowed them to meet new challenges of climate and culture. As we will see, the approach to these challenges was a very effective one.

The second reason must relate to the ideal types. We have seen that in the Indian case, the development of Buddhism was a definite move in the direction of the withdrawal paradigm. As such it moved very close to the ideal type at least in some respects. The problem of suffering that gave it birth however, was in some sense alleviated through the Buddhist practice born of that analysis. In other words, the Buddhism that was born of suffering provided a medicine for the healing and alleviation of that same suffering. Therefore the tradition had to change because the individual would no longer be likely to feel the same pressure towards escape and the withdrawal paradigm. As Buddhism moved out of India, particularly Eastwards, it encountered a worldview

which is strongly of the nature religion paradigm, and very life affirming. Why then would such an environment want to take on the notions of suffering, reincarnation and the other fundamentals of Buddhism. Conze (1951:22) writes: "The Buddhist point of view will appeal only to those people who are completely disillusioned with the world as it is, and with themselves, who are extremely sensitive to pain, suffering, and any kind of turmoil, who have an extreme desire for happiness, and a considerable capacity for renunciation". This would hardly describe China of the First Century. What changes were necessary then in Buddhism to accommodate this more positive environment while still maintaining its soteriological potency? The answer we will see, lies in two sets of very powerful bridging symbols. This first set will be dealt with now, while the other will be addressed in the next chapter.

Buddhism in China:

Fang in his seminal work tries to characterise Chinese philosophy during various periods. He uses three categories of metaphysics that in some ways resembles Cumpsty's ideal types. The first he calls praeternatural metaphysics where "existence is sharply divided into the authentic and the illusory, a juxtaposition which he says characterises Western thinking. This type has rarely if ever been appropriated by Chinese thinkers. The second he calls transcendental metaphysics which is characteristic of the Chinese doctrines of reality. This rejects a neat bifurcation and disowns hard dualisms, and can be called ideal realism or real idealism. The third and last he calls immanent metaphysics in which fundamental reality is the eternal root of all. "It comes to energise itself into anything and everything", and "the profound

noumenon or ground reality (exhibits) itself in the realms of phenomena" (Fang 1981:20) These three types of metaphysics would correspond broadly with secular world affirming, withdrawal, and nature paradigms respectively. The latter of the three was to be found in China before the arrival of Buddhism, and the second connotes Buddhism and its effect. Speaking generally of Chinese thought he writes: "We think of the human individual in terms of observed actualities and idealised possibilities. From actuality to possibility, there is an elaborate process of self-development, an arduous task of self-culture as well as a full range of self realisation" (Fang 1981:27). This certainly evidences the impact that Buddhist thinking and practice has had in China. The history of the introduction of Buddhism into China and its eventual spread and innovations can shed much light, both on the Chinese society it encountered and on Buddhism itself.

The China that Buddhism encountered was dominated by two schools of thought. I would suggest that these two together, and through a division of interests, formed a developed but clear nature religion paradigm. Taoism stressed the need of the individual to maintain harmony with the natural and spiritual elements. Confucianism stressed this same harmony in the social, human and interactive sphere. Both however were characterised by a drive towards harmony. The latter concerned itself also with continuity through the metaphor of ancestors and social and societal maintenance. Taoism did the same through its emphasis on biological continuity and that of the natural realm in general. All the societal and worldview concomitants of Cumpsty's nature religion paradigm are to be found in both Taoism and Confucianism in various degrees and emphases. This is clear case of allocation as described in chapter one.

The things which in India had led to a move into the withdrawal paradigm were not apparently in evidence. Why then should China have taken on this quite burdensome worldview. Two answers seem apparent. The first is that Buddhism only really succeeded in gaining widespread appeal when the Chinese system of governance was breaking down and there was both internal political turmoil and foreign invasion. Both of these would have tended to make the immediate environment less affirmative as the real. The other answer must lie in the ways in which Mahayana Buddhism made significant moves towards a nature paradigm whilst still maintaining the integrity of its soteriology. In order for the latter to occur, radical changes in the practice and philosophy associated with salvation had to take place. It is telling that the vehicle through which Buddhism first came to fruition in China was that of Taoism itself.

Buddhism arrived in China in the first century CE from the North West by the nomadic tribes of Eastern Turkistan. It was two hundred years later that Buddhist scholars arrived from India. From the Fourth Century onwards, some dynasties became patrons of Buddhism and Chinese scholars began to trek into India, coming back to establish various schools. By the end of the Fourth Century, all the major schools in India were represented in China.

The history of the development of Buddhism in China is very much one of translation. The Chinese language was not well suited for the transliteration of Buddhist terminology. The metaphysics most closely approximate was that of Taoism. At the beginning therefore, Buddhist concepts tended to become subordinated to Taoist ones. In this sense the paradigm had yet to undergo any significant changes. The inclusion of

the new foreign religion was an aid to Taoists hoping to gain on the stronghold of Confucianism, and found in that regard a strong, if somewhat unaware, ally. Buddhism was in fact accepted as an extension of Taoism. It was only at the end of the Han dynasty, and with an increasing number of Buddhist monks, that they began to move away from the definition of them provided by the Taoists. The Taoists responded in writing the Hua-Ha (Conversion of the Barbarians) theory into a *sutra*, the first of this kind of religious writing for the Taoists. The Buddhists rallied by producing a forged *sutra* (sometime between 317 and 420) which stated that both Lao Tsu and Confucius were disciples of the Buddha.

From 400 CE we find a period of reform in Chinese Buddhism. The one person who bears responsibility for this more than any other was Kumārajīva, the famous translator. He and his band of followers were directly responsible for translating over 300 volumes of sacred literature into Chinese. What marked these from the earlier attempts was that they introduced technical terms for Buddhist concepts that were not under the rubric of Taoist cosmology. He was the first to introduce Mādhyamika texts and teachings into China and his students between then comprised the most significant wave of Chinese Buddhist scholarship. Basically together their contribution was to refute the neo-Taoist notions that had crept into Buddhism, and proselytise widely.

Robinson argues that the development of Chinese Buddhism was activated by the tension between two divergent influences, the Indian tradition and the Chinese one. "As long as the desire to harmonise these two persisted, the faith remained vigorous

and progressive. When the accumulated tradition achieved a sort of harmony, it languished from lack of stimulus." (Robinson 1988:318)

In terms of the ideal types, the stimulus to growth and religious innovation was born of the tension to integrate the paradigms through the production of far-reaching and inclusive bridging symbols. When this bridging was complete, few changes happened until the event of the twentieth century and the new challenges it brought. The three major bridging symbols that will be looked at below; Trikāya, the Bodhisattva and Upāya, are fundamental to all Mahayana Buddhism, and are to be found therefore in both China and Japan.

Buddhism in Japan:

Again we find a situation in which Buddhism encountered a strong nature religion paradigm, and the task of assimilation began again. The situation here was different from that of China in two respects. First, the Buddhism that came into Japan was one that had already undergone a period of transformation in China. As such, it was already much more closely allied with a nature religion paradigm. Also the one form of Buddhism that was to have the most effect in Japan, was Ch'an or Zen, arguably the closest to the nature paradigm. Secondly, where in China the greatest threat to Buddhist establishment was the intellectual classes in government, in Japan Buddhism was born on the banner of a higher culture. It was through the influence of the Chinese court, a system of writing and careful political policy introduced from China, that Buddhism made its entrance.

Four clear phases in its spread can be isolated from history. In the first, Buddhism was introduced at the Imperial court. It arrived through Korea in the sixth century, and before long there were 13 distinctive sects, representing the Buddhist scope almost in entirety. These sects were really no more than groups of scholars that studied together and favoured one metaphysical position amongst others. Until the Heian period (794-1192), the court tried quite successfully to exert a monopolistic control over Buddhism, ordination, the temples etc. It was in fact illegal for any Buddhist monk to teach the common people. (Davis 1977:17) There was strong resistance from some quarters to the introduction of gods or practices that would rival the indigenous *kami*. It was only on the introduction of Buddhism that the term Shinto, the way of the *kami*, was coined in opposition to Butsudo, the way of Buddha. As such the introduction of Buddhism forced the religious authorities to become much more formal in their identification of their role and structure.

Conflict between Buddhism and the newly circumscribed Shinto did not concern doctrine, but focused on whether or not it was appropriate to worship images of the Buddha. Eventually Buddhism was elevated from a private devotional cult situated in private homes of the wealthy, to a state religion partly responsible for the national welfare. The path to its acceptance went from the clan leaders to the imperial court and finally to the state. Buddhist monks from Korea served the needs of court and state through the recitation of *sutras* for healing purposes, burial rites and the performance of memorial services.

Earhart (1969) argues that this early success was due to the profundity of doctrine on the level of art, ritual and magic. Certainly it was classy in the court to have knowledge of the Chinese classics and Buddhism. Prince Shotoku (573-621) is considered the father and founder of Buddhism in Japan, declared it to be, alongside Confucianism, a pillar of state. From this period onwards to the seventeenth century, Buddhism overshadowed Shinto in their contest for the favour of the state.

In the Nara period (710-984), Buddhism became the official state religion, and Todai-ji, the massive temple at Nara was built. It was to be the centre of Buddhist ordination for centuries to come. From this period on there was the trend to identify Buddhist figures with the *kami*, and temple and shrine grounds usually corresponded. Towards the end of the dynasty, Nara was infamous for its corruption and decadence. Much of this had to do with the wealth and power of the Buddhists and their misuse of resources. The new Emperor in seeking to break the back of their monopoly moved the capital to Kyoto, ending the first period of Buddhism in Japan.

The new Heian period saw an important reform movement in Buddhism. Two young monks, Kobo Daishi and Dengyo Daishi went to China at the same time and returned with Shingon and Tendai respectively. These two and their religious progeny dominated Buddhism in Japan until the Meiji restoration. Shingon, briefly, is esoteric Buddhism, also known as *mikyo*. Tendai (Chinese T'ien T'ai) is a system which aims to harmonise the scope of Buddhist teaching by developing a hierarchy of spiritual knowledge. As such it is important as a synchronising move, and within its house is held the greatest range of doctrine. The competition for power between these two was

a source of much seminal writing and ardent debate and politics. While the Shingon school was by far the most powerful at its inception, almost all the innovations in Japanese Buddhism thereafter can be traced directly back to the Tendai.

Again these two schools became involved in wealthy decadence, as the prestige brought money from the nobility and power from the court. Critique against the decadence and the impetus to reform came from within latent forces in Tendai, particularly those more closely associated with the Pure Land teachings. The Kamakura period (1185-1333) saw a shift in power from the court at Kyoto to the feudal lord of the Shogun, and the beginning of the third period of Buddhism. The loss of money for the two big schools and greater uncertainty and unrest called for more immediate religious resolution and salvation. It was from this that the Pure Land sects, Jodo and Jodo Shinshu and Nichiren were formed. The religious positions taken up under the feudal Kamakura were to stand until the Meiji restoration which opened Japan up to the rest of the world.

It was at this latter period that Buddhism and Shinto were forceably separated. In an attempt to conform to Western criticism and definition of "civilisation" the Japanese state made some radical changes. They identified Shinto as something that was not religion, but Japaneseness. Buddhism therefore came to correspond to the term religion, and was removed from any form of state patronage and the temples lost much of their power. It was at this crisis that Buddhism had to again respond and reform, and it did so in ways which will be discussed in the last chapter.

In general then it is possible to say that Buddhism entered a strong nature religion paradigm in Japan, which, like China, affirmed the reality of immediate life. The entire history of development of Buddhism in Japan can be viewed in terms of two trajectories. The one is a move to greater involvement with the common people. From its cradle in the civilizational efforts of China to its involvement and integration with the local and regional deities lay a long journey. The second is again its relation to the nature religion paradigm and the necessity to maintain a viable soteriology in the face of ever increasing affirmation.

BRIDGING SYMBOLS: In The Mahayana:

In the next chapter I will look at the various trends within Mahayana Buddhism and the development of various schools and their implications. For now through, I will focus on things in common to all Mahayanists. These are doctrines, for lack of a better word, that made the Mahayana capable of this move into nature paradigms without needing recourse to division of labour as we found amongst the Theravadins. There are three powerful bridging symbols that are wrapped up in each other to the degree that any discussion of one without the other two is somewhat artificial. Nevertheless, it is important to identify the component concepts.

The Trikāya:

As we have already seen the nature religion paradigm is monistic. The withdrawal paradigm on the other hand, posits a bifurcation between the ultimately real and it's

illusory manifestation. This split is not necessarily a duality, and neither is it a vertical division. What the doctrine of the Trikāya did was to add a third level in the ontology through which the two could in some way interact. Thus the Trikāya provides a framework of interaction between this world which is illusory but the realm of mundane experience, and the ground or noumenon hidden by human's faulty perception. We find in early mythology that Buddhas are to be found in every realm, in the *lokas*, and in every sentient being. The doctrine of the Trikāya has reduced this complexity into three easily distinguishable levels.

The Trikāya directly translated means the three bodies of the Buddha. The first of these is the *Nirmānakāya* or manifestation body. It connotes the physical and historical body of the Buddha. As such it is not so much supernormal or supramundane, but merely a highly evolved human form. This form is to be revered as the vehicle of the teachings, but has no capacity to intervene, being as it is, perished at *parinirvana*. The second, *Sambhogakāya* is the enjoyment or bliss body. This is the aspect of reality populated by the spirits or gods. These beings are also conditioned, much in the same way as the Indian Hīndu deities are. They are similarly in need of enlightenment which they cannot attain whilst in this realm. The last of them is the *Dharmakāya* or teaching body. This is the ultimate body, a state of knowledge and truth, the sphere of nonduality and unmediated perception. (Herbrechtsmeier 1992)

Alicia Matsunaga has done much work on what she terms the "Buddhist Philosophy of Assimilation". It is her contention that Buddhism has always managed to incorporate the elements from any religious environment sometimes called the "little traditions".

She traces this trend to Buddhism in India, and even before the development of the Mahayana. "This willingness to accept non-Buddhist practices and incorporate them into Buddhism is a unique phenomenon that has come to characterise Buddhism. It was from this point of view that both Indian practices and deities were conceived as having beneficial uses for Buddhists if correctly utilised" (Matsunaga 1969:14).

Therefore, for example, what had been the Hindu worship in the six directions soon came to be represented in Buddhist terms. These gods as guardians were replaced by symbols of moral obligation. It still remains a moral guide for laymen in Theravadin Buddhist countries. This type of assimilation however took away the personification and the power of the deities it encountered by transforming them into names pointing to ethical principals. The same trend in Mahayana however, transformed these deities into real powers that could act on behalf of the religious seeker, and of Buddhism itself. Asking what Buddhism has taken from India is a fairly obvious question. The new tradition must of course maintain some ground in the resources from which it was born. A far more interesting question to me however, is how it could include and assimilate things from encountered traditions with such dexterity.

The answer seems to lie in the way in which indigenous spiritual entities came to populate the second of the three *kāyas*. They were mediators between the worlds, and yet their reality is never considered absolute from any ultimate point of view. Matsunaga suggests another way of characterising the Triloka, which is extremely fluid and powerful. In other words the alternative is that the "essence of the Triloka is in its relation to the psychological process of the individual, not as a cosmological

description having a basis in time and space" (Matsunaga 1969:46) The Triloka in this regard then came to have two meanings. The first is that every state is a potentiality of consciousness, and the individual can therefore reside in any one at a time, with the potential to move between them inherent in every moment. The second is as a pure classification of spiritual or psychological states. This kind of thinking will be examined more closely in the next chapter. In this case the terms Trikaya and Triloka are synonymous. *Kāyas* represent bodies or states where *loka* refer to locations or sites as well as states of consciousness. The Buddhas or Pure Lands referred to in the doctrine of the Trikāya are additional to the traditional six lokas. In other words, all *kāyas* are *lokas*, but not all *lokas* are *kāyas*.

Clearly though, whether the Trikāya is considered in cosmological, ontological or psychological terms, it involves a huge potential for inclusion and assimilation. This can be seen most clearly in the Japanese experience which developed a virtual identity between the Buddhist pantheon and the *kami* of Shinto. The notion of *shimbutsu-shugo*, or unification of gods and Buddhas, is to be found in Japan from 698 CE. When Buddhism first reached its shores, it appeared to be a superior type of magic, bringing powerful spirits "in the form of personified Buddhist images that could be invoked to obtain material prosperity, the cure of illness, or to prevent calamities" (Matsunaga 1969:168).

This soon developed into what became the *Honji-suijaku* theory. This began with a distinction between the relative and the absolute in which no form of gradation was applied. This division corresponded with that of the historical and absolute

(*Dharmakāya*) Buddha. By the mid eighth century, Tomitsu, a Buddhist monk, introduced the following notion. It is possible to view the infinite through the finite, therefore the Buddha who produces the Lotus Sutra was both the infinite Eternal Buddha as well as his manifestation. The theory then comprised both an identification and a bifurcation.

This position was first applied to the relationship between the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. In the late Nara and Early Heian Era's, Prince Shotoku became regarded as a manifestation of a Bodhisattva. A correlation was made between him and the third patriarch of Tendai. Later in the Kamakura he was elevated to being a source (or *Honji*) himself, and his manifestations included Emperor Shomu, Kukai etc. The *kami* were then elevated to a position within the Buddhist pantheon. Suddenly we find that they have new functions to perform. They accept and protect the dharma, they are suffering sentient beings, they undergo enlightenment, and finally they become manifestations of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. By the early twelfth century there is a systematised correspondence between the Buddhist and Shinto pantheon. This is reflected not only in the religious literature, but also in the parallel organization of shrines and temples. In brief, all these new beings that are included in the realm of Buddhism, find a place in the middle ground of the Trikaya. They are more powerful than the humans, and are therefore capable of granting favours, both material and spiritual. The height of this development is undoubtedly to be found in the Pure Land Doctrines.

The Bodhisattva Ideal:

This chapter opened with the split at the first council. Of the five points raised there, two had to do with the Arhat. The Theravadin tradition considered the Arhat to be the ideal of human perfection, one who had undergone rigorous training in self control and had extinguished desire. In establishing this as an ideal, the Theravadins rested on the wisdom or withdrawal side of the dual ethical source inherent in the withdrawal paradigm.

The Mahayana ideal is that of the Bodhisattva, literally a Buddha-to-be. The term began when it was used to describe the lives of the historical Buddha previous to his reincarnation as Siddhartha Gautama. As such it is found in common to both the branches of Buddhism, yet only the Mahayana chose to extend the idea to make it applicable to all. The comparison with Arhats was favourable because the latter, in seeking enlightenment only for themselves, have not yet fully realised the truth of not-self. The Bodhisattva on the other hand makes no distinction between self and others, favouring as they do the ethics of interrelationship. Of the five virtues it is compassion that is most important. (Conze 1951)

Anyone can become a Bodhisattva by making a vow to strive to help others, to aim for enlightenment, but to refuse to become enlightened until every other sentient being is similarly saved. It is not necessary that one be in the sangha at the time of making the vow, it is a category applicable to householders also. A Bodhisattva provides active help, and is ready to take on the suffering of all beings, and to transfer his or her own

karmic merit to others. This introduces the idea of a kingdom and linear time with a communal salvific aim. As such, and this is most clearly seen in the application thereof in Pure Land Buddhism, it generates a grand purpose.

The Mahayana distinguishes two kinds of Bodhisattvas. The one kind comprises of earthly beings who are marked by their extraordinary wisdom, compassion and altruism along with clear and ardent striving towards enlightenment. The other class of these beings are transcendent, those who have perfected the six *pāramitās* and attained buddhahood, but postponed final *nirvana*. They are no longer subject to *samsara* while having the capacity to appear in any form therein. They are venerated by believers who believe them to appear at times of crisis. Most common amongst these are Avalokiteśvara, Mañjushrī and Kṣhitigarba.

It is these beings that populate this middle realm of the *Trikāya* discussed above. In the tantric forms, they are also considered to be personifications of psychological states and can be used through identification in order to develop particular faculties. Across the Buddhist world there is a vast pantheon of these Bodhisattvas, and the lines between them and other forms of beings are often indistinct. We have already seen the case of *kami-bodhisattvas* in the *Honji-Suijaku* theory in Japan. Also local heroes and heroines of pre-Buddhist myths become involved in the pantheon. Not only does it provide role models in the way that the Jataka tales do for Theravadins, but also creates an opportunity for the Buddhist to have some sort of assistance beyond their own powers of liberation.

Upāya: Skilful Means

This doctrine, a strange mixture of ethics and metaphysics, holds together the entire ethical and cosmological structure of Mahayana Buddhism. (Keown 1992) The term is first found in the Lotus Sutra where the teaching and practice of the historical Buddha are declared to be "provisional means, skilfully set up for the benefit of the unenlightened" (Pye 1978:1). Skilful means are always provisional, and at enlightenment the expedients become redundant. With the goal that all beings reach enlightenment, Mahayana Buddhism itself is only a skilful means in that the teachings are no longer necessary once the state of enlightenment has been attained, it is only the finger, not the moon.

The Lotus Sutra describes how the Buddha and other teachers of the dharma operate:

"According to how the living beings
In previous lives put down good roots,
They have knowledge of the mature
They take it all into account,
Articulate it in their understanding,
And following the way of the one vehicle
They appropriately expound the three"

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In other words "various aspects of graded Buddhist guidance are clearly thought of as provisional, and ... they find their ultimate resolution and dismissal in the successful

appropriation of the Buddhist meaning" (Pye 1978:43) Everything in the story of the Buddha and all the teachings can be similarly interpreted as provisional means skilfully applied in order that the hearer gain insight into truth or dharma.

It is interesting to see how this is applied to Vimalakirti, the layman and householder. In the Theravadin ideal it is really necessary to be a monk in order to have the correct environment to achieve enlightenment. The Mahayanist view is that everyone being of Buddha-nature has both the capacity and the potential to enlightenment. The example of Vimalakirti is an important one to evidence this. He is "one who through living in the world, cultivates the disciplines normally associated with the religious ascetic" (Pye 1978:87). His immersion in the daily life of the community is therefore a skilful means. Pye contends that this involvement has some important implications. Firstly it offers substantiation that the world has its own value, albeit a provisional one. Also, and especially in Japan, it shows that laymen can associate themselves with things that would not otherwise be allowed to the lay Buddhist, especially other teachings, so that the message of the Buddha might be spread further. "Both lay and monastic status have provisional means only, and that is why generally speaking both are maintained in Mahayana Buddhism" (Pye 1978:91).

Skilful means has two important consequences in the Mahayana. The first is that it can break out of the restrictive bounds of ethical norms in the furtherance of awareness and wisdom through compassion. In this sense it is possible for the Bodhisattvas and other highly developed spiritual beings to apply their greater knowledge and understanding in ways that would otherwise be considered unethical. There are examples of teachers

killing their students before they can perform deeds that would bring them such bad *karma* as to prevent their growth for lifetimes. It is then the one who kills who takes onto themselves the *karmic* responsibility for the actions, thus freeing the other for further growth, Murder is then turned into an act of compassion in this case. Secondly, it provides a framework into which it is possible to assimilate alternative religious and mythical systems. It can be argued that these other beings were in some way or another preparing the ground for Buddhism's establishment, or they are protectors or benefactors of members of the Buddhist pantheon. We saw this to be the case in the Japanese system where *kami* were assimilated into Buddhist mythology and ritual.

The doctrine of skilful means presumes a variegated hierarchy of wisdom and spiritual attainment. Teachings are therefore given at any level, and may no longer be appropriate at another. Any teaching may also reveal a depth of meaning not apparent at the surface. For example the Trikāya doctrine taken at its lowest level is an inclusion of another ontological layer. It extends and houses a cosmology full to the brim with Bodhisattvas, Arhats and lay saints of various kinds. A deeper insight shows these various bodies of the Buddha to be states of consciousness which are operational coterminously. As such they provide a mythological language, always considered only analogous to truth and experience itself. The language however is a means which can allow others to be pointed to that same experience if used skilfully.

As such, this last of the three bridging symbols has an enormous capacity to hold together the various and diverse strands of teachings. It cuts out the need to make

distinctions between what on the surface are incompatible teachings. It allows for the systematisation of Buddhist teachings according to various levels of spiritual attainment as found in the T'ien T'ai (Tendai) school. Moreover it holds together the logic of the Bodhisattva, and also their sometimes remarkable behaviour and the ethics that provide a higher logic to their actions. The Trikaya is also held together by skilful means in that the *Sambhogakāya* is relativised from any higher perspective, thus cutting through the Buddha's injunctions against intervention. In the end, this intervention is considered to be of your own making as it is only the invocation of a psychological state.

More than anything else that can be said about these three, their sheer efficacy in neutralising opposing religious positions is enormous. They have made it possible for Buddhism to reach out from the withdrawal paradigm of its early roots back into the nature paradigm without losing its soteriological power.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MAHAYANA

In the last chapter I argued that the three bridging symbols of Upāya (skilful means), the Bodhisattva and the Trikāya made possible the extraordinary expanse of Mahayana. Although all of the later schools of Mahayana Buddhism had precedents in India, they took root in China and Japan and made their biggest impact there.

It is quite difficult to assess what exactly is meant by a school of Buddhism, as it usually does not involve a stable community of fellow adherents who follow those teachings exclusively. The only exceptions to this are found in the various forms of Pure Land Buddhism and the reasons for this will be discussed later. For the rest it is important to remember that they were more like strong trends in Buddhist thinking which gave rise to new ways of meditation, conceptualisation and devotion. As Stanley Weinstein (1987:264) writes: "... the present day Chinese monk typically will belong to a Ch'an lineage, will probably have studied in some detail a particular doctrinal system, and will have been ordained by a master who stands in the lineage of one of the branches of the Nan-Shan Lii school. In addition, his daily devotions are likely to be derived from the Pure Land teaching".

There seem to have been four easily identifiable developments in Mahayana Buddhism namely; Mādhyamika, Yogācāra, Ch'an and Pure Land schools. Each one of these in

very different ways addressed the problem of conflicting world views. They did so though, not in bridging the concomitants of the ideal types, but in identifying the ultimate realities in each. The success of these in the regions discussed is certainly as a result of the Chinese trend to synchronise the doctrines, and the influence that had on Japan. I will examine each in turn to find the ways in which the ultimates were bridged, and the implications this had.

The Mādhyamika School:

This began as a sustained criticism of the inadequacies of the Abhidharma system. Nagarjuna was the one who formulated the doctrine out of general *prajñāparamita* thought. Born approximately 150 CE in Southern India to a brahmin family, he became one of the most prominent teachers of the famous Nalanda Buddhist University. (van Loon vol.2: 28) This trend of thought quickly gained prominence, and by the fifth century there were two subdivisions. There were those who called themselves the Prāsanga school, headed up by Buddhapālita, whose position was that the Mādhyamikan could hold no position in and of itself. Its only task was to reduce to absurdity any view or thesis held (ibid). A second school, the Svatantra, was led by Bhāvaviveka. They held that the Mādhyamikas do have a definite position and it should be explicitly stated and advanced. This latter school never really grew beyond a few members, its position being somewhat self-defeating.

In the sixth and seventh century the Mādhyamika was rigorously systematised by Chandrakīrti and Santi Deva. They revitalised Nāgārjuna's injunctions on personal

spiritual training for Mādhyamikans. This included training in a path of moral discipline and virtue, and cultivating the *bodhicitta* for all. In the Seventh century there were some who made a radical departure from the original position in trying to negotiate a compromise between Yogācāra and Mādhyamika. They took an idealistic Yogācāra position on apparitional reality (see below), and a Mādhyamikan one on ultimate reality. Both were invited to Tibet where the syncretic version became dominant. It has remained so until the recent past in Tibet. (van Loon vol.2:29)

The philosophical tenets of the system begin and end with a refusal to conceptualise ultimate reality, an origin rooted in the "silence of the Buddha" on some cardinal metaphysical questions. It is clear that some things were to the Buddha inexpressible, and as Pannikar puts it (1989:14) "His silence not only clothes the reply, it invades the question. He is not only silent, he reduces to silence". The traditional way in which Buddhist metaphysics posits the question is as follows; not is, nor is not, nor is and is not, nor neither is nor is not. (van Loon vol.2:29)

In other words the Buddha took a non-position that transcends all views, implying that certain forms of speculation are untenable and uncondusive to detachment and peace. In other words, only those questions that have some soteriological impact are worth asking. The rest will only further involve the seeker in debates which would alienate them from their salvation.

Nāgārjuna exploited this dialectic, one which is founded on criticism itself. He began with a critique of causality, demonstrating that it has empirical validity only. He did so

by systematically refuting all possible positions on this and other important metaphysical questions. Causality, like the other issues was shown to be impermeable to rational explanation as each position holds within it its own contradiction. (van Loon vol.2:31). In this way he addressed questions of change, motion, time and space.

"Each system of belief is therefore burdened with a set of opinions which derive their apparent validity only in being in opposition to other, similarly dependant opinions" (van Loon vol.2:31) The logical consequence of this is that it is valid only to have no set opinions, because to do otherwise is to betray both truth and reality. (ibid) The only thing which is left after such a devastating dialectic is emptiness itself, *śūnyatā*. It is awareness of this that constitutes true wisdom in the Mādhyamika system, and is the nature of insight. "What is required is that our discursive thoughts must, as it were, be driven to commit conceptual suicide" (van Loon vol.2:32) They therefore accepted that there exists some ultimate reality, but it is relative only, therefore leaving them with a position of two levels of truth.

The similarity between this position and the one advanced by Śaṅkara is no mere accident. It is certainly the case that the latter was strongly influenced by Nāgārjuna who was his slightly earlier contemporary. In fact, Śaṅkara was often accused by other Vedantists of being as near to a Buddhist as possible. Only two things distinguish their position. The first is that Śaṅkara preferred to stay within Hindu orthodoxy, and by this I mean he chose to maintain the authority of the Vedas, and the Māhāvakyas in particular. The second is that, as I have already mentioned, Śaṅkara was, in his

personal devotions, a Kali devotee. Thus his own religious affiliations in some ways defied, on the empirical level, his own relativisation of truth.

Returning to the Mādhyamikas, we see that the ultimate reality alone is set as the standard of truth. Conze (1967) suggests that this position is a result of protracted meditation on conditions and co-productions, which is equivalent to the insight into the emptiness of all dharmas. Conze asks the question whether this view on emptiness is the same as nihilism, but finds that he has to answer in the negative. This is the case because the destruction of all opinions in the dialectic described above must also include the destruction of the view which proclaims the emptiness of everything too. (1967:243) He therefore suggest that the Mādhyamika position is not so much a view as an aspiration.

Turning again to this ideal of *śūnyatā*, we find that its etymology points to the Sanskrit root that includes the meanings swollen and hollow. (Conze 1951) In Buddhist terms this means that it is both constituted by the five *skandhas* and devoid of central self. It can therefore in no way correspond with nothing. "Used as a technical term, the words empty and emptiness express in Buddhist tradition the complete negation of this world by the exercise of wisdom" (Conze 1951:132). This conception of emptiness is a radical shift from the Theravadin conception found in the Abhidharma. There the dharmas, meaning the constituent parts of reality, material or not, have substance in and of themselves. Where they say that there is no self, Anatman, what is really meant is that there is no specific dharma that corresponds to a self or an individual essence. Despite certain schools outlined in the last chapters that tried to sneak in such a

dharma under the name of *pudgala* or *vijñānaskanda*, it was never really accepted. The Mahayana conception, while obviously acknowledging no self, goes a step further. It says that dharmas themselves are without substance, and it is only the interrelationship between dharmas that give the appearance of materiality or existence. "It is, in fact, the interdependent relationship between the dharmas that forms the basis of all phenomena - not the dharmas themselves" (van Loon vol.2:10).

What is important for our purposes here is that in their emptiness, in the spaces between dharmas, *nirvana* and this world correspond. Therefore through the Mādhyamika position it is possible to see how the identification of the realms of relative and absolute take place in their emptiness. This functions as a profoundly powerful bridging mechanism, transcending, at least conceptually, the problem of perception.

Ch'an (Zen):

The formative period of this school was from some 440 CE, and really began with the translation of the Lankavatara Sutra into Chinese. It was only in 520 CE that Bodhidharma came to China, although he is considered to be its founder. Around 700 CE it was established as a separate school, and while the Northern branch died out, the Southern one flourished. After 750 CE we find Ch'an established in separate monasteries with an independent organization. What separated them from other traditions was an interpretation of the *vinaya* rules which introduced manual labour for monks, a thing previously unheard of (Conze 1951:201).

Ch'an slowly gained ascendancy over all other Buddhist schools in China bar Amidism. The Lin-chi sect was particularly successful, and it is this group that is responsible for the systematisation of the teachings in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Ch'an permeated much of the culture in China and eastwards, having an especially important impact on art. It flourished in Japan where two rival sects were established, the Rinzai and the Sōtō. The impact of its introduction into Japan has been marked, and has more recently spread to the West with great force.

Conze (1951) identifies three general characteristics that mark Ch'an or Zen off from any other school of Buddhism. In the first place there is a marked hostility towards traditional aspects of Buddhism such as images and scriptures, and a radical empiricism which motivates this drive. Secondly, there is an aversion to metaphysical speculation and theory, instead direct insight is sought. Thirdly, sudden enlightenment is acknowledged, especially in the southern schools in China and in the Rinzai sect in Japan. This moment of enlightenment is an act of recognition in a timeless moment. Ultimately it is possible to reach the fulfilment of the Buddhist search of enlightenment only in the negation of Buddhism itself.

This last ties in very closely with what was said of the Mādhyamikas above. For example, the negation of the teachings that point one to the enlightenment experience is only of relative use. This also refers back to the concept Buddhism itself being a skilful means described in the last chapter. The tendency to hold onto the form and content of the teachings is itself a barrier to direct experience. Thus all views, including

the ones most effective in bringing about the moment of enlightenment, must ultimately be discarded.

More importantly though, the experience which can be induced through the highly efficacious methods of Zen teaching, is one of the identity of the phenomenal with the real. This is to be achieved by being thoroughly in the moment which, because it is empty, in no way limits experience. What I am suggesting is that Ch'an is in some way a practical concomitant of the *śūnyatā* doctrine. As such, and without being very wordy about its basis, experience of the ultimately real is accessible. In the Mādhyamika school, the object of ultimate reality is achieved through continuous negation. In the Ch'an system, the same object is experienced through continuous experience of the present. The experiential ground itself, rather than the methods which reach it, bridges the duality inherent in human perception.

The Yogācāra School:

van Loon (vol.2:34) contends that it was a response to the Mādhyamikan incapacity to speak that gave rise to the more idealistic view of the Yogācāra. In fact, the yogācārins taught that the absolute is thought or consciousness only. The Absolute is therefore to be sought in the pure subject which is free from all object. Conze contends that this interpretation is based on the world revealed by withdrawal into the higher stages of trance.

The school was founded in approximately 400 CE by the brothers Asāṅga and Vasubandhu in north-west India. From about a century later it began to dominate Mahayana Buddhism significantly. It was completely eradicated from India by 1100 CE, but by then was well established elsewhere. In China it was called Weih-shih, and in Japan it was known as the Hosso sect. (Conze 1951) Where its impact has been greatest however, is in the tantric traditions of the Vajrayana in Tibet and in the Mikyō or esoteric practices in Japan.

They argue that the empirical is an illusion that can disappear at the higher stages of trance absorption. *Avidyā* or ignorance is comprised of mistaking external objects for something separate from the mental image with which they are absolutely identical. They agree with the Mādhyamikans that the Absolute is unimaginable and unthinkable. Where they differ however is that the Yogācārin contend that empirical objects can not exist without a matrix of essential consciousness. This Pure Consciousness itself is held to be the ground against which all phenomena manifest themselves. (van Loon vol.2:34/5)

The method which goes along with this analysis is one that focuses on meditation, trance, absorption and introspection. In the higher stages of trance the objective world dwindles and disappears altogether, demonstrating pure consciousness without objects. It is this which is the basis of universal buddhahood, it is buddha-nature. The mechanisms of this ground of being and the methods through which the consciousness manifests were rich ground for the development of the Yogācāra doctrine. Most important to note for my purposes though is that the individual can engage in creative

ideation through control of their consciousness. Thus the meditator is placed at the centre of existential beingness. (van Loon vol.2:36)

Through this the Yogācārins gave the doctrine of the Trikāya a decidedly mystical interpretation. In particular the *Sāmbhogakāya* is seen to be the field of all mystic inspiration. Unfortunately it is extremely difficult to get coherent and accurate information on the tantric systems based on these conceptions. It is for this reason that I have neglected this aspect of Buddhism in this thesis. The problem is twofold. First the amount of literature that has been identified let alone translated is hardly sufficient relative to the amounts existing to get a clear and representative picture. Also, the problem of translation is huge. Most of the texts are esoteric to the extreme, and those who would know about it would have to undergo initiation under a teacher in order to learn the interpretations of otherwise incomprehensible texts. What can be said as a starting point is that tantrism and Yogācāra are closely allied. If all is consciousness and it is within human potential to control and create with it, then any object can be created in an reverse process. The images can be attuned with to the degree that awakens that aspect of reality within the trance practitioner. From that basis it is possible to move a long way in the direction of esoteric practice and power.

What is important for our purposes, is that once again there is an identification made between what is *samsara* and what is *nirvana*. This time it is not through the experience or category of emptiness, but that of consciousness. Clearly a lot more can be said about consciousness than can about emptiness. As that may be, I would

suggest that the two function similarly as bridging symbols that operate at the level of ultimate reality itself.

Referring back to these three developments, it is possible to see them together as a general trend, and they function in a similar manner. It has been stated previously that the ideal type of withdrawal paradigm is threatened where it comes into a situation in which the immediate world of experience can be affirmed as the real. In the case of Buddhism we find two situations in which this takes place. The one is where the beginning of Buddhism in fact created an alternative community which negated some of the pessimism that was inherent in Indian society. The second case was when Buddhism moved Eastwards. We have seen that in both China and Japan there were strong nature religion traditions, and these had to be encountered and assimilated. Generally therefore, Mahayana Buddhism has moved in the direction of the nature paradigm, whilst still maintaining some soteriological validity.

The last chapter examined some developments that allowed Buddhism to assimilate these other traditions through the bridging symbols that gave an enormous amount of fluidity to the tradition and its community. The problem still remains however that both paradigms are monistic, whilst the withdrawal one seeks to negate the immediate world of experience, and the nature one affirms it as completely and ultimately real. The change that takes place in the development of Mahayana is that the immediate world, instead of being something to withdraw from, becomes the mode or means through which ultimacy can be reached. Instead of it being characterised by suffering, its nature is emptiness or consciousness itself. Experientially this is to be found at point

instances of time, by being continually in the present. The illusion that is the root of ignorance is thereby redefined. What used to be a fundamental flaw in perception regarding the existence of the immediate world, becomes a flaw in the nature of the immediate world. It no longer has substance. Affectively this led more to play than rejection, more to appreciation than to defilement, and more to simplicity than complexity.

The Pure Land (Amidism):

This is evidently a very different religious phenomenon from the other developments discussed above. It grew originally out of the enormous popularity of the *bhakti* traditions in India from 400 CE. (Conze 1951) Where the Hinayana traditions has placed great emphasis on personal exertion and self-reliance in the pursuit of liberation, the Mahayanists did not. Most importantly, the latter took seriously the concerns of the laity and were, right from the beginning, more populist in their orientation. The kinds of meditative practices suggested by the Hinayanists were beyond the capacities or means of many of the people.

The Mahayanists still recognised that total liberation is impossible without significant insight into the three marks of being, but if the laity couldn't direct their energies there, they could at least aim for this as a future goal. This would then involve practising Buddhist morality and projecting devotional zeal to the Bodhisattvas and the Buddha-fields (van Loon vol.2:47). In other words, within the five virtues, faith was raised to a level equivalent to wisdom (Conze 1951).

From about the first century CE there is to be found a vast array of literature of this ilk. All suggested reliance on the power of Bodhisattvas and the potency of their vows to save all sentient beings. There was a shift in emphasis then from self-power to other-power. As I mentioned earlier in the last chapter's section on the Bodhisattva ideal, this brings about the constructs of linear time and a kingdom which is a future goal. These schools were founded in China in the second century and moved into Japan only around the tenth. It was in Japan that they developed most fully in the sense that certain schools such as Jodo Shinshu removed all distance between the laity and the sangha.

The tenets which give support to the doctrines are to be located in the idea of the Buddha-fields. These are not geographical localities, but taking from the Yogācāra, are ideational fields. They are in fact conjured up in the minds of the Bodhisattvas. As van Loon writes (vol.2:48) "it is a question of where one is conceptually centred in a multi-level universe of stratified perception: depending on how one allows one's mind to be conditioned, so one becomes conscious of certain levels of relative reality."

The aim of religious devotion is therefore to be reborn into a Pure Land of Bodhisattva compassion. This is the lowest level of understanding of the doctrine. It is one in which the lands are given ontological status equivalent to present reality, and can be reached only after death, this being a wonderful reincarnation. A higher level of interpretation reveals these lands to be states of consciousness, and as such they are coterminous and immediately accessible as realms of awareness. It is most certainly the former rather than latter interpretation which induced the populace to follow its path.

This school offered universal salvation where other forms in some way or another presumed some capacity that was required by adherents. If all beings have Buddha-nature then surely all are equally entitled to salvation. I noted in the second chapter that the other reason that a system would move out of a withdrawal paradigm is that persons no longer feel capable of bridging the problem of transcendence themselves. This was certainly the case in the development of *bhakti*, where in the *Kali Yuga*, humans are no longer capable of the exertions required of them by *Jñānayoga*. There is a similar doctrine of degeneracy to be found in Buddhism. There are periods roughly 500 years in length, stretching from the time of the Buddha's birth. Each new age brings with it a greater inability to comprehend and implement to Buddha's teachings. And so, in rough parallel to the *bhakti* movement, the faithful must now rely on others for liberation.

In terms of the ideal types, this movement is again a bridging out towards a secular world affirming paradigm. This is the case to the degree that the Pure Land becomes, not a transitional point in which capacities for salvation are improved, but an end in itself. The bridge towards the secular world affirming paradigm is not as complete as it is in Śaivite *bhakti*.

The move is sufficient however for there to be some radical concomitant changes in social orientation. It is not surprising that the only schools of Buddhism that asks for the exclusivity of its adherents is this one. This is to be found especially in the Japanese case with the Nichiren brand of religious nationalism which proclaims Japan itself to be the Pure Land. The doctrinal issues which come to the fore in Pure Land revolve

around exactly what responsibility there is on the side of the adherents in order to achieve salvation. The positions range from the necessity to follow all the Buddhist moral injunctions to the simple recitation of the name of the Bodhisattva concerned or the relevant *sutra*. This point will be discussed again in the last chapter, but it is important to note that the trend to a secular world affirming paradigm was exacerbated in Japan by the Meiji influx of Western worldviews and especially technology as a mode of engagement. There, while the symbols used are those derived from the Buddhist tradition community, the worldview is decidedly dualist. These groups too have managed to transfer well back onto Western soil.

In general then it is possible to see two broad movements in the developments of Mahayana Buddhism. Both relate to the increasingly affirmative nature of immediate life experience. The first three developments in their various ways, created an identity between the realms of *samsara* and *nirvana*. This allowed what had been a tension between immediate experience of the world and the promise of salvation to be turned instead to a creative and positively defined paradox. The last development of the Pure Land is, I would suggest, a case in which the tension in fact broke down in the increasingly affirmative situation. The drive to renunciation, be it affective or physical broke down. In that situation it became possible to rely on some level of trust in order to gain salvation.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE MODERN PERIOD AND DISCUSSION

What I have done thus far is apply the ideal types to the material at hand, and locate the tradition communities relative to them. I have also identified some of the more important bridging symbols that have been used between the nature and withdrawal paradigms. A third aspect has been the shifts that have taken place where the tension between the two has in some form broken down and solidary communities have been established. In these cases of Saivism and Pure Land especially, there is a move towards the establishment of a community based almost entirely on a single paradigm, that of secular world affirming religion. All of this has taken place before the modern period.

The modern period, and the colonialism that spread it, owes its success in large part to technology; military, civil and administrative. The one thing which underlies all three is that the technology is a clear expression of a mode of engagement that very actively takes hold of and shapes the immediate world in the pursuit of some grand purpose. In other words, it is the mode of engagement of the secular world affirming paradigm. I think it must be clear that any ideal type when introduced must become an important polarity in the religious landscape. This is clearly in evidence in the situation in India where there are found the beginnings of the withdrawal paradigm. All the tradition communities that were already established had to respond in some way to the entire construct that is inherent in the first expressions of the new paradigm. This must happen at least as much, if not more,

where there is a case of another paradigm being brought in from an external source. The impact of the world-view of technology, it is clear, spread far beyond the material existence of the instruments.

What I have attempted is to locate the various tradition communities relative to the triangulation of the ideal types. What happens in the modern period is the influx, on a large scale, of aspects of the secular world affirming paradigm. What I will now do is assess some religious and worldview changes in response to this phenomenon. In this way I hope to be able to further show the fruitfulness of the application of Cumpsty's theory in a broad sweep of religious history. Moreover, I think that the trends which are to be found in the modern period show up quite clearly some of the predictive factors to change that have already been encountered.

"Socially Engaged Buddhism":

The most important founder of this movement is Thich Nhat Hanh who emerged during the Vietnam war where the term engaged Buddhism is first to be found (D'arcy May 1994/5:22). Hanh's main doctrinal point is that of "interbeing", based on the doctrine of dependant origination. It is on the basis of this understanding of human commonality and interrelationship that he began programmes of social involvement. All of them were non-violent and non-partisan in political terms. The work for which he is best known is that of refugee repatriation and helping families find their members during and after the war. His activities in Vietnam led to his having to leave that country. From there he went to France where he established Plum Village, a meditation retreat and popular centre for

many of the people involved in this new movement. Thich Nhat Hanh is a prolific writer and traveller, and much of his work has been published through Parallax Press, which has also been at the Western frontier of this movement.

Another important development is that of the Sarvodaya, begun in Sri Lanka in 1958, ten years after its independence from British Rule. Starting as a school project under the science teacher A. T. Ariyaratna, it has developed to the degree that it now affects the lives of 2 - 3 million people in 400 villages (as at 1983). It is the largest non-government development project in that country and is gaining increasing international recognition as a highly effective development project. While the philosophy of the movement is largely Buddhist, it was inspired by both the Quakers and the Gandhian movement, and utilises Churches and Mosques as well as Temples (Macy 1983:29).

The name Sarvodaya means "awakening of all" which implies both the awakening of all people as well as that of the totality of persons, and thus the "building of a new person" (Macy 1983:32). In so doing they believe that it is fundamentally important to alleviate the physical and psychological impotence of the rural poor. By tapping into core religious values and redefining the symbols of the Buddhist tradition community they put people in touch with both their *swashakti* (personal power) as well as their *janashakti* (collective power). Taking again from the central Buddhist conception of Dependant Origination which formulates the interconnectedness of all life, each and every act is understood to have an affect on all other beings. Community development, therefore, is seen as a means for pursuing what is, essentially, a religious goal; that of awakening or enlightenment (Macy 1983:33).

All the central doctrines of Buddhism have been reinterpreted in this schemata in terms of rural village life. For example, the Four Noble Truths have been restated as follows: 1. There is a decadent village, 2. There is a cause; egoism, ill-will, ignorance, etc. 3. There is hope in that no fate condemns people to live like that, in that we are all responsible for ourselves and our actions, 4. The path is that of the Sarvodaya village that incorporates the fulfilment of needs identified by the movement (Macy 1983:38). These needs are arranged in a hierarchy and include such things as personal dignity and creative cultural life. Right Mindfulness, for example, becomes being mindful of the needs of the village and alert to any possibilities of collective and personal betterment.

This kind of Buddhism is explicitly used to counter feelings of cultural inferiority in the wake of the colonial period where the Protestant powers had gone to great lengths, not only to criticise Buddhism, but also to displace the sangha from its social and political nexus. Also the labour camps in many of these villages repair and clean up temples and other religious sites, thus re-placing the temple at the centre of village activities. The Buddhist doctrine of craving being at the centre of suffering is a well known one, but it has often resulted in the shunning of material possessions. Sarvodaya believes that attention to the non-material needs of the people puts the material ones in perspective. Moreover, it is stated that material well-being, whilst needing to avoid self-indulgence, is the only possible basis of spiritual development. Obviously the story of the Buddha eating to restore health before his meditations under the bodhi tree provides a wonderful analogy.

Particularly important in the success of the movement is the role of the monks, some 1000 of whom work more or less full-time on these projects. Their presence at events ensures

greater participation as well as sets the tone and ethics for the gathering. This has the special effect of allowing participation by children and women. Manual labour is traditionally seen as immoral and undignified as well as contrary to the *vinaya* rules for the monks, and there have been some problems, both with the authorities in the sangha as well as in lowering esteem from the laity. The monks' involvement, despite this, symbolises a great change in the nature of the sangha itself. As the sangha is drawn out in this way it is also expanding in renewal. As such the religious vocation of monks is being reinterpreted. Despite this, "socially active" *bikkhus* still have much lower esteem than the "forest dwelling". Interestingly, the image of the bodhisattva is being evoked in increasing degrees, and in some circles, detachment is being equated with freedom to act rather than withdrawal from society. In other words there is a parallel here with Liberation Theology and this "engaged Buddhist" reinterpretation. While the two aspects of meditation and social action have traditionally been polarised in the Lankan sangha, Sarvodaya is acting as a bridge between these two ideals.

Parallel to this kind of movement involved in the villages, came the development of an urban Sinhalese Buddhist elite. The problem that they encountered was that traditional Buddhism as found in Sri Lanka lacked almost any form of modern institutional apparatus. What they did, and this parallels many trends in post-colonial India, was to adopt Protestant models for Buddhism (Obeyesekere 1972:23). Many of the propagandists of this new Buddhism were bilingual, wealthy, and educated at missionary schools. This Buddhism was held to be a kind of Theosophy, a religion of "rationality", and devoid of "superstitions". In order to portray this, the peasant cults were actively demythologised.

While the spatial separation of the monasteries from the people had been commonplace, there was now a massive change in both the spatial and ideological manifestation of Buddhism in the urban centres. A large part of this change was due to the strongly Buddhist flavour of Sri Lankan nationalism developing at the time. The sangha had to come to the fore as a political force. Monks, as we have seen, became increasingly involved in political and social activities. There still exists a great deal of ambiguity regarding the economic role of monks, mostly because economic development and technological advance are seen as aspects of Western scientific materialism and devalued as such (Obeyesekere 1972:64). There is also an increasing paradox in attitude towards the monk, and the greater his public involvement, the greater the criticism of his virtue. In response to this there emerged a group called "The Society for Rejuvenating Discipline" which is attempting to enforce the *vinaya* again (Obeyesekere 1972:67).

One symbolic change which is very important in this context is the creation of a new category which bridges the old and new conceptions of the monk, and therefore the religious ideal. The contradiction between the renunciate and the worldly is in some degree eliminated in the category of the lay Buddhist. The political leader and reformer, Anagarika Dharmapala, envisaged and embodied a new role in this regard. He created and wore a special vestment, a white robe worn slightly differently from those of the monks, and he did not take tonsure. He practised sexual abstinence and the ascetic renunciations recumbent on novice monks. The Mahabodhi society which he founded aimed at the resuscitation of both Buddhism and the Sinhalese people in a powerful combination of religious nationalism. In so doing he provided a new focus for national unity, and in the process it was inevitable that he had to become involved in matters of this world. While

few people have actually taken on this role it has had a significant intercessionary function and significance (Obeyesekere 1972:73).

In other words, the same kinds of changes which necessitated reviewing the social role of the sangha in the urban centres were at play in the rural areas where the Sarvodaya movement has had such great success. Both are revisionist movements which do not explicitly move away from Theravada. In fact, the identity as Theravadin has become increasingly important and significant in the light of newly developing nationalist identities in Sri Lanka. Certainly the Buddhist tradition is varied and multivalent enough that these revisionists can call on the Pali cannon to witness that their intent is not at odds with either the teachings of the Buddha or the tradition community built upon the dharma. Yet, there is a very definite shift in emphasis.

Returning again to the theoretical issues, we have seen time and time again that the ideal type of person established in a tradition community is a reflection of the ethical norms, and thus the mode of engagement, in operation. These two examples given above in Sri Lanka reflect a radical need for redefinition in this regard. Previously the allocation in operation gave the sangha the capacity to embody the ideal type of person on the side of withdrawal and personal enlightenment in the dual ethical source. I have shown in chapter three that this allocation was on doctrinal rather than symbolic grounds, and such allocation according to Cumpsty is more difficult to cleanse when the situation no longer makes it tenable. This would, I suggest, explain the enormous amount of contention which surrounds the redefinition of the roles of the monks in Sri Lankan society.

The secular world affirming paradigm, as its name states, gives far more affirmation and validity to the immediate world than does the one found in traditional Theravadin Buddhism. The impact of this is reflected in this need to redefine the role of monks. The move to break some of the *vinaya* rules is therefore a fundamental one and is a result of an increasingly affirmed immediate environment. I think that this must validate and reconfirm many of the statements I made previously on the development of the Mahayana out of the Theravada. We saw that the increasingly affirmed environment encountered in China and Japan tended to move the Mahayana in the direction of the other side of the dual ethics, that of interrelationship and compassion. We therefore find parallels in the Theravadin revisionist situation of socially engaged Buddhism. This is evidenced particularly in the new-found reference to the ideal of the *bodhisattva* and in recourse to the doctrine of dependant origination that was previously not as highlighted.

The Mahayana:

What then is the situation in the Mahayana, that already generally had the orientation towards compassion? The modern period saw a second influx of affirmation of the immediate environment, this time from the secular world affirming paradigm and its ambassador, technology. Unfortunately it is impossible to say what has happened in the situation in China with the advent of Maoist Marxism and its cultural revolution. A situation which is more open to examination is that of Japan.

The Meiji restoration saw the government of Japan breaking down much of the feudal structure and the parallel organizational structure of the Buddhist temples and the Shinto

shrines. At the time there was a small but significant persecution of Buddhism and a separation of the two previously interwoven religious traditions, if not the communities. This left the Buddhist hierarchy without many of the resources it had previously owned, but also without the strictures that had previously been placed on their roles and functions. The Meiji restoration and the period running up to it saw a massive development of new religious movements that were more or less Buddhist in nature. The largest of these is the Sokka Gokai which is quite representative, but there are a plethora of others which are also strongly nationalist and Buddhist in the Pure Land stream.

These new religious movements are, in ideal types terms, a move towards a single paradigm, that of secular world affirming religion. As such they display all the concomitants of that type, from the establishment of solidary communities to linear time and goal orientation. They also demand the exclusive allegiance of adherents, a characteristic particular to the Pure Land in Buddhism. What is happening, therefore, is that the paradox between the nature paradigm and the withdrawal one which had been so creative and finely balanced, is broken down by the increasing affirmation of the immediate environment. This completely negates the previous soteriological drive to affective if not physical withdrawal from the environment which is absolutely necessary in other forms of Buddhism. Because those symbols that were used to bridge the nature and withdrawal paradigms were fluid and effective, there has been no parallel to the Theravadin revisionism evidenced above. Instead the more traditional communities have continued rather as before, simply expanding the scope of the immediate world in the older symbolic representation and worldview. The alternative move is away from that paradigmatic polarity into solidary community and the secular world affirming paradigm.

The West:

Let us look, then, at what has been happening in the West with respect to those traditions that were born in India, both Hindu and Buddhist. In order to do so I need to present a characterisation of various components of Western religious worldview in terms of the ideal types. To do so I need to go back to the Enlightenment. Previous to that time of revolutionary change, we find an almost total and pervasive dualism about reality. The only notable exceptions to this were the more mystical aspects of the Christian and Jewish traditions in Europe and North America. With the advent of a far greater emphasis on the natural environment and a new and powerful method of investigation in science that led to what has been called scientism, the secular polarity became far the stronger in the duality. For a significant part of the more educated populace in these areas, this move went to the extent of denying the transcendent altogether. This can be stated in the extreme with Nietzsche's statement on the death of God. This was complemented by a rise in agnosticism and atheism, and a new search for social and religious ethics. I do not use the word secularization because of its ambiguity in this context.

We find, therefore, a situation where science is the method of investigation and technology the method of application in a worldview that has, to some degree or another, negated one half of a duality. The late modern and especially the post-modern situation is one that is moving closer to the nature paradigm than any other. Knowledge is relative, no longer absolute. Even those who maintained belief in and experience of God, the role of the church and of revelation have undergone radical criticism and revision.

What then is the logic behind the shift to certain religious traditions of Indian origin in the West? There have really only been three kinds of traditions that have made significant impact on the Western religious landscape, especially in North America where, it is arguable, these post-Enlightenment trends have been taken the furthest. The first is that of Indian *bhakti*, especially the Hare Krishna movement. In the United States it is possible to see this as one of many groups that have been characterised as new religions movements. Almost all of these have maintained the dualism inherent in the secular world affirming paradigm, but have become completely disillusioned with the traditional Christian doctrines which previously expressed it. The symbols of that tradition have therefore not survived radical biblical criticism. The trend to conversion is therefore in this case, a replacement of symbols that represent a similar world view. These new symbols do not have to bear the baggage of previous criticism. In the process the Indian bhakti tradition that is its source has also undergone Protestantisation, whereby myths are "rationalised" and organisational structures resemble those of the Christian Church. This certainly began in India after colonial rule ended, but has gone even further on Western soil.

The second group of new religious movements that have found a home in the West are those from Pure Land Buddhism, and especially those from Japan. Many of the Japanese groups, as I have already said, were strongly nationalist in flavour. Those groups that have managed the transplantation have needed to revise this nationalism towards a greater universalism. Nichiren and "Namu Amida Butsu" chanting groups are two examples that have managed to do so. This is a case which is quite explicitly a bridging back. By this I mean that the impulse for their development came from Western technological expansion and its concomitants, and now their successful negotiation of the historical situation has

allowed a re-colonization, as it were. These groups would also gain adherents from people located at the same place as those outlined above as adherents to the Hare Krishna.

The third really successful religious transplantation also comes from Japan in the form of Zen Buddhism. I would argue that the emphasis on the intellectual in the Western tradition derives from revelation and the necessity to have right beliefs in order to assure membership in the solidary community. This rational/philosophical/intellectual approach was then transformed into scientism, and a belief that science was the best, if not the only, means of acquiring knowledge of the world. What seems to be happening, and this would be a post-modern phenomenon, is that there is a serious disillusionment with the capacity for rational enquiry to answer some of life's more metaphysical questions. Generally speaking, those who have taken to Zen Buddhism and certainly the Western translators of it, are highly educated and disillusioned with the scope of that education. Dogmatically that corresponds well with the Zen tendency, mentioned before, to radical iconoclasm and anti-intellectualism. As with Zen in Japan, moving as close as possible to a nature religion paradigm within Buddhism, so too does this group of people hold most closely to a nature paradigm. The result, therefore, is an experiential rather than a revised conceptual understanding of the totality of existence.

Thich Nhat Hanh, whilst working in a largely Theravadin situation, is a Zen Buddhist by lineage and training. With the loss of a secure ethical source in the breakdown of the transcendent duality, ethics in the West has undergone radical relativisation. The assertion of the Buddhist ethical principles of interdependence in conjunction with Zen experientialism is having an impact that is clear from the popularity of the kinds of

publications made by Parallax Press. It ties in well with the environmentalist movement and various other components of spiritual and healing movements now coming to fore in the West.

The Application of Cumpsty's Theory:

The thesis until this point has been about the application of parts of Cumpsty's theory to the broad scope of religious history from early Hinduism to contemporary Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. My aim in this application has been two-fold. The first is to see whether the ideal types and the idea of bridging mechanisms can further understanding and explanation in a broad historical and religious horizon. The second is to assess Cumpsty's theory in terms of the material at hand. It is rather obvious that the more fruitful and applicable the theory, the closer these two aspects will be to each other.

What Cumpsty's theory can do is identify the mosaic that comprise the multiplicity of the empirical phenomenon that is religion. In identifying the ideal types and their concomitants, it is possible to locate a tradition community with some accuracy. It is also possible to recognise what symbols are and are not negotiable in a tradition community in order to maintain that location without losing vitality and adherents. The difficult part of any application such as the one I have been doing, is to identify what are the logical consequences of the ideal types, against those parts of the tradition that are bridging, containment, or allocation. This is the case because, for a tradition community to establish and maintain integrity, it must hold together tightly the various symbols. The discernment

of these aspects, however, reveals the factors that influence change, and allows for some form of prediction.

If we go back in overview, it is possible to identify the logical and structural factors at work in any given historical situation. Obviously this is much easier with some hindsight, and where trends have later become reified, or become tradition communities in and of themselves. What I have done, therefore, is to trace the religious history of the more significant movements that developed in India and Buddhism which spread from there. So from early Hinduism we find the beginnings of ethicization, which, because of a doctrine of reincarnation and a negative assessment of the immediate world, leads to a bridging out to a withdrawal paradigm. Thus we find elements within one society moving out from a nature religion paradigm to a withdrawal one with its individualism and its asceticism. These two paradigms are seen within the Indian people as a conflict between moksa and dharma and their concomitants.

The move to the withdrawal paradigm is most complete in Buddhism. In response to this development, all the other aspects of the religious worldview of India had to be renegotiated, and bridging symbols established. I have given examples of this in terms of *varnasramadharm*a and Vedanta, both of which maintain the tension, and *bhakti* and Saivism which move instead to a secular world affirming paradigm.

Turning to Buddhism, I have applied the same type of analysis to a situation where the distinction between these two paradigms is not always ethically clear. I would argue that the lack of previous analysis of this kind in academic scholarship is based on two things.

The first is the redefinition of the term dharma in Buddhism which moves to include both aspects in its connotation. The second is the distinction made within academic scholarship between Indology and East Asian studies. This trend has tended to create a discontinuity. The early Buddhist forms of the Hinayana are clearly very close to the ideal type of withdrawal. Therefore bridging is quite minimal, and it is only in the Mahayana traditions that it re-emerges as a need to negotiate two logically incompatible worldviews.

I have, therefore, made an assessment of the kinds of negotiations that are to be found in the Theravadin tradition (which is not the same as original Buddhism) and functioning in different environments from India. I have characterised the negotiation in this case as allocation, and in so doing hopefully clarified the incredible complexity found empirically in the Theravadin tradition. As to the Mahayana traditions and their later developments, I argue that the causal factors leading originally to the development of the Mahayana are two-fold. The first lies in the solution that the Buddhist doctrine provided to the negative situation perceived by Buddhism's early adherents. In this way the trend to extreme withdrawal was negated by the increasingly secure world made possible by the analysis of suffering in Buddhism. The second is to be found in the fact that the Mahayana managed to move as a missionary religion into areas that were much more affirmative of the immediate environment.

I then went on to identify the bridging symbols that allowed the Mahayana to negotiate this paradox with such success. The first set of these I found in the doctrines of the Trikaya, in the concept of skilful means, and in the ideal of the bodhisattva. The second set

I found in doctrines that asserted the correspondence between the realms and states of *nirvana* and *samsara*, whilst still maintaining soteriological integrity.

The other trend in the Mahayana, that of Pure Land, I have identified as a move out of that polarity between the two paradigms, and into the establishment of a tradition community almost entirely in the secular world affirming paradigm. In the cases where this happens, both in Hinduism and in Buddhism, one of two factors identified by Cumpsty are in operation. The one is where the individual is no longer capable of personal action sufficient to attain salvation, and this is to be found in situations where there is a belief in degeneracy of both the cosmos and the human person. The other is where the affirmation of the immediate environment is to the degree that escape is no longer necessary.

In this last chapter I have looked at the influx of the secular world affirming paradigm in the modern period on a global scale, and the responses within Hinduism, Buddhism and then in the West itself. I have done so, not only to bring the historical analysis up to the present, but also to see how it is possible to apply the theory to a more contemporary period where the trends might not be as clearly identifiable. I believe that in so doing I have not only shown the theory's applicability in this sphere, but also drawn parallels with the previous periods that highlight the accuracy of the factors which I have described in bringing about religious change.

What I must conclude is that this theory, in its modelling, has a predictive power which is unmatched in any other. Provided it is possible to separate out the ideal types from the various mechanisms of bridging, it is possible to identify and predict broad sweeps of

religious trend. It is possible to identify what movements there are in the direction of any one of the ideal types, and the possible alternatives that then become available. It would be impossible though to predict what exactly could be used as bridging symbols, or what the holder of a containment will be. Having said that, it is still possible to identify them as bridging symbols or containments or allocations when they emerge. I believe I have provided sufficient argument to give proof of the fruitfulness of the model and the validity of the factors which Cumpsty identifies as being catalysts to religious change.

With respect to the withdrawal paradigm, Cumpsty states that, because of the incompatibility of the problem of perception with empirical knowledge, the paradigm cannot be broken down further. While I have found this to be accurate in the strictest sense, I have developed on it in two ways. The first is that because of two sources of ethics implied in the paradigm, it is possible and usual to have two concomitant social organisations. It seems from the empirical evidence that either one or the other is more favoured. Also, the withdrawal paradigm is never found in isolation from at least one other paradigm, and throughout this material that other was found to be a nature one. I would suggest that the pressures put on the individual in the demand for affective withdrawal are far too intense for any but a few to follow the paradigm with any closeness. In other words, while I accept the logical coherence of the ideal type, very few individuals could have worldviews which correspond with it. Therefore, it is necessary for communities to have this other polarity. It is in fact the very dynamism derived from the tension between the two that has powered the motor of religious change and cultural creativity. In this way I have taken Cumpsty's withdrawal type and further developed it.

One more issue needs to be addressed, that of the definition of religion itself. The entire construct of the ideal types, while applicable separately from any other part of the theory, rests on the definition of religion as belonging. It would seem that much of the debate on the definition of religion has been founded on the question of what can and cannot be denoted as religion, and how that which is denoted can be characterised. This is obviously quite circular, as any definition must be based on the characterisation and visa versa. The approach that has been used seems to be one where all things that in some form or other intuitively feels and looks like religion has been collected. Then the commonalities have been described as essences. This is why the issue of theism has been so hotly contested in this debate, is it or is it not essential to religion? As such, Theravada and Vedanta have been turned to again and again as examples at issue. The question of what is Buddhism itself has been important, especially as the Mahayana and the Theravada seem so different with respect to this issue.

In terms of the question of the nature or structure or essence of Buddhism itself, it is possible to provide, not a delineation but a location through Cumpsty's theory. This location must differ across the expanse of Buddhism and take into account the identification of persons as Buddhist across a large spectrum . The phenomenological approach has taken self-identity to be almost the only possible answer to the question. It is indeed the only yardstick one can have to the delineation. What is possible with Cumpsty's model is to locate one kind of Buddhism at various points between the nature and withdrawal paradigms, and another within the area of the secular world affirming paradigm.

The other approach to the definition of religion in the broadest sense has been based on the individual, and a psychological model. This has often been in the direction of religion as some form of lack of health in the individual, religion as a crutch, etc. What this has done, and it is in the correction to this that phenomenology has been so important, is to negate the religiosity of the human person. This kind of psychologism has neglected to take the subject of religion seriously, obviously in contradiction to those persons who understand themselves to be religious. While Cumpsty's definition of religion cannot delineate very clearly in social terms, it makes it possible to delineate in personal terms without negating the religiosity itself.

I conclude that the application of Cumpsty's theory to the broad sweep of history is fruitful in its capacity to both explain and clarify. I believe that the application of the theory to a divergence of religious phenomena in this thesis is justified. Moreover, the identification of inherent patterns in religion diversity possible through the modelling of the ideal types is a powerful explanatory device and capable of generating prediction. The fruitfulness of the theory in its application has, I believe, proved its usefulness through empirical testing.

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