

BUDDHIST AND VEDIC STUDIES

A Miscellany

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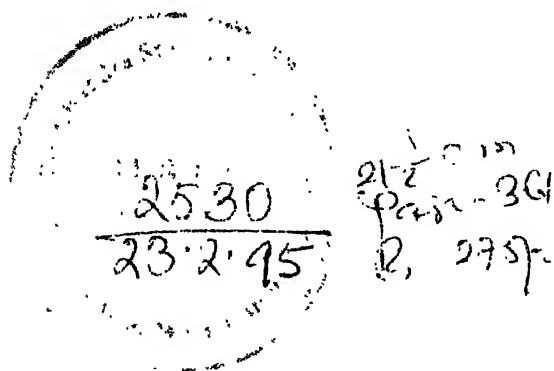
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**MOTILAL BANARSIDASS PUBLISHERS
PRIVATE LIMITED • DELHI**

Kṣatra-Dharma and Rāja-Dharma*

The historical relationship between these two concepts poses an interesting problem to the student of ancient Indian social and political ideas. While in general there has been no attempt to distinguish between the meanings of these two terms, in a few instances they have even been considered synonymous. The purpose of this paper is to examine the historical development of these concepts and determine as far as possible their exact social and political significance.

The problematic nature of this relationship appears from the fact that, beginning with the canonical Buddhist texts, at least in a few places in Indian literature, especially in the great epics, *kṣatra-dharma* or *kṣatriya-dharma* is openly condemned as anti-social, whereas generally in the orthodox Hindu view *kṣatriya-dharma* is considered as the norm or legitimate duty of kings, that is as the *rāja-dharma*, and given a definite socio-moral value. In the Buddhist canonical *Jātaka* text¹ there is a stanza (427) containing the most pronounced condemnation of *kṣatra-dharma* that is found in any Indian source. The stanza may be literally rendered thus: 'Those who are skilled in *khatta-dhamma*, generally become doomed to (suffer in) purgatory; therefore, having renounced *khatta-dhamma*, warding Truth, I have come back (to face the man-eater).' Ghoshal² who noticed only the preceding stanza (426) has obviously erred in taking the compound word *nakkhatta-dhamma* occurring there to mean 'knowledge of the astral lore', understanding it as '*nakṣatra-dharma*' (*nakṣatra* in the sense of asterism), whereas the correct analysis would be '*na-k-khatta-dhamma*'. In Pali it is a common phenomenon to find the 'k' as first element in a conjunct consonant doubled after a short vowel in pronunciation. There is no doubt that

*Essays in honour of Professor Kewal Motwani, Agra, Satish Book Enterprise, 1970.

both stanzas refer to *kṣatra-dharma*, i.e. the norm or ethos of the *kṣatra*, the sphere of activity proper to the *kṣatriyas*. Similarly, in a passage of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (1.9) *khatta-vijjā* is denounced as a low art (*tiracchāna-vijjā*, lit. a brutal science). One is generally inclined to agree with Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids in interpreting the term as referring to 'the craft of government, then lying in great part in adhering to custom'.³ He bases his rendering on the commentary of the *Dīgha Nikāya* where Buddhaghosa takes it as '*nīti-sattha*' or 'the science of polity'. The commentarial passage on *Jātaka* 426 also has the gloss '*nakkhatta-dhamma saṅkhatē nīti-satthe*', identifying *kṣatra-dharma* with *nītiśāstra*. But, as will appear from the ensuing discussion, this is only the secondarily developed sense of *khatta-vijjā*, the original sense being nearer to the significance attributed to it by Śāṅkara and Patañjali, viz., 'the science of weapons (*dhanurveda*)'.⁴ The exponent of the philosophy of such militarism (*khatta-vijjāvādin*) is mentioned contemptuously in another *Jātaka* story (No. 528) alongside of materialists etc. He is there pictured as a person who inculcates Machiavellian tricks, recommending naked force in carrying out political designs, a verse put into his mouth actually asserting that 'wealth is to be desired for oneself even at the expense of killing father and mother. . . .' From these references one thing becomes clear, that in the early Buddhist view *kṣatra* in the sense occurring in these compounds was a concept considered anti-social and contrary to the ethics of the Buddha.

A few passages denouncing *kṣatra-dharma* are also found in the epics. In one place in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (II.118.19) Rāma in renouncing the *kṣatra-dharma* says with moral fervour that the warriors' code masks sin as righteousness and invites hypocrisy. He denounces *kṣatra-dharma* in favour of the true behaviour of kings (*rājavr̥tta*)—a statement whose significance will become clear in the course of this discussion. No doubt this was an attack on the militant ethos of the R̥gvedic Āryan tradition very likely inspired by the heterodox religious morality of the East, the home of Jainism and Buddhism. It is significant that such passages are found in the *Mahābhārata* too, but only in Book XII, which according to Winternitz⁵ did not belong to the original epic but is a later addition (although not so late as Book XIII). Depicting the code of the warrior as the earthly analogue of the sinful amorality evidenced in the character of R̥gvedic Indra, certain passages in the 'Śāntiparva', generally put into the mouth of Yudhiṣṭhira, make a somewhat feeble attempt to condemn the inequity

inherent in the *kṣatra-dharma*. But on the whole, the political doctrine expounded to Yudhiṣṭhira by Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva, Draupadī and the sage Devasthāna are meant to be convincing arguments in favour of the *kṣatra-dharma*.

In the *Mahābhārata*, especially in the 'Śāntiparva' which has been aptly described as 'a great paean to the *kṣatriya-dharma*', the image of the *kṣatriya* that emerges from the exhortations of Yudhiṣṭhira is that of a heartless desperado bent on aggrandizement even at the cost of the lives of others who stand in the way. 'Without killing others. . . without slaying creatures as a fisherman (kills fish), no one can acquire prosperity. Without slaughter no man has been able to achieve glory or obtain subjects in this world. It is by the slaughter of Vṛtra that Indra became great. Animals live upon animals, the stronger upon the weaker. . . . this has been ordained by the gods.'⁶ In the 'Śāntiparva' it is clearly stated that 'a king desirous of prosperity should not scruple to slay son or brother or father or friend. . . .'⁷—words that recall the above cited exhortation in the *Jātaka* by the exponent of *kṣatra-vidyā*. In the celebrated words of Bhīṣma, the *kṣatriya-dharma* is beyond good and evil. His argument is that the sins incurred in battle leave the *kṣatriya* with his very blood.⁸ In another glorification of the *kṣatriya* duty Arjuna asserts: 'I do not find any being in this world that maintains his life without injuring others'.⁹ Thus it will be seen that the heroic ethos reflected in the *Mahābhārata* is more in favour of the propagation of the traditional *kṣatra-dharma* than otherwise.

The above extracts from the canonical Buddhist texts as well as from the two great epics present in the words of a modern critic 'a diametrically opposite view of the relation of statecraft to morality'.¹⁰ Neither he nor any other writer, however, seems to have undertaken an examination of this phenomenon in the light of the date on the evolution of this Āryan culture afforded by the Vedic literature. It is the opinion of the present writer that the solution of the riddle presented by the concept of *kṣatra-dharma*, at times denounced as anti-social and at other times considered the necessary duty of the princely class even identified with the *rājadharmā*, is only to be found in the historical changes in the cultural milieu wrought during the millenium preceding the rise of Buddhism and the Epic age. Thus an examination of the evolution of the concept of *kṣatra* is the *sine qua non* for the solution of this important problem.

The word *kṣatra* is as old as the period of Indo-Iranian 'unity' as

seen from the fact that it occurs both in the Avesta and the *R̥gveda*, while no western Indo-European language shows the existence of such a formation. The *R̥gvedic* term *kṣatra* has been traced to a root *kṣi* (*ksayati*) meaning to 'possess', 'to rule',¹¹ (*dyu*) *kṣu* 'ruling (heaven)' etc. Its Avestan parcell *ksaθra* is similarly derived from the corresponding root *kṣi* (*kṣayēiti*) 'possess, rule'. Bartholomae gives two sets of meanings for the Avestan word: (1) *imperium*, rule, lordship etc., and (2) ruler's domain, sphere, province etc., and remarks that these two meanings are not always distinguishable.¹² It is relevant to note here this particular formation with the suffix *tra/θra* is not found outside Indo-Iranian,¹³ although the root itself has an Indo-European provenance¹⁴ as seen from the related Greek forms *ktamai* 'to acquire, possess, hold' giving *ktēras* 'possession', *ktēana* (pl.) 'possessions' and *ktēmata* (pl.) 'family possessions'. A comparison of the semantic content of the derivatives of this root in the Indo-European languages wherein it occurs, viz., Greek and Indo-Iranian, leads to the unavoidable conclusion that its primitive sense should have been 'to acquire, possess' and that the Indo-Iranian sense of 'ruling' is a later historical development. The semantic shift 'acquire', 'possess', 'be master of' 'rule' is perfectly logical, and confirms the belief that the idea of 'rule, kingship' can be a legitimate conceptual evolution from the Indo-European sense of 'gain, possess' which must have taken place in the original Indo-Iranian period. An examination of the socio-cultural context in which such a change of meaning could have occurred clearly lends support to this deduction.

The ancestors of the Persian and Indian Āryans, according to available prehistoric evidence, are found about the latter part of the third millenium before Christ in the steppes of Inner Asia as semi-pastoral tribes. These Āryan 'rugged hunters and herdsmen' appear at the dawn of history moving southwards from their original location which may have been the Pamir region as Eduard Meyer argued, or, more probably, the vast plains of the Oxus and the Jaxartes as Hertzfeld attempted to show.¹⁵ The cause for their enforced expansion from the Steppe was, according to the pre-historian V. Gordon Childe, the cyclic desiccation of Inner Asia, a phenomenon to which this authority ascribes their nomadism itself. 'Such desiccation', says Childe, 'might have begun the process of expulsion and isolation which the incursion of the Mongols completed'.¹⁶ We can then surmise that these pastoral tribes, the forefathers of the Persian and Indian Āryans, were gradually becoming food-plunderers and land-

hunters, being pressed from behind by the Mongols and being forced by catastrophic geographical changes in their homeland to seek for food and fresh pastures elsewhere. Such a picture of these pre-Indic Āryan tribes as land-grabbing nomads, using indiscriminate methods of attack to plunder and sometimes even to oust the settled communities of the southern regions from their territories, is not only provided by pre-historic evidence but also found to *survive*¹⁷ in the legends and myths recorded in the Vedic literature, especially the *Rgveda*.

Elsewhere¹⁸ the present writer has attempted to show the possibility of a reference to such roving bands of Āryan free-booters in the Ṛgvedic term *bharatas* (lit. raid-ers).¹⁹ Moreover, the same contribution brings out the connection between the Ṛgvedic deities, such as Indra, Bṛhaspati (or Brāhmanaspati), Agni and Soma and the ethos of raiding and pillaging with all the means at their disposal. The use of the *swift-horse*, 'a pre-eminently Āryan animal' according to Childe,²⁰ in these raiding expeditions was also demonstrated by references to the celebrated mythicized and idolized war-horse *Dadhikras* as found in the *Rgveda* (c.g. 4.38.5). What is important for our present purpose is to observe that according to Ṛgvedic data the main motive for these incursions into the lands of settled communities was hunger which necessitated the *plunder* of food and fodder. Not only does the root *bhar* indicate such plunder and looting for food (e.g., 10.64.6; 8.40.2), but it is also clearly found with its object indicated by such words as *vāja* and *medha*, both implying *nourishment* and hence food, as it has been shown in the contribution referred to (cf. *vājambhara*, *bhāradvāja*, *vāja-sāti*, *medha-sāti* etc.). The desiccation of their original homeland naturally compelled these Āryan tribes to undertake raiding expeditions for food and riches (*dhanāni*). According to Childe, there is archaeological evidence supporting the idea that these nomadic Āryan ancestors spread both North and South. Speaking of the tombs found in the northern slopes of the Caucasus of Āryan chieftains who had led their followers on plundering expeditions into Armenia, Cappadocia, and even Mesopotamia, this famous authority of Āryan culture and pre-history says: 'Masses of gold and silver buried in the enormous barrows must partly be *loot* (italics mine) from the rich states south of the range. . . manifest in the gold and silver lions and bulls that decorated the canopy under which one prince was laid to rest. . . The *raids* that brought them north were prelude to invasions. We may suspect that

the *ancestors of the Indians* and the *Iranians* discovered *as free-booters* the roads that eventually led them to the throne of Mitanni and to the Indus Valley. . . . While some nomads were settling down in the valleys and others were constituting principalities on the slopes of the Caucasus, the remainder left upon the steppe would be forced to find outlets for their increasing numbers and fresh pastures for their growing herds by means of *migration*. . . . pastoralists do not spread slowly and regularly like (Danubian) cultivators but more rapidly by darts. Actual migration is preceded by exploratory expeditions in the summer, and such excursions reveal to the nomad other goals than mere *grazing ground*—centres of *wealth to be plundered* and held to ransom. The enforced expansion from the steppe seems in fact to have been guided by some such ends' (pp. 194-96). It is necessary for the purpose of this discussion to underscore Childe's statement here that such nomadic 'raids. . . . were prelude to *invasions*', in other words, to the forcible occupation of others' territories.

It is, then, of great significance to find the word *kṣatra* used in *R̥gveda* with exactly the same implication of 'conquered land', i.e. 'forcibly occupied territory', which in course of political evolution would become the 'domain' of chieftains who led these expeditions. In *RV* (6.50.3) Heaven and Earth are prayed 'to grant wide dominion (*uru kṣatram*)', and in *RV* (1.160.5) they are implored to 'bestow on us great *kṣatra*. . . . whereby we may extend ourselves ever over the folk (*lit.* settlers, *kṛṣṭiḥ*)'. Highly significant in this connection is the prayer addressed to the divine leader of such raids and invasions in *RV* (1.54.11): 'So give us, Indra. . . . great *kṣatra* and strength that conquers tribes (*janā*)' (cf. 7.30.3). In another stanza (1.157.2), the *Āśvins* (*lit.* horsemen), are prayed: 'equip your mighty chariot; bedew our *kṣatra* (i.e. occupied land) with honey and fatness'. (The translation 'power' for *kṣatra* as given by Geldner, Griffith etc. completely misses the point; Ludwig's *Reich* is certainly closer.) *RV* (1.162.22) clearly anticipates the later institution of *Digvijaya* when the god-descended Horse is implored thus: 'May the Steed, propitiated with oblations, win for us *kṣatra*'. That the sense proposed here, namely, 'conquered land' is the original significance of *kṣatra* in these passages is further borne out by the incidence of the plural *kṣatrāṇi* in 4.4.8. and 8.37.7, where the idea of 'conquered territories' or 'dominions' suits the context more aptly than the abstract conception of 'powers' as Griffith gives for the latter reference. In

Avestan too the plural occurs as *kṣaθra* in the sense of 'dominions'.²¹ That in the earlier stage of pre-Āryan antiquity this *concrete* sense was more probable is seen from the idiomatic use of the Greek plural, from the etymologically parallel root, namely, *kteana* 'possessions' and *ktemata* (Homer) 'family possessions'.²² Thus the common meaning of Sanskrit *kṣatra* and Avestan *kṣaθra* is 'dominion' and this could easily be traced to the more primitive Indo-European idea of 'possession' which as shown above in the course of the progress of Indo-Iranian culture gradually developed the specified sense of 'possessed (i.e. conquered) territory', which in turn came to acquire the meaning of 'dominion' in the course of further social evolution.

Further evidence can be adduced from the *Rgveda* to show that such land-grabbing formed an essential feature of the culture of these nomadic ancestors of the Āryans. As indicated above these tribes were hard pressed for new lands, due to the desiccation of their homeland and the pressures from the Mongols from the rear. Such a situation seems to be clearly reflected in the prayer addressed to the Ādityas to give 'expanse from constriction' (*lit.* narrow confinement: *añśor uru*), and the significant appeal to the tribal gods to find 'a way for wide settlement' (*utu kṣayāya* 5.65.4; cf. 6.25.6). Similarly, Indra the culture-hero of the nomadic hordes is prayed to 'give us a wide settlement, wide space, that we may live' (*uru kṣayāya uru no yandhi jivase*, 8.57.12). Related is the conception of such 'nomadic' deities like Indra, Soma, Pusan etc., as 'path-makers'. In RV (6.21.12) Indra is implored to be 'on good and evil paths, our leader. . . our path-preparer', and Soma is called 'path-maker. . . with a thousand ways' (9.106.5). Pūṣan, the nomadic god *par excellence*, is the guardian deity on these land-finding expeditions, and so aptly described as 'protector of the path(s)' (RV, 1.42.1-3). He is significantly prayed 'to lead us past all pursuers' (verse 7) to 'meadows rich in grass' (verse 8). He is hailed as the 'lord of paths' and prayed 'to clear paths for winning of food and booty (*vāja-sātaye*: 6.53.1,4; cf. 10.17.4-6). Frequent is the yearning for 'wide space' (*varivas*), and it is Indra, the divine 'leader' of these nomadic incursions and invasions who is styled 'the giver of wide space' (*varivas-kṛt*, 8.16.6) and 'finder of wide space' (*varivo-vid*, 10.38.4), and it is Soma, the never-failing associate of Indra (9.37.5; cf. 9.62.3; 64.14 etc). Puru, the eponymous hero of one of these early tribes, is said (7.19.3) to have been helped by Indra in the conquest of land (*kṣetra-sāti*) in battles against obstructions (*ṛtra-hanyeṣu*). Indra is also praised for helping Śvitra's

strenuous steed in the capture of land (*kṣetra-jeṣa*) according to *RV* (1.33.15). The use of the swift-horse in such land-grabbing adventures is certainly alluded to also in 4.38.1 where in a hymn to Dadhikras, the divine Horse is extolled for the gift of 'a conqueror of fields and ploughlands, subduer of Dasyus'. Although the etymological identification of *kṣatra* and *kṣetra* suggested by Grassmann, Whitney²³ and others can no longer be maintained, their semantic approximation cannot be denied, for, as the above references show, both words came to signify the (alien) *lands* occupied by the hordes of Āryan antiquity. This conclusion receives definite support from the existence in the Khotan-saka dialect of *kṣirā* (derived from earlier²⁴ *kṣatryam*) with the accepted sense of 'lands'.²⁵ We may also refer here to Gershevitch's suggestion²⁶ that at Yasht 5.87 it would be better to render Avestan *ksaθra* by 'estate' — a rendering which he believes is confirmed by the meaning of the word *sahr* referring to 'cultivated oasis' in the dialects of Basagird. Reference may also be made to the significance of the word '*kurukṣetra*', the name given to the *land* which became the centre of Āryan hegemony in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*.

In view of the facts presented above, if it be conceded that the primitive sense of *kṣatra* was 'conquered land' and thence the word developed the meaning of 'dominion' and finally 'rule', it becomes easy to determine the historical significance of *kṣatra-dharma*. At least in its original implication the term must have meant the 'ethos of the land conquerors' and it appears that this term could at no time in its subsequent evolution totally divest itself of the associations of predatory violence and the primitive tradition of aggression and encroachment which it developed in the early Indo-Iranian period. That this self-same tradition of violence evolved into the militaristic polity of the heroic age is more than clear from the concept of *kṣatra-dharma* as celebrated in many passages of the *Mahābhārata*, particularly the statements put into the mouth of Bhiṣma, as referred to above. It is important to note that this tradition of violence associated with the building up of tribal 'states' has come down to the more civilized phases of Indian political development as reflected in the *Brāhmaṇa* epics and early heterodox literatures. The *Brāhmaṇas* appear to have legitimized this tradition by means of their sacrificial institutions such as *Aśvamedha* and *Rājasūya*, with the associated rite of *Vājapeya*, and the later institution of the *Dig-jaya* or *Dig-vijaya*. No doubt many of the elements in these sacrifices are magico-religious

in character and this fact is at the root of the disagreement among modern interpreters. But when analysed with the socio-cultural context in mind, these institutions yield much that helps to throw light on their historical origins. For instance, in the *Aśvamedha* which in the words of Keith, 'is an old and famous rite, which kings alone can bring to increase *their realms*' (*italics mine*),²⁷ the animal, that has to be a swift horse, is let loose guarded by four hundred armed youths to wander over the country indicating the unlimited extension of the king's domain. 'This ancient and vainglorious *Aśvamedha* sacrifice', says Drekmeier, '... suggests an age when the limit of the territory to which the tribal leader could lay claim was the grazing area'²⁸ and this judgment seems amply supported by the facts above presented. The *Rājasūya* or Royal Consecration sacrifice, as Keith himself points out,²⁹ 'connects itself with Vedic history: the tribes mentioned are the Bharatas or their successors in blood and tradition, the Kuru-Pañcālas' --a fact which undoubtedly recalls the nomadic prehistory of the Vedic Āryans as indicated above. The sacrificer takes from the Adhvaryu a bow with three arrows. . . . strides to the various quarters. . . . is anointed. . . . as king steps on the tiger skin the steps of Viṣṇu. . . . a mimic expedition for booty is performed: the king in his chariot goes out against the cattle of his kinsfolk and, at the time of the fees, he plunders them and they surrender their possessions. In another account, the king mounts his horse and advances to the quarters, an action paralleled in the coronation of the Hungarian king.³⁰ The conception of Dig-jaya or Dig-vijaya is also clearly derived from the nomadic conquest of land accomplished with the aid of the swift-horse, elements present in the above-described ritual institution. The tradition obviously goes back to the prehistoric period of Āryan land-grabbing. The same idea is also reflected in the steps of Viṣṇu mimicked by the anointed king in the *Aśvamedha*. As it is most probable, if the term 'Viṣṇu' is a derivative from the root *viś*, in the sense of 'to lay hold of', 'seize' (*ergreifen*) considered by Grassmann to be its primary meaning in the *Rgveda*,³¹ this god so closely associated with Indra, the divine leader of the proto-Āryan nomads, may etymologically deserve the sobriquet 'grabber'. Moreover, the epithets *uru-gāya*, 'wide-moving' and *uru-krama*, 'wide-striding' prominently applied to Viṣṇu and Indra bring out very clearly their connection with tribal migration and expansion traceable to the nomadic period as argued in this paper. Although we do not find the very term *dig-vijaya* in the *Rgveda*, there are several

references to such a practice. In 10.128.1, the king about to set forth on territorial conquest implores Agni: 'May the four quarters (*pradisāscatasrah*) bend before me: with thee for guardian may we be victorious (*jayema*) in battle' (cf. 3.53.11). In 4.37.7 the Vājas and Rbhu (*kṣan*)s, progeny of Indra (stanza 8), are lauded 'in order to conquer for us all quarters of the earth (*āśās tarīṣaṇi*; cf. 5.10.6)'. The change of meaning in the verb *tr* (*tarati*), which originally meant 'cross' or 'pass over'³² to indicate 'conquer' is of great significance since it occurs also in Iranian and Hittite³³—languages that must historically reflect the same nomadic culture as found to survive in the *Rgveda*. The land-grabbing ancestors of the Āryans were out to *conquer* the territories that they *passed through* in their peregrinations. Much more evidence can be adduced from the *Rgveda* to show that the type of rulership implied in the term *kṣatra* is the product of a particular mode of social evolution in Āryan prehistory when nomadism and aggression formed the essence of that heroism and chieftainship which in course of centuries evolved into the chivalrous concept of land-conquering sovereignty as found in the *Mahābhārata* and other literature of the Heroic Age.

There is unmistakable evidence in the hymns of the *Rgveda* that, even during the later period of the Punjab, tribes fought one another for ownership of new territories. That this ancient tradition which developed into the forcible occupation of border lands as part of the king's function had come down in unbroken continuity right through the post-Vedic period is definitely seen from a verse in Manu: '(The king) should (seek to gain) by force of arms (*daṇḍena*) what he has not yet conquered' (VII.101). And verse 109 clearly lays down that 'for *increasing of the kingdom*, *sāma* (conciliation) and *daṇḍa* are the two chief means'. It need not be pointed out that *daṇḍa* here must mean 'aggressive war' as implied in Bühler's translation of the word in verse 101 as 'army', following Kullūka's comment which defines *daṇḍa* as 'consisting of elephants, horses, chariots and foot-soldiers'. This interpretation in view of what has been said so far, seems historically justifiable. Merely to give the word the penal sense of chastisement in these contexts would obviously be unsuitable. There is no doubt that what is recommended by Manu is the propagation of the *kṣatra-dharma*. The king who fulfils his duties according to *Dharma*, may seek to acquire (border-lands) that he has not conquered yet. . . . says another verse (IX.251), and this is confirmed elsewhere (X.119) by the forthright assertion that 'the

king's inherent duty (*svadharma*) is conquest (*vijaya*). This political doctrine of aggressive self-interest is not restricted to Manu, for we find it upheld as a fundamental principle of the foreign policy of the ideal Hindu monarch even in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and in the 'Śāntiparva' of the *Mahābhārata*. The latter text (103, 105) unashamedly recommends even attacking a friendly power if it will promote the expansionist policy of the State. Thus is derived the justification for the existence of the 'ambitious, aggrandizing state'³⁴ termed the *vijigīṣu* by such political authorities. Another idea of these political theorists, inherited no doubt from the same militarist tradition is the concept of the 'sphere of influence', technically called *maṇḍala*,³⁵ a theory which assumes the inherent necessity of kingship to make itself secure by the conquest of the adjacent territory. Such concepts of political expediency and militant diplomacy clearly demonstrate the influence that the predatory institution of *kṣatra* had on the evolution of the socio-morality of Hindu kingship.

From what has been said so far it seems legitimate to draw the conclusion that *kṣatra-dharma* must have originally meant 'the policy of aggressive expansionism'. Such a meaning certainly suits the facts presented above relating to the origin and development of the concept of *kṣatra*. Given this significance, its condemnation in the Buddhist and other contexts cited above becomes perfectly intelligible. The problem, however, assumes quite a different complexion when we find *kṣatra-dharma* equated in some instances with *kṣatriya-dharma*. The intricacy of the problem results from the uncertainty of the sense of not only the much discussed term *dharma* but also from the inability of writers to determine the exact significance of the word *kṣatriya*. A reference to the *Rgveda* material, however, can again throw much light on the original meaning of this class-name. This derivative from *kṣatra* with the suffix *-ya* (with euphonic *-i-*) would generally mean 'related to' or 'belonging to the *kṣatra*'. If the theory proposed above is correct, *kṣatriya* must then refer to those who took part in the acquisition of alien territory. The general sense of Avestan *ksatrya*, viz., 'lord', 'master', indicates the same connection. According to Bartholomae the word is applied only to gods in the Avesta,³⁶ and its incidence in the *Rgveda* shows that in the older books its application is similarly to the Indo-Iranian deities like Mitra, Varuṇa and the Ādityas.³⁷ These facts clearly point to the origin of the idea in the Indo-Iranian antiquity. Thus the term survived as the name appropriate for the predatory expeditionists who grabbed

alien lands (*kṣatrāṇi*) and established their overlordship against the indigenous settlers (*kṣitih*). With the passage of time these warlike conquerors of the plains of the Punjab would have developed into the 'warrior-class' as distinct from other professional groups. Thus the term *kṣatriya-dharma* came to mean 'the duty of the warrior caste'; as actually found in most contexts of the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Manusmṛti* (X.81) it is used to mean 'the law applicable to the *kṣatriyas*',³⁸ which clearly implies the caste-duty for the warriors as laid down by tradition. It may now be seen how the *kṣatriya-dharma* or *svadharma* of the warriors, as the *Bhagavadgīta* calls it (II.31), can be regarded as an historical evolution from the *kṣatra* of hoary Āryan antiquity. Kṛṣṇa's own definition of *kṣatra-dharma* brings out its martial nature in vivid colours: 'Prowess, boldness, fortitude, dexterity, not fleeing from battle, liberality and mastery, born of (their own) nature constitute the *kṣatra-dharma* (XVIII.43).

It has to be observed that even in the oldest parts of the *Rgveda* the *Kṣatriya* is connected with kingship (*rāṣṭram kṣatriyasya*, 4.42.1). In a tribal invasion it is only to be expected that the 'leader' of the movement would become the 'ruler' (*rājā*) after a settled life has been established. Thus one among the invading *kṣatriyas* would normally become the king and the others will remain members of an exclusive class of military aristocrats or knights. Thus could arise the traditional connection between kingship and the *kṣatriya*. In the tribal 'states' where the king came to be 'elected' the choice would naturally be from this nobility. It is, therefore, no wonder that the *kṣatriya-dharma* or the codification of the routine duties and privileges of this class had by the time of the *Mahābhārata* assumed an importance second only to the *rāja-dharma* or the 'Norm of kings'. The likelihood of a *kṣatriya* being consecrated as king in the future must have required the behaviour of a *kṣatriya* to be as close to the *rāja-ṛtta* or royal conduct as possible. This situation is clearly reflected in the frequent characterization of a consecrated sovereign in Pali texts as '*rājā-khattiyo muddhāvasitto*' (the king—a crowned *kṣatriya*).³⁹ These facts can explain why in certain passages in the *Mahābhārata* no distinction is made between the *kṣatra-dharma*, the *kṣatriya-dharma* and the *rāja-dharma*.

But by the time the Brāhmaṇa editors of the *Mahābhārata* rationalized their notions of what a king should be, the very concept of kingship in India had undergone a radical transformation. The causes that underlay this transformation were undoubtedly many

and complex. By the sixth century before Christ, Rgvedic Āryanism had spread far into the eastern lands but present evidence indicates that it was not into a cultural desert that it spread. Whether as remnants of a forgotten Indus Valley civilization or as the surviving institutions of an earlier pre-Rgvedic Āryan colonization, there must have existed in the east, several centuries before the advent of the warrior-culture derived from the nomadic period described above, some ancient concepts of social organization and polity. The evidence of the *Atharvaveda* (especially the Vrātya section) and the traditions recorded in early Jaina, Buddhist and Purāṇic works, certainly lend colour to such a view. Whatever be the explanation for such a phenomenon, before the rise of Buddhism, in the Gangetic basin, there appears a notion of sovereignty quite different from the kṣatriya kingship pictured above. In keeping with the prevailing urban commercial civilization that we find there, a sedate type of kingship guided more by ethical and spiritual considerations than the rough and crude expedients of tribal rulership had come into being. Reference may be made to the normative (*dhammika*) ethos of the Cakkavatti ideal as recorded in the early Buddhist canonical texts like the *Dīgha Nikāya* (Suttas XXVI, XXX etc). This literature is replete with ethical observations pertaining to the righteous king, as the benevolent ruler of the kingdom.⁴⁰ According to canonical Buddhism a king must practise ten kingly qualities (*dasarāja-dharma*) without ever forsaking them: liberality, moral conduct, self-sacrifice, rectitude, self-chastisement, non-anger, non-injury (*avihiṃsā*) forbearance and not being out of harmony. It is significant that in Manu's enumeration (VII.45ff) of the similar attributes of the Hindu monarch non-injury (*ahiṃsā*) is prominent by its absence, showing that even in such an advanced stage in the evolution of Hindu polity the power of the traditional *kṣatra-dharma* was too alive to be discountenanced. In fact, the rule of *ahiṃsā* is nowhere applied to kingship in the Hindu literature of the period. As Norman Brown points out, 'on the subject of *Ahiṃsā* the text (Manu) is equivocal.'⁴¹ According to him it was only slowly that the idea of *ahiṃsā* began to win status in Brāhmaṇic circles and never had full and unchallenged acceptance and practice among Hindus and should not be considered to have arisen in Brāhmaṇic circles. 'It seems more probable that it originated in a non-Brahmanical environment, was promoted in historic India by the Jains and the Buddhists, and was adopted by Brāhmaṇic Hinduism after it began to win its way in north India

where Brahmanic Hinduism was developed.⁴² The point to be emphasized is that it was precisely in such a non-Brahmanic environment that the Buddhist idea of kingship seems to have developed. It is natural, therefore, that the Buddhist king as a promoter of *ahimsā* should have unequivocally renounced the violent and aggressive policy of aggrandizement traditionally associated with the concept of *kṣatra-dharma*, a renunciation which was accomplished in historic manner by the great Emperor Aśoka.

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13. Cf. Mayrhofer, op. cit., s. *kṣaṭram*.
14. See Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (626); Burrow, op. cit., p. 81.
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16. *The Aryans*, pp. 96, 194-95.
17. On such a theory of 'survivals' as a methodological tool in analysing R̥gvedic data, see 'Some Pre-historic Survivals in the R̥gveda', in this volume, pp. 285 ff.
18. See 'R̥gvedic Bharata : A Survival from Aryan Pre-history, in this volume, pp. 245 ff.
19. For the sense of 'carry off, seize, capture', in the root *bhr*, see Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-veda*, s.v.
20. Op. cit., p. 156 (78, 109, 190).
21. See Bartholomae, op. cit., s.v.; cf. Taraporewala, *The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, p. 775.
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