

# THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

By

Dr. V. RAGHAVAN

Professor of Sanskrit (Retd.), University of Madras,

Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow (1969-70)

Author of the Indian Heritage, the Spiritual Heritage  
Of Tyagaraja, The Great Integrators—Saint-Singers of  
India, etc.

With the Foreword of

Prof. ARNOLD TOYNBEE

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## PREFACE

My happiness in the publication of one more of my studies by The Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, are enhanced by the distinguished historian- of Civilization and Culture, Professor Arnold Toynbee, contributing an illuminating Foreword to it. I desire to express my gratitude to Professor Toynbee for his Foreword.

The subject of this study has been one very much after my heart but because of the limitations of a lecture in the form of which it had to be presented; all my material could not be included here. The wide coverage that I wanted to give could be seen in the extensive Bibliography that I have appended to the publication. In this connection, I must thank the several Libraries in Madras, Bangalore and Delhi for the facilities they extended to me to consult the large number of old and new books on the subject, all of which could not be had at one place.

Before this lecture was taken up for printing, I had been on an academic visit to the United States and had an opportunity to discuss it at a meeting arranged by my friend, Professor Milton Singer, Professor of Anthropology, University of Chicago, Chicago, with members of his Department.

It is a matter of deep regret that between the date of the lecture and its publication, two of my esteemed friends of the Indian Institute of World Culture, Mr. Jacques Dedeyn and Miss Ethel Beswick, passed away. I have grateful recollections of the ever helpful Miss Beswick, who during my stay in England in 1953-54 invited me more than once to lecture at the London Branch of The Indian Institute of World Culture.

Dipavali

18-10-1971

V. RAGHAVAN

## FOREWORD

I am happy to have been asked to write a preface for Dr. Raghavan's Founder's Day Address on 'The Concept of Culture'. His subject is at the centre of my own interests, and I have a high regard for the Indian Institute of World Culture. My wife and I had the pleasure of visiting the Institute in 1957 and meeting the Founder, Sri Wadia, and Madame Wadia. Dr. Raghavan opens his Address by paying a tribute to the Founder's memory. He has expressed my own feelings and those of very many other people.

The word 'culture' has at least three meanings. Its widest meaning is the social heritage which, in human society, is transmitted from generation to generation through education in the broadest sense of the term. Mankind shares with other kinds of living creature the capacity to reproduce itself physically, and a physical heritage carries a built-in instinctual heritage with it. However, the role of instincts in human life is subordinate to the role of culture, and culture seems to be something specifically and distinctively human.

As Dr. Raghavan points out, culture, in this widest meaning of the word, includes all human activities that do not spring from instincts, and our instinctual activities — for instance, the impulse to satisfy the cravings of hunger and of sexual desire — are governed and modified by our manners and customs, which are manifestations of our culture. In so far as a human being's instincts escape from cultural control, he becomes something less than human.

Culture is the humanizing factor in human life, but of course this does not mean that our cultural heritage is wholly good. Two of the most wide-spread human institutions have been war and slavery; these have been products of culture, not of instinct, and they are manifestly evil. Human culture is ethically ambivalent. It is a mixture of good and evil and the proportion has varied at different times and places and in different social classes.

This diversification of culture is probably recent. It is perhaps no older than the beginning of the Neolithic Age; for neither class-differentiation nor slavery nor war would have been practicable before society had begun to produce an economic surplus beyond the requirements for meeting day-to-day needs. In the pre-Neolithic age, our culture may have been as uniform as our tools, and it looks as if it is going to be uniform in the future, now that we have 'annihilated distance'. In retrospect, cultural diversity may be seen to have been a brief phase of human life, intervening between two vastly longer ages of cultural uniformity. Even in the age of maximum cultural diversity, local cultures prove—as Dr. Raghavan has also pointed out — to have been syncretism's composed of elements assembled from distant times and places. Unity is culture's dominant characteristic; cultural diversity is subordinate and probably ephemeral. Dr. Raghavan makes this point apropos of the connotation of the word 'Arya'. He illustrates the concept of culture partly from Indian manifestations of culture, but, throughout his Address, he is concerned with the culture of mankind as a whole.

The first meaning of the word 'culture' is the social heritage transmitted through education. The second meaning of the word is some variety of our common human social heritage: 'a culture' as distinct from culture in general. A third meaning is the ideal way of life that is mankind's objective, and here, again, there has been a high degree of uniformity. The moral, aesthetic and intellectual ideals of the various branches of human society have been very much the same, while, in our practice, we have, all alike, fallen short, to a humiliating degree, of our professed standards.

Moreover, we have been tempted to claim that our own particular cultural ideal is noble

and also that it has been attained by us. If the Indian and Iranian ethnicon 'Arya' means 'noble', this is a case in point. But the higher the claim, the greater the discrepancy between ideal and practice is likely to be. The title has to be won by living up to the ideal. As Dr. Raghavan puts it, 'a true Arya is no Indian... but one who belongs to the whole World'.

A pessimist might conclude that cultural ideals are discredited by the betrayal of them. An optimist will take comfort in the difference between culture and instincts, and in the manifest paramountcy of culture in deciding human destiny. Instincts are implanted and modified by natural forces that are beyond the control of human wills. Culture, on the other hand, is *karma*. It is the cumulative product of past action, and human action is partially free. Each time that a human being makes a moral choice, he modifies his *karma*: he makes this either better or worse. Our cultural ideals are a challenge to us to raise our *karma* nearer to their level. This is the value of ideals — always supposing that we are sincerely striving to fulfill them.

ARNOLD TOYNBEE

Chatham House,  
London.

25th March 1971

## THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Madame Wadia, Mr. Dedeyn, Sri Venkataramiah and Friends,

I am thankful to the authorities of this Institute for their invitation to me. The participation in this your important annual function is not only a matter of pleasure, but for me it is also the discharging of a special duty that. I owe to one who had spontaneously, without any previous background of association, evinced his appreciation of my work and taken, as is usual with him, an active and practical interest in it. You, Madame, in your opening address, have made some observations referring to my work. If I had been able to achieve anything, it is due primarily to the elders who had been putting forth their endeavors before me and had provided inspiration to me. Among them I cherish the late respected Founder of this Institute whose memory, we are met now to honour. I have stood in this Hall at his instance several times and what I had spoken on those occasions have appeared as Transactions of this Institute. I should refer specially to my book *The Indian Heritage* which could not have been published in time according to the schedule of its sponsors, the UNESCO, but for his quick decision and generous co-operation.

So far as I was concerned, even at that time, Sri Wadia was no stranger. The beginning of<sup>1</sup> my own voyages and explorations in Indian thought and culture coincided with the founding of his journal, *The Aryan Path*, which is maintaining its position as the foremost monthly of its kind. From its inaugural volume in 1930, I have, been following it. The very title that was chosen for it revealed the man and mind behind it. It meant not merely the ancient knowledge handed to us, down the ages, which was its main inspiration. Prof. A. V. William Jackson, Iranian Specialist, in his note of welcome published in the first issue, pointed out briefly that the word 'Aryan' recalled the common heritage which the Occident shared with the Orient and went elaborately into the philology and philosophy of the word 'Path', as indeed some other writers in the other issues of the first year did. I, for one, was struck by the first word 'Aryan', not from the point of view of its anthropology, which continues to disturb us, but of the higher ethical import and overtones of the term, no less original and ancient, true and significant, — an example of that semantically process which has given us bright gems of ideas and precious concepts of culture out of many raw materials of history and ethnology. From earliest times, the word *Arya* meant auspicious, noble; contrasted with *Mleccha*, it carried a clear sense of the cultured as against the unrefined and uncivilized. It is this sense in which the name *Aryan Path* becomes very significant in relation to the ideas which it has been its mission to propagate. It is in this sense of moral discipline that Valmiki and Kalidasa use the word *Arya*: the former when describing Rama as an *Arya*, one who is equal towards all and is uniformly and always pleasing to behold (*Aryah sarvasamas caiva sadaika-priyadarsanah*— I. 1.16) and the latter, when he speaks of King Dusyanta's conscience as *Arya*, so much disciplined that propriety and proper conduct had become instinctive with it ('*Yadaryam asyam abhilasi me manah*' — *Sakuntala*, 1.20). It is again in this sense that the four Truths proclaimed by the Buddha are called *Arya Satyas*. I have been able to unearth two specific definitions or descriptions of *Aryata* and *Arya* from Sanskrit literature: The great Bhisma, from whose discourses nothing is absent, says in the Great Epic (*Anusasana* 162): "That is the quality allied *Aryata* whereby one, by effort, does good to the beings, without displaying on his demeanour any symptoms of his doing good, and in a disinterested manner."

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<sup>1</sup> Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, 1956, 1958, 1963

Aryata nama bhutanam yah karoti prayatnatah |  
Subham karma nirakaro vitaragas tathaiva ca ||

The second definition, whose exact source is not given, is extracted in the *Sabdakalpadruma*:  
“Doing what has to be done, not doing what ought not to be done, he who does what is proper to the time and situation, he is considered to be an *Arya*”

Kartavyam acaran kamam akartavyam anacaran |  
Tisthati prakrtacare sa tu arya iti smrtah ||

It is this meaning which I want to stress on this occasion and I cannot do it better than by quoting what Sri Aurobindo said, bringing out the full implication of the word *Arya*:

“The most varied qualities met in the Indian conception of the best, *srestha*, the good and noble man, *arya*. In the heart benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, long-suffering, liberality, kindness, patience: in the character courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power too to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a strong independence and love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, an openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; in the inner being a strong religious sense, piety, love of God, seeking after the Highest, the spiritual turn; in social relations and conduct a strict observance of all the social *dharmas*, as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, member of clan or *caste*; this was the total ideal of the *Arya*, the man of high upbringing and noble nature. The ideal is clearly portrayed in the written records of ancient India during two millenniums and it is the very life-breath of Hindu ethics. It was the creation of an at once ideal and rational mind, spirit-wise and worldly-wise, deeply religious, nobly ethical, firmly yet flexibly intellectual; scientific and aesthetic, patient and tolerant of life’s difficulties and human weakness, but arduous in self-discipline. This was the mind that was at the base of the Indian civilization and gave its characteristic stamp to all the culture.”<sup>2</sup>

Such a true *Arya* is no Indian, nor even an Indo-European, but one who belongs to the whole world, the universal man.<sup>3</sup>

The aim and message of one humanity and a universal culture, Sri Wadia himself stated in one of his editorials, “Thus Have I Heard.”<sup>2</sup> In this Editorial called ‘Discipline and Culture’, he said: “A man of real culture will recognize that humanity is one” and that “Culture alone will enable hint and the group to which he belongs to live at peace with all other men and all other groups”; that “Self-discipline and self-training are necessary to make themselves men of culture”; and that culture, peace and freedom formed together a triad and that culture was the apex from which “alone came peace for the many nations of the world and freedom for all men and citizens.”<sup>4</sup>

The ideals of the Institute where we are celebrating the Founder’s Day this evening are the same, although the form and method of serving these ideals vary.

It was for fostering the ‘International outlook and a truly cosmopolitan spirit’ and ‘the ancient culture which is neither of the East nor of the West but is universal’ that it was

<sup>2</sup> P. 20, The Foundations of Indian Culture, Aurobindo Asram, Pondicherry, 1959

<sup>3</sup> Collected and published under that caption, Indian Institute of World Culture, 1959

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 213-4.

founded. Himself delivering the 14th Annual Address, on 'Our Soul's need',<sup>1</sup> Sri Wadia said: "The speciality of our Institute's programme is the spreading of the humane ideas, as distinct from material and mechanistic thoughts', 'stress on the humanities which directly touch the moral basis of man' and 'the spirit of real tolerance'.

The Institute was originally called when it was founded in 1945 the 'Indian Institute of Culture' and later the word 'World' was added before 'Culture'. The addition was probably due to the desire to remove any misapprehension that might have risen in some minds that the scope of the culture studied or promoted through it is confined to any particular part of the world and that it is not universal. Indeed, in one of the previous Addresses, the one by Sri Rajaji,<sup>2</sup> is found the observation that it would be proper to call this 'Indian Institute of World Cultures'. I think this was not the real intention. The theme of my address, on the Institute's Founder's Day this year will be devoted to this subject, namely the concept of Culture, in singular, to which the Institute is dedicated.

## II

When we refer to the culture of a people, or the cultural history of a people, almost every activity of a people, including the material and the economic, their whole social anthropology, is meant. Also, each nation has, by virtue of several historical and geographical, as also psychological and intellectual factors, certain characteristic culture traits, a certain ideology which is of course part of culture, but lays more emphasis on certain aspects of it. In these two senses, the use of the word in its plural form, cultures, seems proper.

Even in the above two senses, we may say, that there is an aspect of universality which is revealed by a historical and comparative study of a culture or of different cultures. People have always mingled by commerce, conquest, migration and other historical factors, so that no culture can be held to be absolutely original or uninfluenced by other cultures. In his two-volume study of *The Great Cultural Traditions*, Ralph Turner has shown how the culture of one people has absorbed that of another and how civilization is, in essence, a co-operative process. We shall take two examples, one relating to the higher sphere of religious beliefs and doctrines, and another to the lesser sphere of material culture. Regarding the former, the following from Ralph Turner on the evolution of Christian culture is illuminating:<sup>5</sup>

"Significant elements of every local culture superseded by the Christian culture found fundamental positions in it. From Sumer came the conception of the physical universe, which set the earth between heaven and hell. From Babylonia came the sense of sin that prostrated man before God<sup>6</sup>. From Egypt came elements of the social outlook that made Christianity an ethical religion. From Palestine came the belief in one God, and the faith that his purpose is the redemption of mankind. From this source also came the belief that this purpose was to be achieved through the Messiah. From Persia came the vision of the hereafter, the array of spiritual hosts, and the conception of the cataclysmic denouement of the drama of redemption. Persian conceptions clarified the belief, strong in Judaism but also found in Egyptian and Greek culture, that earthly life is a moral struggle. From Greece came, above all, the conception of the Messiah as a personal Saviour-God. Although the role of this Saviour-God in the drama of redemption was developed in terms of the Gnostic doctrine of mediation, the manner of mediation was worked out in accordance with the Greek philosophical conception of the Logos. From Rome came the union of universalism and

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<sup>5</sup> Indian Institute of World Culture, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1958.

<sup>6</sup> "Unification of Cultures," 1966.

authority, having form in law, which set up orthodoxy as the necessary mould into which all of these materials could be cast. When the Christian argued that the Roman Empire had prepared the way for Christianity, he was simply declaring that Christian culture was the heir to the universal dominion Rome had exercised. By this assimilation of pagan materials Christianity was transformed from a religious into a cultural organization of life.”

Now, regarding material culture, the following fascinating passage from Ralph Linton is quoted by George M. Foster with the remark that it should remind the American of his debt to world cultures and perhaps restore a bit of humility that is not always present<sup>7</sup>.

“Our solid American citizen awakens in a bed built on a pattern which originated in the Near East but which was modified in Northern Europe before it was transmitted to America. He throws back covers made from cotton, domesticated in India, or linen, domesticated in the Near East, or wool from sheep, also domesticated in the Near East, or silk, the use of which was discovered in China. All of these materials have been spun and woven by processes invented in the Near East. He slips into his moccasins, invented by the Indians of the Eastern Woodlands, and goes to the bathroom, whose fixtures are a mixture of European and American inventions, both of recent date. He takes off his pajamas, a garment invented in India, and washes with soap invented by the ancient Gauls. He then shaves, a masochistic rite which seems to have been derived from either Sumer or ancient Egypt.

“Returning to the bedroom, he removes his clothes from a chair of southern European type and proceeds to dress. He puts on garments whose form originally derived from the skin clothing of the nomads of the Asiatic steppes, puts on shoes made from skins tanned by a process invented in ancient Egypt and cut to a pattern derived from the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean, and ties around his neck a strip of bright-colored cloth which is a vestigial survival of the shoulder shawls worn by the seventeenth-century Croats. Before going out for breakfast he glances through the windows, made of glass invented in Egypt, and if it is raining puts on overshoes made of rubber discovered by the Central American Indians and takes an umbrella, invented in southeastern Asia. Upon his head he puts a hat made of felt, a material invented in the Asiatic steppes.

“On his way to breakfast he stops to buy a paper, paying for it with coins, an ancient Lydian invention. At the restaurant a whole new series of borrowed elements confronts him. His plate is made of a form of pottery invented in China. His knife is of steel, an alloy first made in southern India, his fork a medieval Italian invention, and his spoon a derivative of a Roman original. He begins breakfast with an orange, from the eastern Mediterranean, a cantaloupe from Persia, or perhaps a piece of African watermelon. With this he has coffee, an Abyssinian plant, with cream and sugar. Both the domestication of cows and the idea of milking them originated in the Near East, while sugar was first made in India. After his fruit and first coffee he goes on to waffles, cakes made by a Scandinavian technique from wheat domesticated in Asia Minor. Over these he pours maple syrup, invented by the Indians of the Eastern Woodlands. As a side dish he may have the egg of a species of bird domesticated in Indo-China, or thin strips of the flesh of an animal domesticated in Eastern Asia which have been salted and smoked by a process developed in northern Europe.

“When our friend has finished eating he settles back to smoke, an American Indian habit, consuming a plant domesticated in Brazil in either a pipe, derived from the Indians of

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<sup>7</sup> 2 vols., McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York-London, 1941.

Virginia, or a cigarette, cigar, transmitted to us from the Antilles by way of Spain. While smoking he reads the news of the day, imprinted in characters invented by the ancient Semites upon a material invented in China by a process invented in Germany. As he absorbs the accounts of foreign troubles he will, if he is a good conservative citizen, thank a Hebrew deity in an Indo-European language that he is 100 per cent American.”

Lewis Mumford calls this ‘technical syncretism’ in his book *Technics and Civilization*. “Modern man could not have found his own particular modes of thought or invented his present technical equipment without drawing freely on the cultures that had preceded him or that continued to develop about him.”

“Each great differentiation in culture seems to be the outcome, in fact, of a process of syncretism ... add in the development of Christianity it is plain that the most diverse foreign, elements, — a Dionysian earth myth, Greek philosophy, Jewish Messianism, Mithraism, Zoroastrianism — all played a part in giving the specific contents and even the form to the ultimate collection of the myths and offices that became Christianity.”

Ralph Linton, already quoted, deals in another book of his, *The Tree of Culture*, with the ways in which this cultural borrowal and diffusion take place. “One of the important aspects of the integrative process is,” he points out, “the assignment of new meanings” to the forms assimilated. “In this way, new elements can be made intelligible to the members of the receiving society and can be adjusted to its existing values.... To understand the way in which forms may be re-worked to become congruous with pre-existing attitudes, one need study only the history of Christianity and its progressive modifications as it passed from a Jewish sect to a proletarian secret society with mutual aid aspects, to the State religion of Imperial Rome and ultimately to the war-like barbarians beyond the Roman borders” (p. 45). .. human culture as a whole is made up of many cultures.”

But there have been a few powerful dissenting voices on this question of the meeting of cultures and their mutual assimilation: *e.g.*, Spengler, whom Kroeber quotes in his *Configurations of Culture Growth*<sup>8</sup> says that the patterns of any one culture are bound by some nexus into a grand master pattern; and that this nexus being inherent, *great cultures can never blend or assimilate*<sup>8</sup>. Each is distinct and having expressed or exhausted itself, must die, to be superseded by others. They may take over non-significant material content from former cultures, but they work this over into their own forms according to their own master plan, which begins unconsciously. Cultures are therefore as distinct as personalities, even as organisms of different genus. In fact Spengler goes to the extent of saying that *intercourse with outside cultures is an illusion*.

This however seems to be an over-extreme stands resulting from an over-emphasis of certain specific or unique characteristics of certain cultural traditions. The specific or unique character of these cultural elements are not non-universal and they can be traced in other traditions as well; but in some traditions some traits have received greater cultivation through the centuries and have endured and colored other traits and attitudes. It is true that, as Spengler himself admits, there is no borrowal or assimilation which does not re-work the elements into the grand pattern of a particular culture which is highly evolved and is strong. The analogy of the rivers flowing into the salt sea and becoming merged into the latter, which has been applied to the process and nature of the assimilation of peoples and cultural elements from outside by the Indian tradition, is a well-known illustration of this. This is a central

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<sup>8</sup> P. 1142, Vol. II. *The Great Cultural Traditions* by Ralph Turner.

feature of the grand synthesis and harmony which Hindu culture has worked out during the course of its long history not only in respect of elements that flowed in from outside, but also of the numerous little traditions within the country itself.

But the expression World Culture has a definite and different meaning, the singular in it underlining the universal aspect of Culture. There is an inevitable universal aspect of Culture. Attention has been drawn to it in some other studied e.g., *Universal Categories of Culture* by Clyde Kluckhohn. *The Mind of Primitive Man* by Franz Boas where in ch. 6 entitled "The Universality of Culture Traits," the author draws attention to the "similarity of mental functions in all races." "Not only emotion, intellect, and will power of mats; are alike, but that much more detailed similarities in thought- and action occur among the most diverse peoples," and "The Cross Cultural Survey" by Murdock (1940): "To the extent that culture is ideational, we may conclude all cultures; showed reveal certain similarities... Wissler has also discussed the universal cultural pattern. In fact, what I want to do in the time at my disposal is to dwell on Culture as an absolute concept and show its universality."<sup>9</sup>

### III

Culture is one of our young concepts. Its historians have traced it to Bacon and his Advancement of Learning. It was in France that Voltaire and others started using the word culture in an absolute sense and the word, with the meaning 'cultivation' in general, found a place in the present sense of good manners etc., in the Oxford Dictionary in 1805. In Germany Herder and other writers discussed it in its modern usage at the end of the 18th century. It occurs in Kant as having the same meaning as civilization and as referring to the cultivation of social graces and refinements through art etc. Schiller characterized it as 'grace and dignity. In the new world, Emerson advocated it in his essay on Culture in his *The Conduct of Life* and dealt with it in *The American Scholar* (1837). When in the latter he spoke of the doctrine that man is one, he emphasized the universal aspect of culture. According to him, culture implied all that which gave the mind possession of its own powers and saw the ultimate foundation of culture in the moral sentiment. Again, "there can be no high culture without pure morals" (Emerson's Journals). In England Mathew Arnold, in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869)), highlighted the subject and described culture as "a pursuit of total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits which we now follow staunchly but mechanically" (Preface). Arnold's summing up of it in the two words as 'sweetness and light' became quite famous. Swift had also spoken of "sweetness and light" and described them as the two noblest things (*The Battle of the Books*). More important is *The Meaning of Culture* by John Cowper Powys. In this work, Powys discussed culture in relation to the different forms of cultural activities, the arts and literature, religion, human relations and the idea of happiness. He called it 'the clue to the narrow path of the wise life upon earth', recalling to our mind the Upanishad description of the difficult razor edge path: *Ksurasya dhara, durgam pat hah*. The subject of culture, along with that of civilization, began to engage regularly the attention of leading philosophers, some of whom we shall be mentioning during the course of further detailed consideration of the subject, Whitehead, Russel, Clive Bell, Laski, T. S. Eliot and a number of social scientists who produced a large

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<sup>9</sup> The Study of Man, by Ralph Linton, D.Appleton-century Co., New York, 1936, pp.326-327. Quoted by George M.Foster, Traditional Cultures and the Impact of Technical Change, Harper and Bros., New York, pp. 16-18.

crop of studies on culture in the former part of this century<sup>10</sup>.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn arrayed in their *Culture, A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* no less than 161 definitions of Culture, but most of these take Culture in the comprehensive anthropological sense. The first thing that the two authors point out about the concept of Culture is that one cannot analyze it, for its components are infinite, and one cannot describe it for it is protean in shape. A study of the historical evolution of the word Culture reveals that in England, Taylor whose work appeared two years after Mathew Arnold's work used the word in its modern technical and anthropological meaning (p. 9). It was Voltaire who first emphasized that history lay not in Dynasties, Kings and Wars and what was essential was Culture as seen in beliefs, customs, forms of Government etc. In this connection, the related words Civilization and Culture have been discussed by several authors as to their exact connotation and mutual relation<sup>11</sup>. Maclver contrasted Civilization and Culture as being the means and end, the apparatus of living and the expressions of life, the former going by the name Civilization and the latter, Culture. The realm of culture is the realm of values, styles and emotional attachments, of intellectual adventures. In this sense, Culture becomes the antithesis of civilization (p. 14). Oppenheimer contrasted Civilization as material and Culture as spiritual. In Germany there were three attempts to contrast the concepts of Civilization and Culture on the basis of the material vs. spiritual. Spengler called civilization the old age of culture and the petrified state of culture; and said that while the man of civilization lived outwards and consciously, the man of culture lived inwards and unconsciously. Alfred Weber defined Civilization as objective and material and Culture as subjective, comprising art and philosophy (pp. 147-8). In his article on Culture in the *Encyclopedia of Education* (1911) John Dewey defined Culture "as the habit of mind which perceives and estimates all matters with reference to their bearing on social values and aims" (p. 30). Herder defined Culture as "a progressive cultivation of faculties" (p. 146) and Adelung as "an amelioration or refinement" (p. 146). Herder's 'progressive cultivation of faculties' has its echo in Arnold's "endless growth in wisdom and beauty" and the general harmonious expression of those gifts of thought and feeling which make the peculiar dignity, wealth, and happiness of human nature. "The great law of Culture;" according to Carlyle, is "Let each become all that he was created capable of being...."

#### IV

All the treatment of culture in its higher sense can be analyzed in two ways, one in which we could bring together the more general characterizations of it and the other, the more specific qualities that are comprised in it<sup>12</sup>. To avoid duplication later, I shall, while showing the ideas of the Western writers, point out also, then and there, the parallel ideas in our own tradition. Culture is first of all a condition of the inner being; it is intellectual, inward and based on the soul and the spirit; it has been held by some that it consists of modes of thinking and feeling, *i.e.*, features of inner activity but according to others, behavior and action patterns cannot be excluded from it. According to others, all modes of thought and feeling have corresponding modes of physical behaviour.<sup>13</sup> So far as our own thought is concerned this is a basic idea; one of the most prominent features of the cultured man is, according to us, the integration of thought, word and action:

Manasyekam vacasyekam karmanyekam mahatmanam.

<sup>10</sup> George Routledge, London, 6<sup>th</sup> edition 1947, Chapter III, i.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. also pages 15-16, *Are We Civilised?* By Robert H. Loure, George Routledge, London, 1929.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1955.

<sup>13</sup> University of Chicago Press, 1944, p. 826.

With a cultured man, as Powys says, there is to be no lacuna between his opinions and life. An individual trait like being good, kind etc., cannot be understood or realized except in the individual's active relations with others. Says Aurobindo in his *The Human Cycle* (p. 102) .. There seems to have been a quarrel between culture and conduct; yet according to our definition, conduct also is a part of the cultured life and the ethical ideality one of the master impulses of the cultured being. The opposition which puts on one side the pursuit of ideas and knowledge and beauty and calls that culture, and on the other, the pursuit of character and conduct and exalts that as the moral life must start evidently from an imperfect view of human possibility and perfection." This integrated and internally balanced nature of culture negatives also the criticism that it is beset with certain concomitant drawbacks like a weakening of the mind, sloth or impracticality. There can be no weakness in this state; it is on the other hand one of strength; like a *Yogin*, the cultural idealist gradually, steadily and courageously works at the eradication of the weeds of his mental soil, fights against pests and encroaching and cultivates the virtues. Firmness and fortitude are part of his equipment. His fight is not merely internal, but outside too, as the man of culture has many lesser men to contend against. He is, as poet Bhavabhuti says, now soft as flower, now hard as adamant; indeed the hearts of the extra-ordinary ones are inscrutable:

Vajrad api kathorani mrduni kusumadapi |  
Lokottaranam cetamsi ko hi vijnatum arhati !!

Arnold says that "Culture has a rough task to achieve and its preachers have... a hard time of it." In the words of the *Dhammapada* life is hard to one who is sensitive to fear and shame, has resolved to be pure in deed and conduct, is reserved and can distinguish the true from the false. According to Arnold, it is "not an outward set of circumstances," but an internal or inward condition of mind and spirit, a condition of "inward ripeness" which forms "the true springs of conduct.;" consequently it is one of humanity as against animality.<sup>14</sup> "Religion says: *The Kingdom of God is within you-*, and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an internal condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality." That is, in terms of the familiar Upanishadic analysis, in culture, man functions not in the last two sheaths or levels of existence, the *Annamaya* and *Pranamaya kosas*, but in the further higher and higher ones, the *Manomaya*, *Vijnanamaya* and *Anandamaya kosas*. It is so general that it is universal rather than individual. It is also perfection for Arnold, for it is an expansion, a *bhuma*, of all the powers of man, rather than of one particular power like the religious. "But Culture which is the study of perfection leads us to conceive of true human perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity, and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our Society." It "is a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest." His summing up of it as 'sweetness and light' and 'as love of perfection has already been referred to. It not only takes away one's attention from the immediate necessities like eating, but being an internal quest, it is averse to external conquests. Prince Angada, Rama's emissary to Ravana, in Abhinanda's *Rama-carita*, tells the demon king: 'Wherefore, without any justification, have you launched upon this thing of great strain, viz., the conquest of others? Think of conquering your own self, whereby you shall have no more distresses.

Bahusramah parajayah Kim akaranam adrtah |  
Sa cintyatam atmajayo yena bhuyo no khidyase ||

<sup>14</sup> P. 371, quoted in *The Condition of Man* by Lewis Mumford, Martin Seeker & Warburg, London, 1944.

According to Whitehead, who posits five constituents — Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art and Peace, — Regularity, which some other writers refer to as Routine, is a characteristic of cultural behaviour; it is the conformity to a norm which secures stability and prevents Anarchy, by supplying a principle and authority.

Powys has a chapter on Culture and Human Relations which is important as it answers many misgivings of culture being an unsocial and insular phenomenon. Its social character is thus brought out by Arnold: “There is a view in which all the love of our neighbor, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it, — motives eminently such as are called social, — come in as part of the pounds of culture...” Qualifying his ‘perfection’ more than once as ‘a general perfection’ he says again; “...the notion that culture, or the study of perfection, leads us to conceive of no perfection as being real which is not a *general* perfection, embracing all our fellow-men with whom we have to do. Such is the sympathy which binds humanity together, that we are indeed, as our religion says, members of one body, and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Individual perfection is impossible so long as the rest of mankind are not perfected along with us. ‘The multitude of the wise is the welfare of the world’, says the Wise man” (pp. 349-50). And earlier: “Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward. And here, once more, culture lays on us the same obligation as religion” (p. 84).<sup>15</sup>

One of the writers on the concept has included in it the *laissez faire* attitude towards others. This is a sure means of avoiding jealousy, heart-burning and conflict on the one hand and pride, high-brow standoffishness and the oppressive attitude of condescension on the other. The *Yoga Sutras* prescribe for the attainment of mental composure the medicine of friendliness, compassion, happiness, *laissez faire*, *Maitri*, *Koruna*, *Mudita* and *Upeksa* in situations involving the happy, unhappy, the fortunate and the unfortunate one (1.33). The *Bhagavata* puts it thus effectively: If one wants to cross over the darkness, one should content oneself with what has been his portion of things, and the attendant happiness and misery; if one wants not to be annihilated by heartburns, one should rejoice at one who is superior in endowments, sympathise with one inferior and be friendly with one equal (IV. 8. 33-34).

Gunadhikan mudam lipsed anukrosam gunadhamat |  
Maitrim samanad anvicched na tapair abhibhuyate ||

“Culture and self-control are synonymous terms” according to Powys. It is only by controlling certain routine, degrading and corrupting tendencies of the mind that certain other positive, benevolent and creative qualities of the mind could be brought into play. Self-control or *Indriya-nigraha* has been enunciated as the bedrock of our discipline. ‘Senses carry away the mind and intelligence of a person, even as flood the boat’, says the *Gita*.

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<sup>15</sup> See my paper on ‘Variety and Integration in the Pattern of Indian Culture’, *Far Eastern Quarterly*, xv, 4, pp. 497-505. “Any culture of national scope is inevitably composed of numerous subculture,” Ralph Linton, *The Tree of Culture*, p. 265.

‘*Krtatma*?<sup>16</sup> is a name commonly applied to a great soul; and Vyasa explains the adjunct

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‘*Krta*’ here as ‘disciplined through the control of senses’.<sup>17</sup>

Contemplation has been prominently mentioned as a basic quality needed for culture<sup>18</sup>. Powys considers that “the most thrilling happiness possible to man proceeds from pure contemplation,”<sup>19</sup> points out the need<sup>20</sup> “for an integrated and calculated art of sinking into the soul” to get over the worries of life and its feverish restlessness, and adds that “the Orientals are adepts at certain spiritual devices by which an inward calm is attainable in the midst of jolting and jarring confusion.” The reference is to our *yoga* and its *an gas*, *pratyahara* (withdrawal), *Samadhi* (concentration), *dhyana* (contemplation), and *Samadhi* (absorption). These are comprehended in the more ancient discipline of *Tapas*, the most potent means of smelting the ore of the raw human stuff and refashioning it, the greatest example of which is Sage Visvamitra, ‘the friend of the universe’, who, in the words of poet Murari, chopped off with the chisel of penance the violence of his earlier militant self and carved out his new self established in friendship, peace and sweetness. The sage had so identified himself with the entire creation that when he moved out of his *Asrama*, says Valmiki, not only did his pupils and fellow hermits follow him, but also the birds and beasts and the entire denizens of that part of the forest.<sup>21</sup>

Powys analyses Culture as a state of happiness. Emerson had pointed out (*Conduct of Life*) that “A cheerful intelligent face is the end of culture,” Such a face, as we shall see. Ramachandra possessed according to Valmiki. Indeed, it is happiness, *ananda*, as we would say of the state of Self- realization. The happiness of culture is a corollary of equanimity (*samatva*), friendliness (*maitri*), and the establishment of the mind in a state of *sattva*, a state of lightness or a sense of being unburdened, and enlightenment (*jnana*) in which the two lower qualities of *Tamas*, delusion and *Rajas*, activity and restlessness, have been subdued. This is a state of perfect mental health, *Anamaya*, says Vyasa; to a question as to how one is thus able to be free from all ills, Vyasa gives the reply through one of his characters: “What has happened to me today? What shall come in the morning? The fever of anxious thought is not there; hence do I live in perfect mental health. Age, death, misery, the joys of gains in these I neither sorrow nor rejoice; Whatever good or bad comes in its time, is the same to me, even as my right and left hands which are equally parts of my body. When some one is happy, I too am happy and when some one is in suffering, I too suffer; I am dear and friend to all. ‘He is a kinsman, this one is not; he is mine own, this one is different’ this I do not know; hence do I live in a state of perfect mental well-being.”

Many of the qualities associated by thinkers with culture are moral qualities. These naturally have the largest part in the cultural composition of a being. The Chinese philosopher These says in *The Golden Mean*, in the section on the *Central Harmony I* “The cultivation of the moral law is what we call culture”; and Confucius had identified this moral law as the Universal moral order (the *Rta* of the *Veda*) and had said that “to find the cultural clue to our moral being which unites us to the universal order, that indeed is the highest

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<sup>16</sup> In the anthology called *Anthropology Today* edited by Kroeber and others, University of Chicago Press.1953.

<sup>17</sup> Macmillan Co., New York,1911,1938.

<sup>18</sup> *American Sociological Review*, Volume v.iii,pp.361-370.

<sup>19</sup> *Man and Culture*, New York,1923.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the several works cited in the sequel, see the article on culture in the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*,IV.pp.621 ff.

<sup>21</sup> *The Traveler’s Library*, 1930.

human attainment.” And he lays down in this connection the dictum “What you do not wish others should do unto you, do not do it unto them,” — exactly what Vyasa gives as the quintessence of *Dharma* to be borne in mind:

11

Sruyatam dharma-sarvasvam Srutva caiva avadharyatam |  
Atmanah pratikulani paresam Na samacaret ||

One of the exhortations in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 7,12) is: “Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is Law and the Prophets.”

Culture, in popular usage, has largely to do with arts and literature. The aesthetic attitude is as much essential to it as the moral and ethical. There is one aspect which is at the root of these attitudes, the ethical and the aesthetic, which is also, ultimately, in its widest reach, identical with the spiritual state of universal identity. It is the imaginative empathy through which the self flows out to enable one to place oneself in another’s position or see himself in the other and the other in himself. This is called *citta-sam- vada*, unison of minds or *Sahridayata*, oneness of hearts in Indian aesthetics; in moral and spiritual effort, it is referred to *Atmaupamyā*. “Taking yourself as the illustration, confine your attention to your own wife; as for you, so for others, their wives have to be protected” appeals Sita. To Ravana. The *Gita* (VI. 32) says:

Atmaupamyena sarvatra samam pasyati yo arjuna |  
Sukham va yadi va dukham sa yogi paramo matah ||

“He is the great *yogi*, who, on the analogy of himself, and what would be pleasant or unpleasant to him, looks with the same attitude upon others too.” In Sankara’s words, this is the basis of *Ahimsa*. Vyasa puts this in a nutshell — ‘don’t do to others what you would not like to be done to yourself, this is the essence of *Dharma*.’

Atmanah pratikulani paresam na samacaret |

This is the *Jiva-svara* on which Vyasa harps in his elaborations of the concept of *Dharma* in Bhishma’s discourses (Anusasana, Gorakh. ed. 113):<sup>22</sup>

“He who places himself in the position of others in his attitude towards them and renounces the punitive role and conquers his anger, he indeed attains to everlasting happiness in the hereafter.”

“What is harmful to oneself, one should not contemplate doing to others. This is *Dharma* in quintessence. All else (*Adharma*) proceeds from selfishness.”

“In refusing or in giving, in happiness or misery, in the desirable or the undesirable, the criterion for guiding a person is comparison of others with oneself.”

“As one acts against another, so will the other towards oneself. Therefore take this as the analogy in this world. This *Dharma* has been taught by reason of the subtlety of perception.” “They whom none can frighten, they of whom none is afraid; they for whom the world is like unto themselves, they indeed surmount all difficulties.”

In the cultivation of this attitude of placing oneself in the situation of another, the arts, and particularly poetry and drama, have an effective role to play, by sharpening one’s finer sensibilities and facilitating the dominance over *Rajas* and *Tamas* of the quality of *Sattva* which brings into play this faculty of identification. Also the serenity and repose which aesthetic enjoyment engenders is a state of non-worldly blissfulness, from which the whole

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<sup>22</sup> Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass, 1952.

material world has slipped off for the time being; hence this has been likened to the state of spiritual vision or realization. Hence the value of aesthetics to culture, and of culture to spiritual realization.<sup>23</sup>

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VI

The following is a collection of the qualities which writers on culture from Emerson to those of recent times have associated with culture. The very mention of them shows the comprehensiveness of the concept: Reflection, contemplation; insight into the whole, sense of the more fundamental, sense of the remote good as against the apparent and immediate, *i.e.*, *Sreyas* as against *Preyas* as the *Kathopanishad* says, sense of values, critical attitude to life (*Viveka*), freedom from worldly ambition which is the enemy of peace (*Vairagya*), truth, art, literature, beauty, taste, taste for excellence, emphasis on means rather than on ends; moral sentiment, absence of anger (*Akrodha*), absence of wanton cruelty (*Anrsamsya*), compassionateness and pity (*Karuna*), tenderness (*Ardrata*), goodness and love of the good, conscience, satisfaction of a work well-done, — *Sukrta* which is *Rasa* according to the *Taittiriya Upanisad*, — sense of duty rather than of right; sensitiveness, sympathy, love of mankind and love and reverence for all living things; grace, civility, friendliness (*Maitri*), sweetness (*Madhurya*), reasonableness, equanimity and balance (*Samatva*), harmony, courtesy, consideration for others, humility (*Vinaya*), quiet manners, absence of fanaticism, sincerity, earnestness, tolerance, urbanity, contentment (*Santosa*), firmness (*Dhrti*); cheerfulness (*Mudita*), repose or relaxation (*V Ur anti*), happiness (*Sukha*), bliss (*Ananda*) and peace (*Santi*). To these we may add two omnibus descriptions, one by Clive Bell from his book *Civilization* (1928) and another from Aurobindo from the selections entitled *Science and Culture*. Bell enumerates the following qualities and attitudes: “A taste for truth and beauty, tolerance, intellectual honesty, fastidiousness, a sense of humour, good manners, curiosity, dislike of vulgarity and brutality and overemphasis; freedom from superstition and prudery; a fair acceptance of the good things of life; a desire for complete self-expression and for a liberal education, a contempt for utilitarianism and philistinism. .. Aurobindo; “Not to live principally in the activities of the sense-mind, but in the activities of knowledge and reason and a wide intellectual curiosity, the activities of the cultivated aesthetic being, the activities of the enlightened will which make for character and high ethical ideals and a large human action, not to be governed by our lower or our average mentality but by truth and beauty and the self-ruling Will is the ideal of true culture,...”<sup>24</sup>

I may also draw attention to one of the Editorials of Wadia in which he emphasized the concept of *Vahumano* from the *Gathas* of Zarathushtra, (Skt. Vasumanas, one of the thousand names of the Lord in the *Visnusahasranama-stotra*) meaning ‘Good Mind’, which epitomizes all the qualities set forth earlier. If we look into the semantics of the word *Vaku*, as explained by Dr. I. J. S. Taraporewala, we will be able to appreciate the all-embracing nature of this concept; for the root *Vah* — *Vas* means ‘to love’ and ‘*Vahu-mano*’ is all-embracing love. *Gatha Ahunavaiti*, Yasna 28. w. I-11 and Yasna 30, v. 9 give two prayers which lay emphasis on the same idea: “Grant that I perform all actions in harmony with *Asa*, Thy Divine Law and acquire the wisdom of *Vahu-mano*, the Good Mind.” “And may we become the bearers of *Universal love* through *Asa*”

These are traits which are common to man as such and to no particular country or time.

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<sup>23</sup> For this and the subsequent references see Kroeber and Kluckhohn.op.cit.

<sup>24</sup> P. 83, *Culture and Anarchy*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London.

Thus these again emphasize the universal character of culture. Culture finds itself, says Powys, upon the eternal elements of Nature and human nature. "Genuine culture," says Russel in his *Education and the Social Order*, "consists in being a citizen of the universe, not only of one or two arbitrary fragments of space-time."

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The qualities mentioned above are indeed too numerous but it is the organic summation of these that constitutes culture. It is something which has soaked from all these into the subconscious and has become instinctive. "Culture is," in the words of Powys, "what is left over after you have forgotten all you have definitely set out to learn." As T. S. Eliot observes, 'Culture cannot altogether be brought to consciousness and the culture of which we are wholly conscious is never the whole of culture'. According to Kant, it is intuitively apprehended. It is like an aroma over the personality, sure but intangible.

In his *The Great Cultural Traditions*, Ralph Turner quotes anonymously the following from the contribution "An Analysis of Jewish Culture"<sup>25</sup>; "The fact that we are normally almost completely unconscious of our cultural settings does not in the least detract from the importance of their influence. Indeed, our unawareness may even enhance it. Since it is characteristic of cultures that they seem to those who live within them to be the normal and natural, the right and only way of life, and the personality type one's own culture creates to be like basic human nature, other cultures and their corresponding cultural type seem not only strange but somehow wrong. One does not normally see the peculiarities of one's own cultural type of personality because they seem the rock-bottom fundamentals of human nature everywhere."<sup>25</sup>

The universality of culture is not confined to the human or living world; it embraces the whole Nature. In two remarkable passages Powys says. "...the meaning of culture is nothing less than to restore, by means of our imaginative reason, that secret harmony with Nature..." "... all real self development lies in a certain magical *rapport*, bringing indescribable happiness between the solitary ego and all that we behold from this green earth." This secret harmony of Nature is the Vedic *Rta*, and to him who desires that *Rta* by conforming to it, the winds blow sweet, the rivers flow honey, the herbs taste sweet, sweet are the nights and dawns, nay the very dust of earth turns sweet, and surely the Father too above, the Heaven, becomes sweet.

"Madhu vata rtayate, madhu ksaranti sindhavah  
Madhvira nah santvosadhah !!  
Madhu naktam utosaso, madhumat parthivam rajah,  
Madhu dyaur astu nah pita !! (Rv. I. 90. 6-7)

When Visvamitra, the friend of the entire universe left, says Valmiki in one of his most remarkable passages, the whole world of living beings of his hermitage moved along with him as he left that abode of his. Not only did a hundred cartloads of seekers of truth, living with him, follow the great sage, but also all the animals and birds of that hermitage followed him and the Sage persuaded the birds and animals to stay back (I. 31. 17-19).

## VII

The understanding of culture is beset with many polarities and apparent internal contradictions. Mention was made of the one between the internal and the external, the mental and the physical, the passive and the active, and the other between the individual and

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<sup>25</sup> The Sri Aubrobindo Library, New York, 1950.

social. The following are some more of the paradoxes which it combines: a childlike simplicity or naivete, such as true Saints and *Mahatmas* have and infinite subtlety; reservation or retreat into oneself or solitude and free spontaneity and moving in company; a stoic and critical attitude towards material things and what goes around and a sense of the beautiful, and the enjoyment of things of beauty, art and Nature, leisure and detachment on one side

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and selfless exertion on the other; for a full life of culture^ solitude and society are equally necessary; culture is a 'development of individuality without sacrificing sodality'. Conformity and regularity of principles on one side and freedom and spontaneity on the other.

More of such polarities may be shown but the remarkable thing is that these are reconciled in the 'formidable integral' state called culture. Some of these are absorbed, like contradictions in the higher *Brahman*, and some solved by the application of the principle of disinterestedness or the *Yoga* of the *Gita* which hits the balance between the two paths of action and non-action, *Pravrtti* and *Nivrtti* or of the golden middle path of the same scripture:

**Yuktahara-viharasya yukta-cestasya karmasu' etc.**

There is a major polarity when we consider the question of *adhikarin*, one who can become a man of culture. The features of intellectuality, sensibility to arts etc., presuppose high breeding, learning etc.; at the same time, we come across also two out-of-the-way phenomena: one, several learned persons devoted to cultural activities are really devoid of elements of culture and two, among the so-called common men, rare gems of character and culture shine forth; for the latter, there are examples of the *Dharma-vyadha*, the hunter expert on *Dharma*, and *Vaisya-Tuladhara*, the wise merchant, two lighthouses, so to say, set up by Vyasa in the *Mahabharata* both of them offering enlightenment to the proud Brahman.<sup>26</sup>

In his *The Decline of the West*, Spengler discusses (II. p. 332) in the chapter called Nobility and Priesthood, the close connection of the elite and culture. According to him, "Culture and class are interchangeable expressions; they arise together and they vanish together. The breeding of select types of wines or fruits or flowers, the breeding of blood horses, is culture, and the culture, in exactly the same sense, of the human elite arises as the expression of a Being that has brought itself into high "form." But it may be observed that, according to what has been said in the previous paragraph, Hindu thought, while emphasising the role of the elite, would at the same time give a place, as a result of its *Karma* doctrine, to the eternal possibility of the fundamental elements of culture percolating and permeating the whole society and fine flowers of culture blossoming forth in the lower ranks. The achievement of this is the mission of the Man of Culture as a *jivanmukta*, a *Bodhisattva*, an *Acarya* or a Saint, one who, in the words of the Gitacarya, is ever engaged, like Himself, in *loka-samgraha*. Describing the men of culture as "the true apostles of equality," Arnold says: "The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divert knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light" (pp. 125-6).

Most of the western writers come down vehemently on the modern community of

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<sup>26</sup> Uttararamacarita, II. 7.

businessmen as philistines, unfit for culture. In theory at least, this view cannot be sustained. Everyone is 'liable' to cultural growth; according to environment and other conditions, the progress becomes a matter of longer or shorter duration. The exceptional examples like the two mentioned above, can be explained as the end-phenomena of a real long process of cultivation over a series of previous incarnations, the *vasanas* of *purvajanmas*.

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Some writers have considered the question as to which kind of Government is most congenial to culture and have naturally come to the conclusion that because of the theoretical assurance of freedom, democracy is best suited. The ancient nations had evolved a high concept of culture and had been prolific in creative productions, functioning under monarchical states. In modern times, atheistic or secular States are also making efforts to 'produce\* culture through the masses, not subscribing to the theory of aristocracy or religion as the medium or source of culture. Although for the time being a lot of complacent feeling and hothouse production of a kind of poetry, dance etc., might be thrown up, it cannot be denied, at least in theory, that over a period the constant striving will have its effect on the gradual building up of taste and standard. It is well known that leisure and an elite form the backbone of culture. By the extension of leisure, through less work and drudgery to larger and larger sectors of people, they can be exposed more and more to the non-utilitarian and recreational pursuits and to spend increasing parts of their time on reaches of being higher than the animal level- After all, according to the ideology of traditional life and culture, work and play were integrated and a great part of our ancient people's artistic heritage is from the folk-arts.

On the analogy of the old solution through *Yoga* of the opposition of action and inaction, *pravrtti* and *nivrtti*, the modern difficulty of the leisured elite and the productive mass may be solved. The former need not be condemned as a burden to the society and indirectly liquidated. While in the modern context, it would not be feasible to maintain the traditional institutions and venues of culture as they used to be, methods could be devised to retain the baby, throwing off only the bath-water. The most essential thing which should be taken care of is that quality should not be sacrificed for equality.

The prospect of a similar solution on the same lines may be envisaged for the confrontation offered by the modern scientific and technological culture, to the traditional artistic culture, and we may hope with Charles Davy who discusses this question in his *Towards a Third Culture* that through a constructive interaction of the two, a third culture will emerge, as all the three elements science, religion and art are "essential for any fully human society."

Similarly, some more fundamental questions like Culture and Tradition or a living Tradition, ends and means, and duties *versus* rights *vis-à-vis* culture, may be usefully discussed but these have to be left over to another occasion.<sup>27</sup>

## VIII

We may now consider the concept of culture as expounded in Sanskrit literature and Indian thought. Naturally, we cannot expect an exact Sanskrit equivalent in the *Vedas* for the modern concept of culture, but it is striking that one seer speaks (*Rv. X. 114.4*) of his having seen the Divine Being with his 'mature mind' (*pakena manasa*).<sup>28</sup> *Paka* or *Paripaka* is used in life as well as in poetics as the name of maturity, which is a characteristic of cultural growth. The qualities and ideas mentioned earlier as going into the concept of culture are

<sup>27</sup> Taittiriyaopanisad, III.

<sup>28</sup> Gaekwad's Oriental Series, XLVI.

however to be met with in the *Vedas* and all over Sanskrit literature. Of these the most important ones in the *Vedas* are *Satya* and *Rta*, Truth and Moral Order. The Gods are conceived as moral beings, sons of Truth, and the demons as of evil. The *Rta* is only for those who act rightly, not for the opposite, the *Duskrtas* (*Rv.* IX. 73.6). Varuna is the great upholder of the Moral Law. A number of sins or evil practices are referred to in the *Rv.*, from which

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also the qualities prized are known; honesty, straightforwardness, faith, generosity, speaking truth, loyalty, non-injury, humility, keeping the word, reverence to elders.<sup>29</sup> A good mind, *Sumati*, is prayed for (VII. 100.2). *Aramati* or devotion is adored as a Goddess. The idea of sweetness, flowing from the observance of the Moral Order was referred to. In another prayer, sweetness in everything is sought (*KYv.* III. 3.2): “I will contemplate only sweet things, produce only sweet things, bear only sweet things, and speak only sweet things.”

“Madhu manisye madhu janisye madhu vaksyami madhu vadisyami,”

and so on. The Vedic Indian had a keen eye to the beauty of Nature as is evident from his poetry. Of poetry and its artistry, he had a conception, all this showing that his culture was not void of the aesthetic content. He had a high notion of speech as a medium of man's refinement and divine contact. It is to the *Rgveda* that we owe the idea of the pleasing and sincere word, personified into the deity called *Sunrta*. Several ethical concepts are deified and invoked so that man may become endowed with them: Prosperity (*Sri*). Shame at doing wrong (*Hri*), Fortitude (*Dhrti*), Penance (*Tapes*), Intellect (*Medha*), Faith (*Sraddha*), Truth (*Satya*), and Dharma (*KYv.* IV. 42.5).

The celebrated *Setu Saman* of the *Sama Veda* exhorts us to cross the bunds of mortal existence and go forth into immortality by practicing charity against possessiveness, gentleness against anger, faith against faithlessness and truth against falsehood. A hymn of the *Sukla Yojurveda* (34th) prays for good Intent of the Mind, *Siva-sankalpa*. The *Atharvaveda* deifies Good Intent as the Goddess called *Akuti*. The prayer 30 of this *Veda* emphasizes the need for concord and harmony between persons at home and in society and the eschewing of mutual animosity. There is here (XII. 1) a remarkable hymn to Mother Earth and the *Rsi* says that it is Great Truth, formidable Moral Order, Vow, Penance, Spiritual Knowledge, and Sacrifice that sustain the Earth.<sup>30</sup>

Satyam brhad Rtam ugram Diksa  
Tapo Brahma Yajnah prthvim dharayanti’.

The notion that the philosophy of performing the rites and rituals enjoined by the *Veda* was devoid of higher values, particularly the ethical, is contradicted by such statements as the following found in the *Brahmanas*. The *Taittiriya Brahmana* (I. 1.4) says that one who has set up the sacred fire and is tending it with his daily offerings should not utter falsehood, for it is indeed Truth in which the fire has been set up; and the same text again says (I. V. 5) that the *Vrata* or austerity is the same as *Rta*, Moral Order, and *Satya*, Truth.

The *Taittiriya Aranyaka* (79th Anu.) praises Truth, Penance, Self-Control, quietude, charity, and *Dharma*. Peace or *Santi* is of course prayed for in special hymns, as also at the end of all texts and recitals. ‘Om Santih’ is the universal prayer of the *Vedas*.

<sup>29</sup> *Adventures of Ideas*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1933.

<sup>30</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, Ch. I, p. 77.

It is in the wake of this Vedic benediction of peace that at the end of other recitals and discourses, we utter the universal prayers: “May everybody surmount the difficulties, may everybody come by things auspicious; may everybody, everywhere rejoice; let none come to any suffering: may all the worlds be happy.”

The *Upanishads* teach no doubt the philosophy of the one Supreme Being, the *Brahman*,

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and its knowledge and realization. But this knowledge, although it transcends all opposites including those of the moral plane, emphasizes that in the stage of striving and discipline, the moral qualities cannot be ignored. The sense of one’s identity with other beings is the strongest basis of love for all and the transcending of feelings of hate or contempt. Self-control (*Dama*) and truth (*Satya*) are the basis of *Brahman*, the *Katha* declares that he who has not refrained from evil acts, has no quietude or composure will not attain the *Brahman*, Truth is glorified in the *Mundaka* as the divine road leading to *Brahman*. The fees for initiation into spiritual life are given as penance, straightforwardness, non-injury and truthful word (*Chandogya*). In the well-known message of the thunder of the clouds, “Da, Da, Da,” self-control, charity, and compassion are inculcated, — *Damyata, Datta, Dayadhvam*. The requisites for gaining the vision of the Supreme are quietude, self-control, contentment, patience and composure.

The greatest gifts of the Vedas to culture are, besides *Satya* and *Rta*, the discipline of *Tapas*, penance or deep contemplation, as the potent means to purify and sublimate oneself; and the exemplar of this culture called *Rsi* the Seer, *Kavi* the poet of far-reaching vision and *Muni*, the meditative one, represent the highest ideal in the evolution of human personality in Hindu thought.

For such a person, we find two words used in the Epics, *Bhavitatma* and *Krtatma*, both of which refer to the self having been processed in a particular way so as to be ennobled thereby. The adjuncts used before *Atman* here may be taken to be akin to the process of culture. Of the latter term, *Krtatma*, there is a definition already referred to in the Udyoga parvan of the *Mahabharata*:

Nakrtatma krtatmanam jatu vidyad Janardanam |  
Atmanastu kriyopayo nanyatra indriyanigrahat ||

The process to which the Self is submitted is given here as none else than control of the senses.

Perhaps a Sanskrit word near enough to culture is *Sams-kara*, which belongs to two spheres, language, its refinement and its correct structure and man's conduct in life and their refinement through a series of sacraments by which an individual is lifted up, so to say, from vulgar existence to a heightened role in life for the performance of *Dharma*, These sacraments or *Samskaras* which are set forth in the *Dharma Sutras* and *Smrtis* and which are likened by the great poet Kalidasa to the polishing of the rough stone of the mine into a dazzling gem, re-make one’s personality, and once this remaking is done, one is, as it were, in a second birth (*Dvija*) and is not at liberty to act as he pleased but only in conformity to the norms laid down. This compares with the process of refinement of the human personality by culture. Over and above these sacraments, there are qualities of the Self, *Atma-gunas* which are universal and which every one is expected to possess. Gautama enumerates them in his *Dharma Sutras* thus:<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mahabharata, Udyoga, Sanjaya to Dhrtarastra (68.17 kumbh;69.17 Gorakh);see below.

“... There are the eight qualities of the Soul: Compassion towards all beings, forbearance, absence of jealousy, purity, moderation, auspiciousness, dignified conduct and freedom from avarice.” In a similar way, Apastamba enumerates a number of evils which scorch one’s bodily elements and these have to be destroyed by *Yoga*, — Anger, elation, indignation, avarice, delusion, vanity, enmity, speaking falsehood, over-eating, traducing others, jealousy,

Passion, ill-feeling, lack of self-possession and lack of mental concentration. Apastamba then gives the following virtues as constituting the approved conduct of all persons in all stations of life: Absence of anger, elation, indignation, avarice, delusion, vanity and enmity; speaking truth, moderation in eating; refraining from exposing other’s weak points; freedom from jealousy; sharing one’s good things with others; sacrifice, straightforwardness, gentleness; quietude, self-control; friendliness with all beings; absence of cruelty; contentment.”

In *Dharma Sastra* literature, Manu has a special place of honour; we shall now see some of his observations of universal cultural significance:

- II. 160: He whose word and thought are pure and are al- always under restraint, he attains all the fruit that philosophy vouches to a person.
- II. 161: Even when he is himself in pain, he should not touch by his words the spots of weakness in others nor think of harming others; that word which would make one shudder, that unholy word, he should not utter.
- IV. 159: All that is dependent on others should, with effort, be avoided; whatever depends on oneself should be done with ecort.
- IV.160: All that is dependent on others is misery; all that is under one’s own control is happiness; this in brief is the definition of happiness and misery.
- VI. 47: One should put up with the excessive words of offence from others; should not insult any one; nor pick up enmity with any one.
- VI. 92: Fortitude, forbearance, non-thieving, purity, sense- control, wisdom, learning, truth, absence of anger, these ten constitute *Dharma*,
- XII. 37: The indication of (me being established in a Sattvic state of mind is that one will do only that thing which he would like all people to know, in doing which he will not be ashamed and he will derive inner satisfaction.

One who has been disciplined in the above manner is called a *Sift a*. Like *Samskara*, the term *Sastra* also is common to grammar and *Dharma Sastra*, the grammar of conduct. The exact meaning of the word *Sastra* is itself ‘disciplined’. There is an illuminating gloss on who a *Sista* is in Patanjali’s *Mahabhasya* on Panini’s grammar-Sutras (VI. iii. 109) and among the qualities mentioned by Patanjali as essential to the concept of a *Sista* are: (1) Non-accumulation of property for more than the absolute minimum period; (2) absence of avarice; (3) disinterested performance of acts of duty for their own sake and (4) the development of mental and spiritual powers to such an extent that even without the intercession of any other agency, knowledge and wisdom reveal themselves to their minds. This follows mostly the definition of the *Sista* in *Bodhayana Dharma Sutra* (I. 1. 5) where we find the additional quality mentioned, of a *Sista* being free from pride, delusion and anger.<sup>32</sup>

In *Smrti* literature, among sources and authorities of *Dharma*, the conscience of such a disciplined soul is also included as a proof of the correctness or otherwise of things, *Almatusti*. In the schools of philosophy which recognize verbal testimony as an authority and proof, it is the word of such a person that is accorded this authority; such an absolutely

<sup>32</sup> Yah ksatradeham paritaksya tankaih tapomayam brahmayam uccakara—*Anargharaghava* 1.22

reliable person is called *Apta*. An *Apta* is one who has nothing to achieve for himself and has therefore no interest or selfishness in tendering a piece of information or advice. In his commentary on the three sources of knowledge, of which the word of an *Apta* is one, enunciated in the *samkhyakarika* 4, Gaudapada quotes two verses on who an *Apta* is; the first verse says that one from whom the defects (*Dosa*) born of likes and dislikes have disappeared and is therefore incapable of uttering falsehood, is an *Apta*. He is an *Apta* who is

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devoted to his duties, is free from attachments or aversions and is revered among those of similar standard of conduct. A full description of who an *Apta* is, is given by Vatsyayana the author of the great commentary, *Bhasya*, on the *Nyaya Sutras* of Gautama (II. 1. 68); Vatsyayana says the *Aptas* are those who know the *dharma* and have nothing other than compassion and grace as the motive for their advising others as to what might be avoided and why and what is to be aimed at. That the exemplar of such an *Apta* is the Lord himself who has incarnated is borne out by Krsna when he says in *Gita*:

Nanavaptam avaptavyam varta eva ca karmani ||  
(III. 22)

“I have nothing to gain which I do not already possess; and still I continue to work.” Such *Aptas* should be the guides for those who undertake public service, *Loka-sangraha* which, in the words of Matthew Arnold is “to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream thitherward....”

## IX

The contribution of the two Epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, to culture lies in the all-comprehensive ideology of *Dharma*, and the human personality being an embodiment of countless auspicious qualities, *Anantakalyana-gunas*. The word *Dharma* has even been used in recent times as an equivalent of Culture. From the Vedic times, we had the great exemplars of culture in the person of the *Rsis*. The Epics added to these the *Rajarsis* or royal sages in whose person God incarnated to provide living illustrations of the impersonal and abstract *Dharma* and the great qualities (*Gunas*) preached by the *sruti* and *Smrti*. Rama, the royal hero of Valmiki, is *Dharma* and *Satya* incarnate *Vigrahavan dharmah*, and *Satyaparakramah* and *Satyasandhah*. Sage Valmiki was anxious about the fate of the great qualities of head and heart, which were threatened with extinction for there was none on earth to embody them in himself and his life. Narada replied to him that there was a man who represented those qualities viz., Rama. The qualities asked for are virtue, heroism, righteousness, gratitude, truth, firmness in vow, character, benevolence towards all beings, wisdom, capacity, ever pleasant looks, self-possession, conquest of anger, splendor and freedom from malice. Narada, in his reply, sets forth these and other qualities and points out also their attendant foils which may vitiate their expression and which were absent from Rama. The first virtue with which the hero is introduced is self-control, the lack of which brought down the anti-hero Ravana.<sup>33</sup>

The additional qualities figuring in Narada’s reply may be noted: “Rama was noble (*Arya*), equal towards all, intent on people’s welfare, pure and attentive.” A fuller description of Rama’s qualities is to be found as a background for deepening the tragedy of the proposed

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<sup>33</sup> See his ‘The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra’, D. B. Taraporevala Sons A Co., Bombay, 1951, pp. 9, 543. 1149-50

coronation at the beginning of the second book. “Rama was always subdued in self; he talked softly and talked first with a smile whenever he met some one; however much he was harshly spoken to, he did not reply; even with one good turn, somehow done, he was satisfied and even a hundred harms done to him, he remembered not; he sat always with elders in character, knowledge and age and with the good ones, profiting by their talk; he spoke pleasantly; although very powerful, he was never elated with his prowess; spoke no false word; was kind and compassionate towards the suffering; he esteemed highly the duty to

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which he was born and was keen only on pure fame; never indulged in anything not conducive to welfare, nor in vain disputations although there was none equal to him in argument; he knew the real worth of persons around but continued to be a good man; never felt wretched, was straightforward, had memory and imagination, understood the significance of the *Purusarthas* — *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama*; was proficient in worldly ways and accepted conduct; was modest; knew the time and effective way of displaying his pleasure or displeasure; was firm in mind, never set his mind on wrong ideas nor spoke ill; had no idleness or negligence; he knew the faults of himself and others; and was an expert in judging as between man and man; knew how to curb or help, as befitting; in gathering good men, in knowing places, he was proficient; he knew how to enjoy in harmony with the interests of *Dharma* and *Artha*, but was not indolent; he knew the recreational arts and knew when to enjoy them; he never rode rough-shod over people nor allowed himself to drift along by the time-force; knew how to pacify people; was soft and firm; spoke what was pleasing and true; he enquired of every common man of his welfare, as if he was a kinsman, even as a father did of his sons, and sorrowed in their difficulties and rejoiced in their joys.”

All through the Epic, we come across more and more qualities and excellences of Rama, presenting to us the extraordinary fullness of culture in a human personality. We shall note a few of the more important ones only. The citizens say: Six qualities adorn Rama — kindness, compassion, learning, character, self-control, and quietude. Not only was he, by nature, friendly towards all beings, *Sarva-bhuta-hita* and *Sarvanukula*, illustrated by the extraordinary felicity of his friendship and affection towards hunters and monkeys, but as he is hailed more than once, he was kind and considerate even towards his enemies, *Ripunam api vatsalah*. In the great coronation crisis he alone stood like a rock, standing on truth and the keeping of the promise and filial duty, when everyone else was in great agitation; and as one head and shoulders above all, he showed no signs of affectation of his mind, his face continued to have the same charm and he abandoned not his wonted cheerfulness.

In the same second book, the father himself says of his son that in Rama truth, charity, austerity, sacrifice, friendliness, purity, straightforwardness, learning and service to elders are always present. The women of Ayodhya pay him the tribute: Where Rama is, there is no fear there, nor any humiliation. Counting this as a *sine qua non* of culture, Emerson said: “With the truly cultivated man, the maiden, the orphan, the-poor man and the hunted slave feel safe.” (*Journals*). Indeed Rama was the canonical exemplar of the doctrine of safety (*Abhaya*) being vouched to one who takes refuge. In Book IV, according to Vali, “Beings all over the world sang of Rama’s glory that he is sympathetic, intent on people’s good, compassionate, controlled, conforming to the conventions of the world and steadfast in his vows.” In the same Book, Marica the demon-enemy, who knew Rama very well indeed, says of Rama: Rama observed the norms of behavior, was free from greed, bad conduct, severity; was benevolent towards beings, never harsh, knowledgeable, controlled in senses; he was *Dharma* incarnate, a good man, of true valour.

Again in the same fourth Book, his wife Sita, speaking of Rama, tells the old hermit-lady Anasuya that compassion, sense-control, firm love and righteousness mark her husband. Over

and above all these qualities which enriched his personality and along with the twin principles-of *Dharma* and *Satya* which he upheld against all odds, the chief quality which, in a fundamental way, belonged to the core of culture, which he, as well as his wife, exemplified in the Epic are *Anrsamsya* and *Karuna*, kindness and compassion. It was to a world made callous and harsh by wicked Ravana that Rama came to resurrect these twin virtues. Sita told Rama that Rama himself had taught her that eschewal of wickedness and benevolence to living beings, *Anrsamsya*, was the greatest *Dharma*: ‘Anrsamsyam paro dharmah tvatta eva

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maya srutah’.

And at the end of the battle of *Lanka*, when Hanuman wants to do away with the demoness-guards who had been tormenting Sita, Sita tells him: “Towards the sinning or the good or even those who deserved to be killed, one should show mercy, if one is an *Arya*, a noble man; there is none that does not err.”

Papanam va subhanam va vadharhanam plavangama |

Karyam kurnam aryena na kascin naparadhyati ||

The *Mahabharata* is an Epic poem but it is also a treatise on the four *Purusarthas* and chiefly on *Dharma*<sup>34</sup>. The counterpart of Rama here is Yudhisthira, the eldest prince, his other names *Dharmaputra* (son of *Dharma*) and *Ajatasatru* (one without an enemy) being most relevant to our present study of culture. Of the many contexts, two in which he comes shining out of the ordeal and test of his unshakable stand on *Dharma*, particularly in its aspect of kindness of heart *Anrsamsya* and *Karuna*, which we have been considering especially, may be recalled.<sup>35</sup> The one is the well-known *Yaksaprasna* where, after his satisfactory answers to the invisible divine being, who is none else than his own father *Dharma* he is given the boon to call back to life one of his brother who had fallen dead at the pool, Yudhisthira replies the his mother Kunti has a son living in himself and he thought that the step-mother Madri should also have one son living Says Yudhisthira: “Kindness (*Anrsamsya*) is the Supreme *Dharma*; I consider it greater than the great Truth itself; therefore want to stand by it; let Nakula come to life Again at the close of the Epic, when the brothers and Draupadi, followed by a Dog were on the last journey heaven, and all had fallen *en route* except Dharmaputra and the Dog and *Dharma* was asked to enter without the Dog, Yudhisthira said firmly: “My mind is always established kindness; let my loyal Dog come with me, King of heavens It is not an *Arya*, but an *Anarya*, an ignoble person, w would abandon it. That prosperity and splendour that would come to me by giving up one attached to me, let me r have that.”

The all-comprehensive concept of *Dharma* has been practically exhausted by Vyasa in the Epic, coming to it as does repeatedly. “By observing *Dharma*,” as Rama told brother Laksmana in the *Ramayana*, Vyasa too says, “one obtains the other ends also, material gains and pleasures, *Artha* and *Kama*. Why then is not *Dharma* resorted to? With uplifted arms I proclaim this. Never should one out of impulse, fear or avarice give up *Dharma*, even if it be to save one’s life. *Dharma* is eternal; happiness and misery are ephemeral.” Vyasa calls this the *Gayatri* of his Epic, its key, secret and central message.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Vol. II, p. 1241

<sup>35</sup> In the International Journal of Ethics, Vol. 47, 1936-37, p, 430.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bovee quoted in the Encyclopedia of Social Science, IV. Culture: “ Partial Culture runs to the ornate; extreme culture to simplicity,”

As in the case of the treatment of the concept of culture, we find in Vyasa's expositions of the chief qualities and moral principles, a composite conception. Thus in the treatment of these in the discourses of the grand old repository of wisdom, grandfather Bhishma, in the *Santi* and *Anusasana parvans*, as also in some of the earlier books, the virtues of *Dama*, *Satya* etc. are dealt with in this manner. This is as it should be as one virtue leads to another or nourishes another and all of them hang together. *Dama* or self-control comprises forbearance, fortitude, non-injury, equanimity, truthfulness, straightforwardness, conquest of

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senses, adeptness in the discharge of one's duties, softness, sense of shame at doing what ought not to be done, absence of fickleness, wretchedness, and flurry; contentment, sweet speech, not hurting and freedom from envy. Similarly Truth (*Satya*) is described as of thirteen aspects: Truth-speaking, equanimity, self-control, absence of jealousy, forbearance, sense of shame, endurance, freedom from spite, renunciation, meditation, nobility (*Aryatva*), freedom from the effects of happiness and misery, mercifulness and non-injury (*Ahimsa*).

*Dharma* is more frequently dealt with, in all its bearings. In the *Yaksa-prasna* episode already referred to, God Dharma himself explains that his embodiments are fame, truth, restraint, purity, honesty, modesty, steadiness, charity, austerity and continence (III. 314.7). Emphasizing more its social aspect, Bhishma describes *Dharma* in the *Santi parvan* (109.9-12): "The question 'What constitutes *Dharma*,' is hard to comprehend. It is for the weal of the living beings that *Dharma* has been expounded; therefore that is decided as *Dharma* which is attended by the welfare of the living beings." Thus it is to Vyasa that we owe the clear enunciation of *Dharma* as a concept which cannot be divorced from its social bearings. Even in regard to Truth, Vyasa can go to the extent of declaring: "The correctness of facts alone is not Truth or deviation from it falsehood; what is ultimately to the good of the people that is truth."

*Dharma* is so called because it sustains; that is then *Dharma* which has the sustaining quality. *Dharma* has been expounded so that living beings do not harm each other; that is *Dharma* which involves no violence.

The completeness of the culture of *Dharma* is also brought out by two well-known pithy verses, one referring to the seven *Samits* or fuel-sticks which keep the flame of *Dharma* glowing and the other mentioning the spouses of *Dharma*: ^Fortitude, Forbearance, Compassion, Purity, Propriety, Mildness of speech, Abstention from harming any living being, —these are the seven fuel-sticks of *Dharma*."

Dhrtih ksama daya saucam aucityam vag anisthura |

Bhutanam anabhidrohah saptaitah samidhah Sriyah ||

"Fame, Prosperity, Cheerfulness, Intelligence, Contentment Faith, Action, Knowledge, Sense of shame in doing a wrong thing, Thoughtfulness — these are the ten spouses of *Dharma*."

Kirtir laksmir dhrtir medha tustih sraddha tatha kriya |

Buddhir lajja matiscaiva patnyo dharmasya ta dasa||

Other versions of this count the spouses of *Dharma* as thirteen, do not mention *Matt* or Thoughtfulness but have the following four: Fullness (*Pusti*), Beauty (*Vapus*), Tranquillity (*Santi*) and Achievement (*Siddhi* or *Rddhi*).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Nivrtti and the 'cultivated inaction' of Matthew Arnold.

The *Bhagavata*, which gives the thirteen spouses somewhat differently, speaks also of thirteen offspring's of *Dharma* through these thirteen spouses: Faith begot Moral Order or Rectitude; Friendliness (*Maitri*) begot Composure; Compassion begot Fearlessness and the gift of Security to others; Tranquillity begot Happiness, Contentment begot Joy, Fullness begot the sense of Superiority, Action begot Disinterested application, and so on.

The two Epics have also another way of emphasizing certain virtues of conduct which are of universal and everlasting significance; they enunciate the virtue and add the refrain '*esa*

*Dharmah sanatanah*' — 'this is the eternal *dharma*'. A few examples may be cited from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In II. 24.13 and 30.38, Rama declares that obedience to parents is one such virtue, V. 1.113 mentions the returning of a good turn as a similar eternal virtue. Vyasa has this on hospitality and attention to a guest: "One should give his eye, his mind, and the pleasing word, and rise and give a seat; this is the eternal *Dharma*." These show that, apart from the more fundamental principles, *Dharma*, which is rich and dynamic in its range, is attentive to all those virtues of family and society which impart a sanctity, dignity and grace to life, in big and small things.

What the concept of *Dharma* means to Indian thought and how, in the context of culture, it is a complete concept, can be seen in what a modern exponent, Sri\_ Aurobindo, says of it.

"The universal embracing *dharma* in the Indian idea is a law of ideal perfection for the developing mind and soul of man; it compels him to grow in the power and force of certain high or large universal qualities which in their harmony build a highest type of manhood. In Indian thought and life this was the ideal of the best, the law of the good or noble man, the discipline laid down for the self-perfecting individual, *arya*, *srestha*, *sajjana*, *sadhu*. This ideal was not a purely moral or ethical conception, although that element might predominate; it was also intellectual, religious, social, aesthetic, the flowering of the whole ideal man, the perfection of the total human nature." (p. 120 — *The Foundations of Indian Culture* by Sri Aurobindo ).<sup>38</sup>

The *Mahabharata* gives several other valuable ideas like *Daksya*, Adeptness and *Apramada*, Vigilance; it has many discourses and dialogues which would be relevant to the study of culture, but the foremost of these is the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The most important contribution of the *Gita* is the equanimity, the transcending of the exhilaration of gains, happiness etc., and the dejection of loss, misery, etc.; this state of *Samya* is called verily a paradise gained here itself 'Ihaiva tair jitah svargah yesam samye sthitam manah |' (V. 19).<sup>39</sup> The description of the *Sthita-prajna*, 'one of established mind' in Ch. II, is too well-known to need quotation. The qualities of clarity or transparency of mind, contemplation and peace, without which there is no happiness described here may be referred to. Peace is again said to be attainable by one rid of desires and the sense of 'I' and 'Mine'. Another valuable idea which would add up to our understanding of culture is the disinterestedness taught by the *Gita*, in the performance of actions and discharge of duty, the ideas of *Niskama-karma* and the *Karma yogin* who is an adept in such action (*Yogah karmasu kausalam* —11.50). This *Kausala* or *Daksya*, the adeptness of action in this which is the correct way when one is faced with action, non-action and wrong action (*Karma*, *A-karma* and *Vi-karma*) is again and again praised by Vyasa and in one of his numberless aphoristic statements he calls it the sole means or basis of *Dharma*. *Daksyam ekapadam Dharmah (Yaksa-prasna)*. As part of the way of this *Yoga*, the *Gita*, gives us also the idea of moderation and balance (*Yuktahara-*

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<sup>38</sup> VI.17.

*vihara* etc.) and the avoidance of extreme and mortifying austerities. Comparable to the description of the *Sthita-prajna* in Ch. IX is that of the *Bhakta* or Lord's Devotee in Ch. XII: "He who spites not any being, is friendly, compassionate, free from the sense of possession and ego, equanimous in misery and happiness, forbearing, ever contented, a *Yogin*, controlled in mind, of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me (the Lord)." "He of whom the world is not afraid and who is not afraid of the world, who is free from exhilaration, wrath, fear or agitation ... Expecting nothing, pure, capable, unconcerned, unperturbed, renouncing all undertakings..." "Alike to friend and foe, as well as in honour

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and humiliation such a person, the devotee, is dear to me (the Lord)."<sup>40</sup>

The analysis of the divine and demoniac endowments, the *Daivi* and the *Asurt sampats* in Ch. XVI has also relevance to our subject. One blessed with divine endowments is kin to the man of culture; among others, the following are comprised in the divine endowments: Freedom from fear, purity of mind, firm stand in self-knowledge and in *its yogic* means, charity, self-control, sacrifice, study, austerity, straightforwardness, non-violence, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, quietude, refraining from calumny, compassion towards all beings, freedom from craving, gentleness, shame at doing a wrong, absence of fickleness, power, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred and annoyance."

Similarly the analysis of the three *Gunas*, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* and their application to faith, food, sacrifice, charity, penance (Ch. XVII), action and happiness (Ch. XVIII) is useful, especially their *Sattvic* forms.

## X

As exemplars and inspirers of the cultural ideal we mentioned the *Rsi* and then the *Raja Rsi* and the *Avatara*. We had similar exemplars in the *Jnanin-Jivanmukta* of *Advaita*, the *Bhakta* and the *Bhagavata* of the devotional schools, the *Yogin* and *Sthitaprajna* of the *Gita*, the *Siddha* of the *Tantra*, the *Buddha* and the *Bodhisattva* and the *Arhat* of Buddhism and Jainism. Of these we have dealt with the *Yogin* and *Sthitaprajna* of the *Gita*. For an example of the contribution of Purana literature to our study, let us turn to the *Bhagavata* where the Lord, in his teachings to his friend and kinsman Uddhava, describes the characteristics of the *Sadhu*. The *Sadhu* or the *Sat*, the *Bhagavata* describes earlier, as a more instantaneous sanctifier than holy waters or images of God. This is what a *Sadhu* is like: "Compassionate, unharmed and forbearing towards all, having truth as his strength, equal and helpful to all, with a mind not ruined by desires, subdued, mild, clean, unburdened by possessions, without craving, moderate in acquisition, quiet, firm, silent and meditative, with a spirit surrendered to Me, careful, deep and unperturbed, devoid of pride, honouring others, fit, friendly, merciful, widowed with imagination — such is the nature of the good and pure Soul."

The *Dhammapada's* portrait of the *Arhant*, *Pandita* or *Buddha* is not different. The virtues that make one the *Buddha* or the Enlightened are cessation from all evil of thought, word and action, cultivation of goodness, cleanliness of mind, patience, forbearance, meditation, refraining from harming or harassing others, restraint, moderation, detachment and satisfaction in non-material things.

The sublime Hero depicted by the two Epics becomes in the literary treatment in poetry and drama, the foremost of the four types of Hero designated *Dhrodatta*. From Bharata's

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. The concept of *Lila* which explains the Lord's own creative activity. See also "*Homo Ludens : A study of the play element in Culture*" by John Haizinga. Beacon Press, Boston'.

*Natya Sastra* onwards, works of dramaturgy and poetics describe the endowments, qualities and conduct of the *Dhirodatta*, who is the fit Hero of the *Nataka*, the prototype of all drama in Sanskrit. It is, however, the royal savant and aesthete Bhoja who gives the most elaborate analysis and description of the qualities which constitute the personality of the Hero-type designated *Dhirodatta*. He says in his *Srngara Prakasa* (Ch. 18) that the primary motivation of the *Dhirodatta* is *Dharma*; *Dharma* expresses itself through the three media of word, mind and act; by word of mouth, the *Dhirodatta* always speaks what is beneficent, pleasing, true and conducive to others' good, *Hita*, *priya*, *Satya* and *Apt a-*, by mind he is marked by faith in the higher values (*Astikya*), Compassion (*Daya*) and non-coveting of others' possessions

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(*Parasva-anipsa*); by act he always respects his elders (*Guru updsti*), performs acts of charity (*Dana*), and also protects the weak and the afflicted (*Artatrana*)} While the above are positive activities (*Pravrtti*), on the negative side (*Nivrtti*), he refrains from wickedness, setting his mind on others' possessions, addiction to objectionable things, injury, violence etc. A third set of virtues relates to his firm pursuit of his own duties, having connections only with those who are fit for company and not with those who act against religious teachings and the way of the world, acquiring wealth only by legitimate means, never transgressing the word of elders and teachers, never refusing to give to one who supplicates, carrying out his promise etc.

Setting forth another set of sixteen qualities of this *Dhirodatta*, Bhoja mentions that he is characterized by the absence of such vices as are generally concomitant with the presence of certain endowments, achievements and circumstances. Thus he is not elated when prosperity comes to him nor dejected when in adversity; he does not transgress righteousness under the sway of passion and the like; always emulates his superiors and dislikes things that are base; sympathetic when somebody has unwittingly erred; always eager to observe proper conduct; is not jealous of the endowments of others; neither does he take pleasure in the miseries of others nor does he traduce others; his anger is never uncalled for; whatever he undertakes he carries through; he is not wonder-struck at any striking act nor is he proud of his own position etc. At the basis of the above-mentioned qualities are the more fundamental ones like *sila* which Bhoja defines as uniform good nature; *Daksinya* (consideration), *Sthairya* (firmness), *Gambhira* (keeping to himself his ideas or feelings), *Pragalbhya* (capability), *Krtajnata* (gratitude), *Avikatthanatd* (not boasting about himself) and *Sobha* or charm which Bhoja defines as not swerving from the path of propriety (*Aucitya-aparityaga*).

Bhoja indeed waxes further eloquent in his description of the *Dhirodatta* by pointing out eighteen more aspects of this high character; and among these may be mentioned his taking delight in things irreproachable, yearning for things and persons superior, thoughtfulness in respect of *Dharma*, *Artha*, and *Kama* and of the outcome of things, unerring judgment, bashfulness when praised by others, carefulness in revealing his attitude, not losing balance when something more than the expected happens, delighting in others' success and performances, having only a gentle smile (never a loud laughter) and enthusiasm and effort to undertake great tasks<sup>41</sup>.

## XI

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<sup>41</sup> Faber & Faber. London, 1961.

The whole literature of poetry, prose and drama in Sanskrit could also be quoted for the precious gems of traits of culture exemplified either in the characters or in the general observations of the poets. There is a considerable literature of *Niti*, or right conduct, the shining model of which is the century of *Niti* by Bartrhari. All the qualities and critical observations made in this literature have a direct bearing on culture and its constituent features. Bhartrhari describes the lot of one who had elected to be a *Sujana* ‘a good man’ as one of extreme difficulty and vigilance and grit and compares it to the austerity called *Asidhard-vrata*, walking on razor’s edge or maintaining one’s integrity while all the time in the company of temptation. Two of his ten verses on the ‘good man’ may be quoted:

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“Behavior which is not only endearing but also full of propriety; inability to do a dirty thing even at the -threat of deprivation of life; refraining from beseeching the unworthy and not asking even a friend, if he is poor; adamant firmness in adversity; and following the footsteps of the great ones — who enjoined on the good souls this formidable austerity of the razor’s edge?” The next one: “Charity done secretly, busy attention towards the guest, silence after doing good to others, public acknowledgement of help received from others, freedom from pride on becoming affluent, meritorious talks about others without any insult to them —\* who enjoined on the good souls this difficult austerity of the razor’s edge?”

For an illustration, from the works of leading poets, the following two verses from the playwright Bhavabhuti may be cited.

1. In his play *Mahaviracarita*, he says (V. 59): “A benevolent disposition even at the risk of one’s life, absence of enmity, avoidance of all pretexts, and bringing on pleasing things as if for oneself — this is great friendship.”

2. “An affectionate disposition, a discipline of the tongue which is sweet In its humility, a mind auspicious by nature, irreproachable company, never false or fluctuating in its flavor either before or after, — this is the pure unadventitious secret of the good souls.”

Lastly I want to refer to the *Subhasitas* which form a storehouse of popular wisdom driving home with great force elements of universal culture. Many of them are derived from Vyasa himself or from the *Niti* literature, or from different poets. But there is still a quantity of them which may be deemed truly anonymous and national. A few samples of the *Subhasitas* may be given:<sup>42</sup>

1. Which wise man will not like the great souls of straightforward and gracious minds in whom the heart, the word and the action, all the three are identical?

2. ‘This one is a kinsman, this another is not so’. So do men of small minds think; but for those of high minds, the whole world is a family:

3. If you want to captivate the whole world by a single act, please prevent your tongue from grazing on the pasture of traducing others.

4. Without causing heart-burning to another, without stooping to the level of the wicked, without abandoning the path of the good, even the little that you earn is really much.

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<sup>42</sup> See the concluding prayers in my *Prayers, Praises and Psalms*, G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, 1938, 1948, 1955.

5. One in sorrow should compare oneself with those who are in greater sorrow; one in happiness with those who are more happy and thus one should not, by over-rejoicing or over-sorrowing, give himself away to the enemies.

6. When it is entirely in your own hands to accumulate virtues, certainly it is a matter for censure if you are devoid of virtues; but wealth being dependent on luck, there is no ground to be found fault with.

7. There is no equal to these in all the three worlds to captivate people, — charity, friendship, compassion towards beings and sweet words.

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8. He who sets at ease the world with these four — namely his action, thought, word and looks — to him the whole world is favorable.

9. This indeed is the essence of life, which is ebbing away every moment, namely, to be in the company of the uninhibited, the guileless and the cultured.

10. One should speak pleasingly but without wretchedness; one should be heroic but without bragging; one should be liberal but not to the undeserving; one should be capable in doing things but without being severe.

11. Straightforwardness, kindness, self-control, control of senses — this is the universal *Dharma* of all classes of people.

12. As you go or stand, keep awake or sleep, if you are not doing something for the good of the living beings, your life is merely like that of an animal.

13. The ten *Yamas* are kindness, forbearance, truth, noninjury, compassion, non-craving, affection, tranquility, sweetness and straightforwardness.

14. Non-enmity towards all beings in thought, word and deed, and help and gift to them constitute good conduct.

15. To help to speak pleasingly and to put forth sincere friendship — this is in the very nature of good people.

16. Absence of malice, forbearance, quietude, contentment, pleasing words, eschewing of lust and anger — these illustrate the conduct of the disciplined ones.

17. Of this poisonous tree of the life-cycle, there are however two fruits which could be tasted — the enjoyment of literature and the company of the good.

18. “The God and the Goddess are the father and mother; all devotees are kinsmen; and the whole universe is one's country.”

In the Puranas and classical literature, one comes across the performances by devout persons of the adoration called *Asta-puspa* (Eight flowers) as part of their daily devotions. On the analogy of the flowers used in the worship of God this act of ‘eight flowers’ consists of ‘eight virtues’, eight spiritual qualities with whose offer they propitiate the Lord. These flowers are thus described: “Non-injury is the first flower; the control of senses is another, forbearance is a flower, and compassion another; then comes the flower of knowledge; penance and truth are two more flowers; and the eighth flower is sincerity.”

Ahimsa prathamam puspaṃ

puspaṃ indriya-nigrahaḥ |

Kṣantih puspaṃ daya puspaṃ

jnanam puspam atah param |  
Tapah puspam satya-puspam  
Bhava-puspam athastamam |

In Culture there is not only the Universality which has been stressed so much in the former part of this lecture; along with this transcending of spatial limitation there is also in it, in its very conception, the transcending of the temporal limitation. Culture in a temporal sense consists of the materials of the civilizations of particular periods. But the higher Culture which I have been expatiating upon here is constituted of those virtues which are eternal

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values. There is no question of past, present and future in this Culture, no question or opposition of tradition and modernity.<sup>43</sup>

The form or medium through which a culture-trait, say Charity, expresses itself may differ from time to time or place to place, but Charity is fundamental, not temporal, a *Sanatana dharma*. The very effort of this lecture to show the common conception of culture and its common traits in ancient Eastern scriptures and Epics and other writings and in the writings of modern authors and thinkers of the West is to bring out Culture as something beyond the regional and historical flux. There is no contradiction in this, as it is its contemporary or local applicability and relevance that sustain its ever-lasting and universal character.<sup>44</sup>

## XII

According to Hindu thought, Culture is not the final thing. A cultural state, like the ethical or aesthetic, brings one nearest to the highest spiritual state of *Moksa*. It is like the *Ardha-mandapa* before the *sanctum sanctorum*. It may be recollected that the formulation of the concept of culture took place in an age when mechanical and industrial developments and economic motives, had begun to influence and dominate the human mind and a corrective was needed to restore the balance of essential humanity and to prevent the impoverishment of the human virtues and sensibilities of man. The aesthetic movement was not adequate and because of its inevitable pitfalls and sensual aberrations, the Indian art- theory oriented aesthetic conceptions to the religious ideal, holding Divinity as the fountain-head of all beauty and all art as preparation, *Sadhana*, for the spiritual realization. The purely moral or ethical philosophy is similarly another disciplinary approach to the same final goal. "Neither the ethical ' being nor the aesthetic being is the whole man, nor can either be his sovereign principle; they are merely two powerful elements... they (the two) must be taken up and enlightened by the higher principle That higher principle seems to be provided for us by the human faculty of reason and intelligent will." (Aurobindo , *The Human Cycle*, pp. 109-110). It is in connection with religion that Matthew Arnold discusses often the concept of culture in his *Culture and Anarchy*.<sup>45</sup> More than once his conception of culture is related to the working towards that perfection which would make the God's will prevail. Elaborating the true value of Culture, he says (p. 83) that the perfection as conceived by culture is "not a having and resting, but a growing and becoming" and that in this, "it coincides with religion."

There is a modern tendency in secular governments to identify Culture with music and dance, representatives of which are always sent out on cultural delegations. Even tourism has come

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<sup>43</sup> V. 38.41 M.L.J. Press Edition

<sup>44</sup> VI. 116.44

<sup>45</sup> See also II. 48, "Samatvam yoga ucyate."

to be identified with it. If real Culture cannot be separated from man, it cannot also be divorced from religion. Spengler declares (*The Decline of the West, II* p. 308) that “Culture is ever synonymous with religious creativeness.” T. S. Eliot would say: “The first assertion is that no culture has appeared or developed except together with a religion.” Much more than in the period which saw the rise and growth of the concept of Culture we are now in a world dominated by the doctrine of ‘produce or perish’ and the spread of secularism, if not of atheism. In a situation as the one we are passing through, Culture offers the nearest substitute

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for religion and philosophy, whereby man’s higher and spiritual virtues and attitudes could be saved. Powys observes of culture that “It is a definite orientation of Mind and Will and is

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of the nature of religion and love. Nay it is a modern • substitute for old religion, the latter being unattainable.” Again .. under certain conditions culture actually becomes a substitute for religion What we are here defining, therefore, as the true nature of culture is nothing less than a substitute for religion, when the absence of faith in a modern person’s being has rendered religion unattainable.” To say as , some do that culture is an end in itself might be accepted, on the analogy of *Dharma* being considered as a *Pvm\$5rtka*. But in both cases the question remains as to what renders *Dharma* and Culture significant or what constitutes its ultimate basis. *Dharma*, although a *Purusartha*, subserves Self- knowledge and *Moksa*, the last and highest *Purusartha*. Powys argues, somewhat similarly, that “At the bottom of all culture lies some fundamental attitude, half-conscious, half unconscious, to the first cause of the Universe.” In his essay on *Useless Knowledge*, Russell points out that “For those whom dogmatic religion can no longer bring comfort, there is need of some substitute if life is not to become dusty and harsh and filled with trivial self-assertion.” It is here that culture steps in to fill the vacuum, and plays its sublimating role and keeps on till it is time for the beatific vision of the Supreme to descend on the deserving one. The very qualities comprehended in culture cannot remain purely within the limits of limitations of relations of the mundane world; if they reach perfection and plenitude, as they have to, although after a long, long journey — *Bahunam janmanam ante*

— they have to allow themselves and the soul to become one with the Supreme, like the rivers with the ocean. Culture which with its imaginative sympathy has helped one to identify oneself with all beings and all beings with oneself, eventually makes one attain Brahmanhood and liberation.

Sarvabhutesu catmanam sarvabhutani catmani |

Samam pasyan atma-yaji svarajyam adhigacchati |

*Manu*, XII. 91

It is not given to many to call themselves really cultured; among thousands who are devoted to the ideals of Culture, a few may be able to reach a high rung in the ladder of perfection. This is no disparagement or argument for the impracticability of the whole concept of Culture. Whatever little, whatever little by little, we have gathered, stands us in good stead:

Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat

The full perfection of Culture may be embodied only in the great incarnations of Divinity, the *Avataras* and in a great poet like Kalidasa and in a great *Sannyasin* like Sankara who are no less *Avataras*; and we should ceaselessly practice their imitation. Two such *Avataras* that stand before the nation as models are Rama and Krsna and on them the *Ramayana* and the

*Bhagavata* have two precious verses, as examples of man, which I have constantly cherished.<sup>46</sup> I think it would be proper to leave you with the thought of these two surpassing perfections of the cultural ideal of man on earth: Rama himself tells his teachers who try to argue him out of his resolve:<sup>47</sup>

“With my senses in contentment, I carry on the course of life, without deceit, with faith, an expert in deciding for myself what is to be done and what is not to be done.”<sup>48</sup>

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*Santusta-panca-vargo'kam loka-yatram pravartaye  
Akuhah sraddadhanas ca karya-akdrya-vicaksanah |*

(II. 109.27)

Suka seeks the Lord with the words:

“The Lord who endeavours without ego, being wise; has no desires, being full; is not goaded by anybody else, teaches people by Himself being on His own proper path; —that Lord I seek, the source and promoter of all *dharmas*”

*Tam ihamanam nirahamkrtam budham  
Nirasisam purnam ananya-coditam |  
Nrn siksayantam nijavartma-samsthitam  
Prabhum prapadye (a)khila-dharma-bhdvanam //*

(VIII. 1.16)

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<sup>46</sup> See also Vatsyayana's Bhasya on Nyaya Sutras, I.1.2

<sup>47</sup> *Gita*, VII. 19

<sup>48</sup> *Gita* II. 40

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