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*A comparative study of the philosophy of action of  
Madhusudana Sarasvati and the ethical thought of  
Joseph Butler*

S. S. Sharma

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"A comparative study of the philosophy of  
action of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and the  
ethical thought of Bishop Joseph Butler."

Thesis presented to the  
University of Durham  
for the Degree of Ph.D.

By

S.S. Sharma.

August 1955.

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Abstract

We have made a comparative study of the ethical and moral teachings of two great thinkers - one British and the other Indian: Joseph Butler and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. They were selected because there is substantial agreement between them on the basis of virtue, the concept of duty, on the relation between ethics and religion and on the fundamental topics.

In the first half of the thesis we have given an exposition of Butler's moral philosophy explaining the hierarchy of the different principles of action in human nature and Butler's refutation of Hobbes's psychological egoism. We have also tried to determine whether virtue, according to Butler, can be equated with self-love or benevolence and then to establish the nature of conscience according to him. The discussion has been concluded by showing that virtue, in his view, is its own end and is to be pursued for its own sake.

In the second half we have first discussed Madhusūdana's ethics and then compared the two thinkers. In explaining Madhusūdana's ethics it has been shown that virtue according to him lies in doing the duties of the station to which one belongs in life. In other words it means doing one's caste-duties, which are determined by one's fundamental nature.

Neither self-love nor benevolence are permissible motives for actions. An action is to be done because it ought to be done. Lastly it has been shown that according to Madhusūdana morality ultimately culminates in the realisation of God.

'Follow-nature' is the dictum of both thinkers. Virtue lies in acting according to nature and vice in deviation from it. Again they both advocate the cultivation of benevolence though with a difference in the psychological attitude. A comparison has also been drawn between Butler's conscience and Madhusūdana's enlightened intellect (buddhi). Finally it has been shown that according to both the ultimate object of man's search is God Himself.

I wish to express here my great indebtedness to Mr. J. Harrison and Mr. A. Basu who have guided me throughout my work. Himself deeply versed in the sphere of ethics Mr. Harrison has directed my faltering steps in the understanding of Butler's ethical ideas. Mr. Basu, with his clear and thorough grasp of the problems of Indian philosophical thought, has always shown me the way to an understanding of them.

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## Introduction.

The importance of understanding between the different peoples of the world cannot be over emphasised. Conditions of life, improved communications and so on have made the world much smaller and nations much closer to each other. But the minds of men have not yet become as close to one another as is desirable. If men are to live together in unity the approach and attitude to life that different people have must be understood and perhaps also appreciated. Philosophy fundamentally represents an attitude towards life and its meaning. This is not to say that philosophy need not be logical and rational. But we are using the term in a very wide sense and wish to suggest that every man, and every people have some idea about existence and life. One man may have analysed these basic ideas and attitudes better than another. We shall call him a better philosopher but that is not to say that the other man has no philosophy at all. For an unified life of the whole world therefore what different people understand by life, its responsibilities and value, must be understood by others.

A very good way of effecting this understanding is to study the comparative philosophy of the different nations. We have chosen two thinkers, one English and the other Indian for our comparative study. Having studied Western, particularly British, philosophy in the colleges and universities and being particularly interested in ethics, we think a comparison

between the two thinkers, one of England and the other of India, might contribute a little towards mutual understanding. It is true that during the last hundred years or so a good deal has already been done in this direction but we feel that there is still much to be done.

When we had to choose a British thinker Butler was an obvious choice because of his preeminence as an ethical writer and because his influence is recognised even today. The second reason for this choice is that the basic ethical principles of Butler, as we have tried to show in the thesis, are very close to those of Madhusūdana, the Indian thinker we have chosen. On the basis of virtue, the concept of duty, on the relation between ethics and religion, and on other fundamental topics there is substantial agreement between Butler's thought and that of Madhusūdana. We have tried to show that according to Madhusūdana duty is to be done solely for the sake of duty. This might lead some readers to think that on this point Butler differs from Madhusūdana in so far as the former does not hold that duty or virtue is to be practised for the sake of virtue only. Butler certainly maintains that actions done for self-love and benevolence are virtuous. But we have tried to show that according to him the ultimate authority, deciding what is virtue and what is not, is conscience, which always decides a particular course because it is virtuous. To say this is not to contradict what Butler says about self-love and benevolence, for acts done in

consequence of these are approved by conscience for the reason that they are virtuous, so that it can certainly be said that virtue is the true standard.

Madhusūdana was selected because he is considered to be one of the greatest dialecticians of the Vedānta school of philosophy, indeed in all Indian philosophy. But it is more his metaphysical works that have been studied till now and his importance as a writer on ethics has not been emphasised. His commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, which is a universally accepted Indian Scripture of unquestioned authority in both religious and ethical matters, is the particular text which we are studying in our thesis. While there are other commentators on the Bhagavadgītā belonging to the Vedāntic school, Madhusūdana's originality consists in emphasising the role of devotion and love for God in ethical life. The metaphysics of his school underestimates the value of devotion and love for a personal God. But Madhusūdana felt that the ethical ideal cannot be fulfilled except in and through such love. In this school of philosophy, knowledge of the self which is one and indivisible is the means of realising the highest good of life. This standpoint has led other philosophers of the school to overlook the value of love for God. But Madhusūdana emphasises the great importance of fulfilling one's duty both as an ethical discipline and also after one has attained the highest spiritual value. The bringing together of spiritual knowledge and works is effected in Madhusūdana by bhakti or

devotion to God. We have shown in our thesis that he asserts that the attainment of the summum bonum does away with duties as such but he also holds that even though duties do not remain as duties, one still has to continue one's appointed work because it is a means of the continuance of God's work. There is no contradiction between liberation, towards which all ethics moves, and a life of activity, even though there is an opposition between liberation and activity in the sense of duty.

The second reason why this text was chosen is that many writers on Indian philosophy feel inclined to hold that there is lack of any ethical thought in Hindu philosophy. While it is true that ethics was not treated separately and independently in Indian thought, this was probably because all life and existence was considered to be unitary so that the discussion of any aspect of life both presupposed and implied the others, and it is not correct, as we have shown in our thesis, to say that there is no ethics at all in Hindu philosophical literature. It is also true that Hindu thought accepts a sphere of experience and activity which is beyond the moral and ethical but this does not mean that the problems of morality did not exercise the mind of Hindu thinkers.

Madhusūdana while discussing the set problems of ethics, like duty, standard of duty etc. examines these not for their own sake but against the background of what he considers to be the highest value of life. In the last analysis this value

turns out to be religious and spiritual and not what is ordinarily considered to be a moral value. From this it may seem that our use of the term 'ethics' is not quite correct. But ethics is as much an attempt to determine what is the good as it is an attempt to determine what is right. In the mind of our author, Madhusūdana, the two are taken up together, though the question of conduct is not important only as a starting point but also as leading to the good. If ethics is concerned with the concept of the Should and the Ought, in other words if ethics is the science of the ideal as against the actual the business of self-improvement is a burning moral problem. For Madhusūdana this self-improvement cannot be complete unless and until the true self of man has been known, and that is how the question of the highest good comes into his ethics.

The study of our text is also appropriate for another reason, that it illustrates the common standpoint of the Vedānta regarding the relation of ethics to religion. Religion is more than ethics but is based on ethics. Ethics is the beginning of religion which is its fulfilment. In our comparison between Butler and Madhusūdana we have tried to say that the general trend of Butler's thought not only does not contradict the above view but confirms it. Butler tries to explain his ethics independently of religion. Indeed his conscious purpose seems to be a desire to establish virtue on a basis of its own - analysis of human nature - apart from

religious support. But it appears to us that he feels somehow convinced that morality is not complete by itself. Indeed we think that according to Butler a man could not be properly moral unless he were also religious, if not consciously yet in effect and actually. To be fully good and moral one must perform certain positive and religious duties as well. One must fulfil one's obligations which one owes to God, the Saviour. Furthermore, though Butler does not derive morality from Scriptures directly, we do feel that his ethics would not have been what it is if Butler's general view of the universe and man's life in it were not a religious one, which in this context is Biblical. Butler was a firm believer in God and to him God is no mere prime mover or first cause of philosophy but a reality, a being, perfectly moral and deserving all reverence and worship. Butler's ethics is thus not religious in the sense that it is derived from Scriptures directly, but it may be said to be religious in the sense that it would have been different if Butler's metaphysical outlook were not what it is, namely religious.

A word with regard to the procedure that has been followed in this is, we think, necessary. Instead of starting the comparison between the two thinkers straight away we have first tried to give an exposition of their ethical teaching separately. The reason for following this procedure is that there is a controversy on almost every important

point in Butler. It was therefore necessary to establish our own views before drawing up the comparison and in order to be able to do so we had to give a separate exposition of Butler's moral philosophy. The reason for giving a separate exposition of Madhusūdana's ethics is not the same. Though, as we have said above, Madhusūdana's metaphysics has been studied, his ethics has not been emphasised yet. We therefore thought it would make for a better appreciation of the comparison to give a separate account of his ethics also. We are conscious that this procedure results in some repetitions though we have tried to avoid this as much as possible.

We have divided the thesis into ten chapters. In the first five we have given an exposition of Butler's moral philosophy and in doing so we have tried to be both critical and sympathetic as far as possible. We have further subdivided four (six to nine) of the remaining five Chapters each into two sections, A and B. In sections A of each of these four Chapters we have explained Madhusūdana's moral philosophy and in sections B we have drawn the comparison between the two thinkers. In the last Chapter (Chapter ten) we have given the conclusion.

For the purpose of our thesis we have followed W.E. Gladstone's edition of Butler's Works, Oxford, 1896, which seems more popular though J.H. Bernard's edition in two

volumes, London, 1900, is also perfectly adequate for all purposes. Also throughout the present thesis by 'Sermons' we have usually meant 'Fifteen Sermons' at the Rolls except when otherwise stated.

For Madhusūdana's 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā' we have followed the Ānandāśrama edition, Poona (India), 1912.

For an English translation of 'Manusmṛti' we have followed G. Bühler's translation in the Sacred Books of the East Series, Vol. XXV, Oxford, 1886 and for 'Upaniṣads' we have consulted Dr. Radhakrishnan's 'The Principal Upaniṣads', London, 1953 and Hume's 'The Thirteen Principal Upanishads', Oxford, 1949.

In the matter of transcription the spelling of the authorities quoted has been retained.

## Chapter I

### Virtue and Human Nature in Butler.

Joseph Butler was born at Wantage in Berkshire on the 18th May, 1692. It was also the birth place of Alfred the Great, one of the most renowned of England's monarchs.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Butler was the youngest of the eight children of a well-to-do linen draper, Thomas Butler, who had retired from business and occupied a house called 'The Priory' on the outskirts of the town.<sup>2</sup> He was first sent to a Grammar School, under Mr. Philip Barton, upon whom he afterwards, on becoming Dean of St. Pauls, bestowed the rectory of Hutton in Essex. Butler's father, a leading Presbyterian, intended him for the Presbyterian ministry. He was therefore sent to a dissenting academy established by Mr. Samuel Jones at Gloucester which academy subsequently moved to Tewkesbury. Among Butler's fellow-pupils were some who became distinguished in their later life. They were: Thomas Secker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury; Isaac Maddox, afterwards Bishop of Worcester; Samuel Chandler, a well-known Non-Conformist divine and John Bowes, afterwards Lord Chancellor of Ireland.

Butler's intellectual development is proved by the correspondence which he carried on while still a student at Tewkesbury with Samuel Clarke who was then regarded as the foremost philosopher of the age. He in his first letter (Nov. 4, 1713) advances with great acuteness two objections which had struck

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1. Thomas Bartlett. 'Memoirs of the life, character and writings of Joseph Butler', London, 1839, p. 1.
  2. An article on Butler in 'Dictionary of National Biography', London, 1886, vol. viii, p. 67.

him in reading the book 'Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God'. Butler doubts whether it is a contradiction to assert the 'self-existence of a finite being', but he declares himself convinced in his fourth letter by Clarke's arguments. He also doubts whether it is a contradiction to suppose the existence of two independent self-existing beings. This latter objection, after some discussion, resolves itself into a question as to the nature of time and space; and at the close of the correspondence Butler is still in doubt. At a later period he professes himself to be fully satisfied on this point also. Butler also declares in his fourth letter to Clarke that he intends 'the search after truth as the business of my life'.

The correspondence between Butler and Clarke took place during the last year of Butler's stay at Tewkesbury and it was at this period that he decided to join the Anglican Church and persuaded his father to allow him to enter at Oriel College, Oxford on the 17th March, 1714. His academic experiences at Oxford were not happy. He was dissatisfied with the academic atmosphere there and contemplated going to Cambridge but subsequently gave up the idea and remained at Oxford till his graduation on 18th October, 1718. Meanwhile he had become intimate with Edward Talbot, son of the then Bishop of Salisbury, and afterwards of Durham. This intimacy had much influence on his later career.

Only ten days after taking his B.A. degree Butler was

ordained deacon in the private Chapel of the Palace by the Bishop of Salisbury on the 28th October, 1718 and received Priests' orders from the same hands in St. James', Westminster on the 21st December of the same year. Shortly afterwards Butler was appointed preacher at the Rolls Chapel and he retained this office of preacher until 1726.

Two years after, in 1720, Butler's friend Edward Talbot died but he had recommended Butler strongly to the kind offices of his father. In 1722, on his translation to the See of Durham, Bishop Talbot assigned to Butler the Rectory of Haughton-le-Skerne, near Darlington which he exchanged for that of Stanhope in 1725. In 1726 Butler resigned his preachership at the Rolls and in the same year published his celebrated 'Fifteen Sermons' with a dedication to the Master of the Rolls. After this Butler had a quiet and restful period of seven years at Stanhope and it is during this period that he completed the matured work of his life 'The Analogy of Religion' which was published in May, 1736 with a dedication to his patron Lord Chancellor Talbot, the elder brother of Butler's friend Edward Talbot.

In 1733 Lord Chancellor Talbot drew Butler out from his quiet life at Stanhope and appointed him his Chaplain. Shortly after Butler was brought to the notice of Queen Caroline through his old friend Secker who was then her Majesty's chaplain. It was at this time when the queen said that she had

believed Butler to have died that Archbishop Lancelot Blackburne of York corrected her saying: "No, Madame, he is not dead, but he is buried". Meanwhile Butler had added to his academic distinctions by taking B.C.L. from Oxford on the 11th June, 1721 and D.C.L. on the 8th June, 1733.

In 1736 Butler was appointed Clerk of the closet to the queen and in the same year the Lord Chancellor presented him to a Prebend of Rochester Cathedral. Unfortunately the queen died in November, 1737 but while she was still on her death-bed she had recommended Butler to the Archbishop of Canterbury and probably this was the only recommendation she had ever made. In 1738 Butler was appointed to the Bishopric of Bristol, which post he accepted not without reluctance. On the 24th May, 1740 he was presented to the deanery of St. Paul when he resigned his rectory of Stanhope and his prebendary at Rochester.

In 1746 Butler was made Clerk of the Closet to King George II, and the offer of the Bishopric of Durham came to him in 1750 when Bishop Chadler died. But Butler was not long Bishop of Durham. He died in 1752 and his remains were taken to Bristol and interred in the cathedral there.

Butler's works are: (1) Fifteen Sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel, 1726. A second edition of the same, to which he added a long preface, was brought out four years after the first, on the 16th September 1729 when Butler was still at Stanhope. (2) The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed,

to the constitutions and course of nature. To this are added two dissertations: (a) Of Personal Identity, (b) Of the Nature of Virtue. (3) Six Sermons preached upon different public occasions, between the years 1738 to 1748. (4) A charge delivered to the clergy at the primary visitation of the Diocese of Durham in the year 1751.

We are, however, mainly concerned with his 'Fifteen Sermons' preached at the Rolls and the Analogy of Religion, and the Dissertation on virtue appended to the Analogy.

For a complete and adequate comprehension of Butler's moral philosophy, it may be useful to refer to the background against which his whole ethical teaching is cast.

The prevailing spirit of the age when Butler preached his Sermons at the Rolls Chapel was narrow selfishness and a contemptuous disregard of religion. It was a period when both morals and religion were at a low ebb. As it appears from Butler's own writings, he himself held that decline of religious belief and excessive self-regard were the two dominant vices of the age. Butler says: "I suppose, it may be spoken of as very much the distinction of the present to profess a contracted spirit, and greater regards to self-interest, than appears to have been done formerly".<sup>1</sup> He again refers to the religious position in his charge to the Durham clergy when he says: "It is impossible for me, to forbear lamenting with you the general

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 1, p. 185.

decay of religion in this nation; which is now observed by every one, and has been for some time the complaint of all serious persons. The influence of it is more and more wearing out of the minds of men, even of those who do not pretend to enter into speculations upon the subject: but the number of those who do, and who profess themselves unbelievers, increases, and with their numbers their zeal".<sup>1</sup>

There is another point which should be mentioned here. Among subsequent writers on Butler there is a good deal of confusion and misconception about his view of morality, with the result that he has been very differently interpreted. Perhaps few thinkers have been interpreted as variously as Butler. It seems to us that there are two main reasons for this confusion. The first is the belief of some writers<sup>2</sup> on Butler that his ethical teaching is exclusively confined to his 'Fifteen Sermons' only, and that the Analogy is a work dealing exclusively with religious controversies. This has been the main cause of the controversy about the nature of conscience, benevolence and self-love. It is no doubt true that the nucleus of Butler's ethical teaching is contained in his Sermons at the Rolls Chapel, especially the first three which contain his fundamental ideas and which thus provide the

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler'. Vol. II, A charge to the clergy, sect. 1, p. 397.

2. We shall have occasion to refer to such writers later on.

foundations of his whole ethical teaching. But it must not be forgotten that his moral ideas are to be found in his later work, e.g. that 'Analogy' especially the first part of it, and for a complete and adequate appreciation of Butler's moral teaching the study of his 'Analogy' is very essential.

The second reason for this confusion about Butler's ethical teaching is the belief among some readers that his original ethical view underwent a change and that he thus preaches quite a different ethical theory in his later work. They hold that Butler puts forward one theory in his 'Fifteen Sermons' and a different ethical theory in his 'Analogy'. This seems to me to be a completely mistaken notion. It is true that there was a long gap of ten years between the publication of Butler's Fifteen Sermons (1726) and that of his Analogy (1736) but this by itself is no proof of the fact that he changed his view in the Analogy. A patient perusal of Butler's works does not give any indication that his original ethical view, which he outlined in the Sermons, underwent any radical change. It must be admitted, however, that in some respects Butler seems more emphatic in his Analogy than he is in his 'Sermons', but this does not mean that he changed his view and propounded an altogether new ethical theory in his 'Analogy'. On the contrary, far from propounding any new theory, the 'Analogy' supports and relies on the fundamental position of 'Sermons'. Indeed the nucleus or the germs of the Analogy are found in his

'Sermons' especially 'On the ignorance of man'. The suggestions which Butler makes in this Sermon are expanded, elaborated and applied with great force in the Analogy.

Again, the long preface and the foot-notes which Butler adds to the second edition of his Sermons at the Rolls do not suggest any change in his view. They are only aimed at removing certain ambiguities and obscurities about which there was complaint by the readers when the first edition came out. They should therefore be taken as merely elucidatory and explanatory and not suggestive of any change in the original view of Butler's moral philosophy.

We now come to Butler's main ethical teaching. The central point about his moral theory is contained in his view of human nature. Butler's main thesis is that virtue consists in following nature, and vice in deviation from it. He is not of course the pioneer in this respect. The theory is at least as old as stoicism. It was the famous tenet of the stoics. They had already taught that virtuous life was life according to nature. Butler probably refers to them when he says: "That the ancient moralists had some inward feeling or other, which they chose to express in this manner; that man is born to virtue, that it consists in following nature, and that vice is more contrary to this nature than tortures or death, their works in our hands are instances".<sup>1</sup>

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 8, p. 6.

In the modern times the theory was developed by Thomas Hobbes and was then later adopted by Shaftesbury who expanded and elaborated it.

At first sight it appears strange to say that virtue consists in acting according to human nature . It seems a meaningless assertion altogether. There can be no mode of acting which will not be in conformity to nature. To ask people to do an action when it is impossible for him to do otherwise is a more absurdity. Thus it appears that it is not only idle to recommend and exhort people to do what they cannot avoid doing, but also absurd to prescribe it as a rule of right conduct. Butler was well aware of this position. In fact his only justification and excuse for making a restatement of the old classical view is that the expression 'follow nature' is not properly understood in modern times and in many cases it is grossly misrepresented. Wollaston's remark against Shaftesbury that to place virtue in following nature is at best a 'loose way of talk'<sup>1</sup> was in Butler's mind. He therefore first of all analyses the different wrong interpretations of the expression 'follow nature' or simply 'nature'.

In the first place Butler points out that by 'nature' is often meant no more than some principle in man without regard either to the kind or degree of it. But in this sense it would

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 9, p. 8.

be absurd to do any action contrary to man's nature, as any feature whatever of a person may be called part of that person's nature. There will be no action which will not be in conformity to nature. It will be tantamount to doing as an individual pleases. "If by following nature were meant only acting as we please, it would indeed be ridiculous to speak of nature as any guide in morals".<sup>1</sup> Butler therefore rejects this view of nature.

There is another sense also in which 'nature' is often used. In this sense it is frequently spoken of as consisting in those passions which are strongest and which most influence the actions. It seems that there is much truth in this sense of 'following nature'. A man's action is invariably determined by the predominant impulse, he is moved to action by the impulse which predominates in him at the moment.

But a little reflection shows that even in this sense 'nature' cannot act as any guide in morals. It does not help us to distinguish between the virtuous and the vicious. A virtuous man will act according to the dominant virtuous principle in the same way as a vicious man will act according to the dominant vicious principle. Thus according to this view of nature both the virtuous and the vicious sail in the same boat as they both act according to their dominant nature. Butler goes further. He holds that in this sense of following nature there is no difference between the actions of a man and those of a brute. He gives an example to explain the point. "Suppose a brute

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 6, p. 56.

creature by any bait to be allured into a snare, by which he is destroyed. He plainly followed the bent of his nature, .... there is an entire correspondence between his whole nature and such an action: such action therefore is natural. But suppose a man, foreseeing the <sup>same</sup> danger of a certain ruin, should rush into it for the sake of a present gratification; he in this instance would follow his strongest desire, as did the brute creature: but there would be as manifest a disproportion, between the nature of a man and such an action, as between the meanest work of art and the skill of the greatest master in that art".<sup>1</sup> Thus Butler rejects this view of nature also.

It may be asked why does Butler mention these two views about 'nature' ? Possibly he does so for two reasons. Firstly he does it to emphasise that virtue does not consist in following nature in these two senses of the term, especially the second, as most people then wrongly thought and believed. Professor Taylor probably refers to this when he says that Butler's aim is also directed to that type of people "who admit the reality of the promptings of virtuous impulse, but see no reason why we should be virtuous when we do not happen to be strongly under the influence of these impulses. .... They hold that the natural and proper course of life is to have no settled rule of action whatever, to let every impulse, good or evil, 'take its turn as it happens to be uppermost'"<sup>2</sup>: Secondly Butler tries to bring out conspicuously, and in sharp contrast against the

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol.II, Sermon II, sect.13,p.60.  
2. A.E. Taylor. 'Some Features of Butler's Ethics', *Mind*,  
Vol. XXXV, (New series), No. 139, July, 1926, p. 284.

background of these wrong notions which he dismisses, the third view of nature which according to him is the right view and which thus provides a criterion of what we should do. Butler takes 'human nature' in the sense of a system, a constitution. It is something like a concrete whole made up of several parts. Again it is not merely a sum total of the different parts. It is, as we have said, a system in which the different parts are all arranged in a hierarchical order. According to Butler, to understand human nature it is not enough merely to know the several parts of which it is made up, but we must need to know their relations and the respects which they bear to each other. To make the idea clear Butler draws an analogy between the human nature and a watch. He says: "Suppose the several parts of it taken to pieces, and placed apart from each other: let a man have ever so exact a notion of these several parts, unless he considers the respects and relations which they have to each other, he will not have anything like the idea of a watch .... let him form a notion of the relations which those several parts have to each other - all conducive in their respective ways to this purpose, showing the hour of the day; and then he has the idea of a watch".<sup>1</sup> So it is with regard to the inward frame of man. "It is from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and, above all, the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. II, pp. 8-9.

And from the idea itself it will as fully appear, that this our nature, i.e. constitution, is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears, that its nature, i.e. constitution or system, is adapted to measure time".<sup>1</sup>

But despite this analogy Butler admits that there is an important difference also. "A machine is inanimate and passive: but we are agents. Our constitution is put in our own power. We are charged with it; and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it".<sup>2</sup>

Before proceeding further it may be useful to point out that Butler is said to have borrowed the idea of human system or constitution from Shaftesbury. Rev. Dr. Matthews says: "In working out this conception Butler makes use of the idea of a system which had been employed by Shaftesbury".<sup>3</sup>

It is no doubt true that Shaftesbury believed and emphasised perhaps more strongly than any did before that human nature not only contains self-affections but also social or natural affections as he calls them. Nay, according to him it also contains unnatural affections. Shaftesbury also held that virtue can be attained only when there is a balance or harmony among the different impulses in the human nature.<sup>4</sup>

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sects. 12 & 13, pp. 9-10.

2. do. Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 13, p. 10.

3. W.R. Matthews. 'Butler's Fifteen Sermons', London, 1949, p. XXII (Introduction).

4. L.A. Selby-Bigge. 'British Moralists', Vol. I, Oxford, 1897, pp. 32-33.

Martineau summarizes Shaftesbury's analysis of human nature in a beautiful passage which though long is worth quoting. It is thus: "He (Shaftesbury) groups the springs of action in three sets: (1) Natural affections towards the good of others; (2) Natural affections (self-affections) towards one's own good; both of which admit of being either right or wrong; and (3) unnatural affections towards no good at all; which can never be anything but wrong. The others have all of them a legitimate function, so that in themselves they are right enough; and when any one of them goes wrong, it is by becoming relatively too strong - a fact which might be equally well expressed by saying that its opposite is too weak; such excess or defect being unnatural, because by nature there is a given right proportion among the several affections; the test of rightness being the economy of social welfare. The mind or character of a man or a society is a composite system for a concordant end, like a musical instrument, which is spoiled for its performance if even one or two of its strings should have a tension too great or too small for the pitch of the rest. Disturbances of character, that is vices, arise from (1) the public affections being too weak; (2) the private being too strong; (3) the presence of unnatural affections that tend to no good at all. To be in the first of these conditions is to forfeit the chief source of enjoyment; to be in the second is to court unhappiness; and to be in the third is utmost misery".<sup>1</sup>

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1. James Martineau. 'Types of Ethical Theory', Vol. II, Oxford, 1885, pp. 462-463.

Shaftesbury's account of human nature sounds very impressive and of course egoism and altruism receive equal consideration at his hands. Virtue, according to him, does not lie in the prevalence of any of the two but in the harmony and balance of both. This is all perfectly correct up to a point, but the fact is that Shaftesbury's account does not go far enough, despite his genuine effort to reconcile self-interest and social good.

The great defect of Shaftesbury's system is that he does not point out how the balance or harmony among the different elements of nature can be achieved. He does not suggest any mechanism through which harmony can be effected. It is not enough to multiply the number of affections in the human mind. Again it is not enough to say that balance or harmony is needed. The important point is how it can be brought about. Butler not only suggests that virtue consists in the harmony among the different elements of nature but he also provides us with a detailed and elaborate mechanism through which this balance can be brought into being. In Butler's scheme is found the subordination of the lower elements to those which are higher and more authoritative. His system is a hierarchy in which some principles naturally govern and regulate while others naturally yield and submit to their government.

Again there does not seem any logical connection between moral obligation and conscience in Shaftesbury. His conscience does not carry any authority with it. Butler visualises this inadequacy in Shaftesbury's system when he remarks: "The not taking into consideration this authority, which is implied in

the idea of reflex approbation or disapprobation, seems a material deficiency or omission in Lord Shaftesbury's 'Inquiry concerning Virtue'".<sup>1</sup>

According to Butler conscience carries the highest authority. It is most authoritative, in spite of the fact that it is often overpowered by passions and affections. We all therefore ought to obey conscience. Butler says: "But allowing that mankind hath the rule of right within himself, yet it may be asked, 'What obligations are we under to attend to and follow it?' I answer: It has been proved that man by his nature is a law to himself, ... The question then carries its own answer along with it. Your obligation to obey this law, is its being the law of your nature".<sup>2</sup>

Thus it seems obvious that though Butler no doubt borrows the idea of a constitution from Shaftesbury it must not be forgotten that in his hands the conception of a human constitution changes altogether. It acquires a new meaning, new significance. Professor Sidgwick remarks: "Moreover, the substance of Shaftesbury's main argument was adopted by Butler, though it could not pass the scrutiny of that powerful and cautious intellect without receiving important modifications and additions".<sup>3</sup>

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect 20, p. 14.
  2. do. Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 6, pp. 70-71.
  3. H. Sidgwick. 'Outlines of the History of Ethics', London, 1886, p. 187.

Sir James Mackintosh also observes: "He (Butler) owed more to Lord Shaftesbury than to all other writers besides. . . . Yet, whoever carefully compares their writings, will without difficulty distinguish the two builders, and the larger as well as more regular and laboured part of the edifice, which is the work of Butler".<sup>1</sup>

After this digression we come back to our main subject namely Butler's account of human nature. He analyses human nature and his analysis reveals that in it there are the appetites, the passions and affections, the principle of self-love, the principle of benevolence and conscience. These five faculties are all distinct and they have their own respective functions in the economy of nature.

An appetite is a desire to satisfy a bodily or physical urge, for instance, hunger, sexual desire etc.

A passion or affection is a desire to satisfy a mental urge, for example, desire of esteem, revenge, compassion etc.

Self-love is a general rational principle which aims at the individual's welfare and happiness.

Benevolence is a similar general rational principle which aims at the well-being and happiness of others.

Conscience is the sovereign principle in man. It has authority over all other instincts and principles of action.

There is a tendency among writers on Butler to overlook

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1. Sir James Mackintosh. 'Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy', London, 1851, p. 54.

the distinction between appetites on the one hand and passions and affections on the other.<sup>1</sup> They seem to use all these synonymously, though Butler clearly maintains the distinction between them. His examples, as we have stated above, of appetites are hunger, sexual desire etc.; while his examples of passions and affections are desire of esteem, revenge, compassion etc. Butler says: "Hunger is to be considered as a private appetite .... desire of esteem is a public passion".<sup>2</sup> It must be admitted however that Butler does not emphasise their differences probably because it was not so much necessary to his purpose.

Butler holds that, of the passions and affections, some tend more especially to private good and some to public good. But he does not think that there is any rigid distinction between these private and public affections. Butler says: "If any or all of these may be considered likewise as private affections, as tending to private good; this does not hinder them from being public affections too, or destroy the good influence of them upon society, and their tendency to public good".<sup>3</sup>

Self-love is a superior principle and should be clearly distinguished from the particular impulses. It is a regulative

1. Professor Broad in his 'Five Types of Ethical Theory' uses passions, affections and appetites synonymously as if Butler meant to treat them as different names for the same thing.
2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, p.40 (foot-note).
3. do. Vol. II, Sermon I, sect. 6, p.40.

principle. It aims at maximising the general happiness of the individual. In fact private happiness or good is all which self-love is concerned about. Its object is thus internal as opposed to the particular passions which are particular external objects. "The principle we call self-love never seeks any thing external for the sake of the thing, but only as a means of happiness or good". It "belongs to a man as a reasonable creature reflecting upon his own interest, <sup>or</sup> and happiness".<sup>1</sup>

The function of self-love consists in organising those particular impulses which tend to the private good of the agent. It assists these private affections and allows them gratifications within their due degree.

But though self-love is a higher rational principle men do not always act from it. They often act from one of the particular affections or appetites overpowering the promptings of self-love. In such cases self-love is not exercised. It is said to be exercised only when one coolly and calmly thinks about the human nature containing different impulses, about the situation and the circumstances then obtaining and then in the light of these decides whether or not a particular impulse should be allowed gratification and if so in what degree or to what extent. In short self-love is exercised when private affections seek their gratifications under its guidance and supervision.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 3, p. 187.

Butler holds that an action in which self-love, in fact any higher principle, is overpowered by the strength of the particular impulse is an unnatural action. It is a wrong action. It is a case of usurpation, as there is in it a violation of the constitution of our nature. According to Butler it is also detrimental to the real interest of the individual. For, in any action, which is in conformity with the economy of human constitution, reasonable self-love must have its due place.

The position of benevolence in Butler's hierarchy of human nature is said to be a little uncertain. This has given rise to a good deal of controversy among writers on Butler. Such writers and critics of Butler can be broadly divided into two classes. There are on the one hand those, for instance Professor Duncan Jones<sup>1</sup> and Mr. McPherson<sup>2</sup>, who hold that Butler treated benevolence as a particular passion. There are on the other hand those, for instance Professor Broad<sup>3</sup>, and Professor Barnes<sup>4</sup>, who hold that Butler meant to take benevolence in the sense of a general principle. We shall therefore discuss this vexed question in some detail.

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1. Austin Duncan-Jones. 'Butler's Moral Philosophy', (A volume of the Pelican Philosophy series), 1952, pp. 58-59.
  2. Thomas McPherson. 'The Development of Bishop Butler's Ethics', *Philosophy*, Vol. xxiii, No. 87, Oct. 1948, p.322.
  3. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951, p. 71.
  4. W.H.F. Barnes. 'Joseph Butler: Moralism', *The Durham University Journal*, Vol. XII, New Series, No. 2, March, 1951, p. 41.

Our own view is that Butler means to treat benevolence as a general principle. The reasons for this view are the following:

The first three Sermons of Butler are basic in the sense that they provide the theoretical frame-work of his whole ethical teaching and the remaining twelve sermons are only an application and amplification of what is contained therein. It is in these Sermons that Butler tries to point out and fix the relative position of the different elements in the hierarchy of nature. Now it is commonly agreed that a thing can be properly understood only when it is put in its proper context. Therefore to our mind any controversy about the position of benevolence, in fact of any particular element in the hierarchy, should be decided by a reference to these Sermons.

Butler in the very first Sermon points out, I think, very unambiguously the position of benevolence in human nature. He says: "There is a natural principle of benevolence in man; which is in some degree to society, what self-love is to the individual".<sup>1</sup> Nothing could be more definite, and categorical about the position of benevolence than this. There seems no reason why this statement should not be regarded as sufficient and decisive as to Butler's view about benevolence. Mr. McPherson referring to this says that this is the only place where

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon I, sect. 4, pp. 35-36.

Butler speaks of benevolence as a general principle.<sup>1</sup> To this our reply is that this is not the only passage, there are various other such passages in Butler where he refers to benevolence as a general principle. We shall quote some of them here.

- (1) "Is it possible any can in earnest think, that a public spirit, i.e. a settled reasonable principle of benevolence to mankind, is so prevalent and strong in the species, as that we may venture to throw off the under affections, which are its assistants, carry it forward and mark out particular courses for it; .... our country?".<sup>2</sup>
- (2) "Thus the principle of benevolence would be an advocate within our own breasts, to take care of the interests of our fellow creatures .... and the state we are in".<sup>3</sup>
- (3) "Thus, when benevolence is said to be the sum of virtue, it is not spoken of as a blind propension, but as a principle in reasonable creatures, and so to be directed by their reason".<sup>4</sup>
- (4) "This will further appear, from observing that the several passions and affections, which are distinct both

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1. T.H. McPherson. 'Development of Bishop Butler's Ethics'-1'.  
Philosophy, Vol. XXIII, No. 87, Oct.1948, p. 322.

2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon V, sect. 10,  
p. 103.

3. do. Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect.4, p.212.

4. do. do. do. do. sect. 19,  
p. 223.

from benevolence and self-love, do in general contribute and lead us to public good as really as to private".<sup>1</sup>

- (5) "The sum is, men have various appetites, passions, and particular affections, quite distinct both from self-love and from benevolence":<sup>2</sup>

I think that our list is fairly exhaustive and it points out clearly that Butler takes benevolence as a general principle. We can, however, pursue the discussion a little further. It can be asked here that if it is as we have shown above that Butler is very explicit about the position of benevolence in human nature, why then is confusion and controversy about it? Why is it that writers on Butler are divided on this issue? Is it that Butler contradicts himself in some passages where he seems to treat benevolence as a particular passion? These are some of the questions which naturally arise in this connection and we have to consider these.

It appears to us that there are two main reasons for this confusion in Butler.

(1) There are passages, mainly in sermons XI and XII and probably one or two in the preface to the 'Fifteen sermons' from which it appears that Butler treats benevolence as a particular passion. But it should be remembered in this connection what is the main purpose of Butler in these two sermons.

His main thesis in these Sermons, especially the eleventh

1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon I, sect. 6, pp. 38-40.

2. do. Vol. II, Sermon I, sect. 6, p. 41.

Sermon, is that there is no conflict between self-love and benevolence. Butler tries to establish this point by showing that benevolence is no more contrary to self-love than is any of the particular impulses. He himself very clearly says in sermon XI: "Thus it appears that there is no peculiar contrariety between self-love and benevolence; no greater competition between these, than between any other particular affections and self-love".<sup>1</sup> Thus it seems quite obvious that Butler is only emphasising here the fact that benevolence is not more unfriendly than other particular passions are to self-love and the emphasis on this point is probably due to the fact that in Butler's time people could not reconcile themselves to the view that self-love and benevolence could work together. Of course in this context benevolence stands in the same line as other particular passions in relation to self-love and I think this is a very important reason why benevolence is taken by some as a particular passion. But this obviously is not the intention of Butler. It can never be taken to mean that Butler meant to take benevolence as a particular passion. It is just a type of argument which he adopts. One can very well challenge his mode of argument but his spirit, his intentions, cannot be doubted. His argument is analogical here. Just as there is no conflict between self-love and particular passions,

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler'. Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 11, p. 196.

so also there is no conflict between self-love and benevolence. It thus never means that benevolence is treated as a particular passion. It may also be pointed out here that the one or two passages in the preface to the **Sermons** where Butler seems to treat benevolence as a particular passion are also in the same context as we have in **Sermon XI**. There also Butler is explaining the same principle, namely that benevolence is not more contrary to and stands in the same relation as other particular passions do to self-love. Butler says: "for whoever will consider all the possible respects and relations which any particular affection can have to self-love and private interest, will, I think, see demonstrably, that benevolence is not in any respect more at variance with self-love, than any other particular affection whatever, but that it is in every respect, at least, as friendly to it".<sup>1</sup>

Moreover the argument that benevolence is not more contrary than particular passions are to self-love should not be made the basis of proof that Butler treats benevolence as a particular passion only. It is just a matter of context. In one context Butler seems to treat self-love also on the same level as particular passions and affections. As far as the question of working 'within due limit' and degree' is concerned self-love stands in the same line, or we should say, comes in the same

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler'. Vol. II, Pref. to **Sermons**, sect. 32, p. 24.

category as particular passions. In fact in the preface to sermons Butler says that self-love in its due degree is as good as any other affection. But this does not mean that self-love is a particular passion.

The second reason of confusion is that Butler is not very precise and exact in his use of the language. He probably did not care very much for it. He was more anxious to get at the truth than about his expressions. Rev. John Eaton quotes with approval: "Butler was a close observer of phenomena and not a genius for language that cares principally for poetic effect and takes the thoughts at second-hand".<sup>1</sup>

Butler sometimes uses 'affection' also for general principle. In sermon XI, speaking about self-love he says: "it is an affection to ourselves; a regard to our own interest, happiness and private good".<sup>2</sup> Whatever the reason for this lack of preciseness in expression may be, it is true that this is very largely responsible for a good deal of confusion and controversy in Butler.

There is one more point which should be remembered in this connection. Much controversy about benevolence is probably also due to its very nature. It is no doubt true that we must be calculating and prudent in the exercise of benevolence, that we blame imprudent benevolent men, but then it should not be

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1. Rev. J.R.T. Eaton. 'Bishop Butler and his Critics', Oxford and London, 1896, pp. 4-5.

2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 5, p. 189.

forgotten that in actual life and practice it is very difficult to stick to this principle so rigidly. It often becomes impulsive in character. We are not always as calculating as Butler's theory of benevolence implies. In actual life when we come across a beggar or some such person, we, very often, without much reflection help such persons.

Again it is difficult to explain the nature of benevolence without referring to particular individuals or particular groups of individuals. Probably Butler himself gets into such a difficulty when explaining benevolence he says: "if there be any such thing as the paternal or filial affections; if there be any affection in human nature, the object and end of which is the good of another; this is itself benevolence, or the love of another".<sup>1</sup>

From all this we can see that a good deal of apparent inconsistency in Butler's treatment of benevolence is due to its very nature. But there is absolutely no reason for thinking that Butler treats benevolence as a particular passion.

We thus conclude that despite apparent inconsistency Butler regards benevolence as a general rational principle in human nature.

We have briefly explained self-love and have also determined the nature of benevolence. We can now deal in some detail with the relation between these two general principles.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon 1, sect., 4, pp. 37-38.

Apparently it seems that self-love and benevolence are opposed principles. The former is concerned with individual's happiness and well-being as a whole and the latter with the general happiness of others. Self-love looks to the self and benevolence to others. Butler holds that there is, really speaking, no opposition between reasonable self-love and benevolence. In fact one of the great merits of Butler's ethical teaching has been to establish a synthesis between these two seemingly opposed principles, the reconciliation of the claims of which has been a perennial problem in moral philosophy. It is really surprising that this important point in Butler's ethical philosophy is often overlooked by his interpreters with the result that some of them interpret him as 'an egoist', while others 'an altruist'. It must be remembered here that Butler is not satisfied merely with championing the cause of benevolence to overbalance selfishness. He goes further and is at great pains to show that it is absolutely a mistake to think, as is commonly done, and especially was in his own time, that there is any inherent or peculiar antagonism between self-love and benevolence. Butler discusses this principle in his preface to the Sermons, and in Sermons I and III. But it is worked out more fully in the two Sermons 'Upon the Love of our Neighbour' (Sermons XI and XII). Butler always and everywhere insists on the principle that there is no peculiar contrariety between self-love and benevolence. In fact they involve each

other in the sense that they tend to realise the one and the same end. In other words the end which self-love tends to realise, namely the general happiness of the man as a whole, is exactly the end which benevolence also tends to realise. We cannot thus promote self-love by repressing benevolence any more than we can promote benevolence by repressing self-love. Thus self-love and benevolence are perfectly coincident and the greatest satisfactions to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in a due degree.

Again it must be borne in mind here that a reasonable regard to our own happiness and well-being is not selfishness. It is the weakness of social affections and the strength of private affections which constitute selfishness. But a life according to reasonable self-love is a life in which private affections are neither very strong nor very weak. In it both private and social affections are well balanced. Thus there is no conflict, no rivalry, no trial between reasonable self-love and benevolence.

But if it is so, as Butler says, it may be asked here, how is it then that the opposition between self-love and benevolence is commonly supposed to exist? Butler holds that all this talk about opposition between self-love and benevolence is based on a false supposition that "our happiness in this world consists in somewhat quite distinct from regards to others"; whereas the truth is that "all the common

enjoyments of life, even the pleasures of vice, depend upon these regards of one kind or another to our fellow-creatures"<sup>1</sup>. Again at another place Butler points out that "The general mistake, that there is some greater inconsistency between endeavouring to promote the good of another and self-interest, than between self-interest and pursuing anything else, seems, to arise from our notions of property; and to be carried on by this property's being supposed to be itself our happiness or good".<sup>2</sup> From this we jump to the conclusion that "as by increasing the property of another, you lessen your own property, so by promoting the happiness of another you must lessen your own happiness".<sup>3</sup>

But the fallacy involved in this position is obvious enough. There is a confusion of means and ends here. We are taking the means as an end and losing sight of the end altogether. Money is not an end in itself. It is only a means to the attainment to the other goods. Money itself is not happiness though when used in certain ways it produces happiness. Thus if we confine ourselves to means only and lose sight of the end it will no doubt appear true that out of a certain sum of money the more we spend on others the less we are left with. But if we care to avoid confusion

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 8, pp. 71-72.  
2. do. Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 19, p. 204.  
3. do. do. sect. 20, p. 205.

between means and ends and hold that money is only a means to happiness, we can at once see that there is no unique contrariety between self-love and benevolence. Even a small sum of money spent on others may produce far greater happiness in us than the large sum spent on our own account.

Then again the mistaken idea that there is an antagonism between self-love and benevolence ignores a very important truth upon which Butler always insists. He argues that a benevolent temper is itself agreeable. It is itself the temper of satisfaction and enjoyment. On the contrary a malevolent temper is itself disagreeable. It is itself the temper of uneasiness and dissatisfaction. The gratification of benevolence, compassion and good-will generate that temper of mind in men which, if not identical with general happiness, undoubtedly makes a great contribution to it. The gratifications of these are, at any rate, accompanied by much less uneasiness and fewer disappointments in life than are the gratifications of revenge and malice. The life of a revengeful man is comparatively very uneasy. He is always in fear of retaliation from his victim. All this Butler himself very clearly points out. He first raises a number of questions: "Is benevolence less the temper of tranquility and freedom than ambition or covetousness? Does the benevolent man appear less easy with himself, from his love to his neighbour? Does he less relish his being? Is there any peculiar gloom seated on his face? Is his mind less open to entertainment,

to any particular gratification ?" And then he answers:  
"Nothing is more manifest, than that being in good humour,  
which is benevolence whilst it lasts, it itself the temper of  
satisfaction and enjoyment,"<sup>1</sup> At another place he again very  
clearly says: "Let it not be taken for granted that the temper  
of envy, rage, resentment, yields greater delight than meek-  
ness, forgiveness, compassion and good-will: especially when  
it is acknowledged that rage, envy, resentment, are in them-  
selves mere misery; and the satisfaction arising from the  
indulgence of them is little more than relief from that misery;  
whereas the temper of compassion and benevolence is itself  
delightful; and the indulgence of it, by doing good, affords  
new positive delight and enjoyment".<sup>2</sup> Thus it is clear that  
"benevolence contributes more to private interest, i.e. enjoy-  
ment or satisfaction, than any <sup>other</sup> of the particular common  
affections, as it is in a degree its own gratification".<sup>3</sup>

Butler by identifying the claims of self-love and bene-  
volence seems to vindicate a great truth the importance of  
which is unfortunately not generally and commonly recognised.  
Most people not only believe, but also act on the false  
supposition, that by injuring others (those they fear) they  
can do good to themselves. But though it may sound paradoxical-

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XXI, sect. 13,  
p. 198  
2. do. do. Sermon III, sect. 10,  
p. 73.  
3. do. do. Sermon XI, sect. 20,  
p. 205.

cal there is much truth in the view which Butler propounds that actions which promote the happiness of others are also those which are conducive to the happiness of the self. Also actions which are harmful or injurious to others are such as in the long run injure the interest of the self also.

It may be objected here that Butler exaggerates the coincidence between self-love and benevolence. It is possible to imagine situations where his theory does not work, where the two principles would be opposed. But in reply it may be pointed out that the reconciliation between self-love and benevolence has been the standing difficulty in moral philosophy. It is extremely difficult to provide any comprehensive ethical principle which can cover all situations, real and imaginary, immediate and remote. Butler by his new interpretation and evaluation of human nature, and especially of self-love, has developed and argued for a principle which undoubtedly goes a long way towards solving the difficulty. If people act on this principle, if all nations form a world-unit and adopt this principle as their policy and sincerely work on it, there would be much happiness in the world and it would be a much better place to live in. Nay more, if all men act on this principle Utopia might well be realised.

With regard to the relative position of self-love and benevolence in the hierarchy of human constitution there seems some confusion among writers on Butler. Professor Barnes holds

that Butler does not treat benevolence as of equal importance with self-love in the individual's make-up.<sup>1</sup> Professor Broad again while holding self-love and benevolence as co-ordinate principles believes that conscience rates benevolence higher than self-love.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to say whether Butler himself would have accepted either of these interpretations. The question whether self-love is more important or benevolence is so in the individual make-up does not arise in Butler. There are two points which may be submitted here.

(i) In Butler's scheme of human nature all elements, appetites, passions and the general principles of action are equally necessary. They are not only equally necessary, but equally important too. They all have their respective functions in the economy of nature. For the proper functioning of the nature as a whole, all elements have to play their role and contribute their share. If an element goes wrong the entire machinery is paralysed. It might be said that no doubt the particular impulses are all necessary and good provided they are within their due degree. This is, of course, true but then this proviso equally applies to the higher principles - self-love and benevolence. Thus it seems obvious that all elements are equally important in

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1. W.H.F. Barnes. 'Joseph Butler: Moralists', The Durham University Journal, Vol.XII, New series, No.2, March 1951, p.41.
  2. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951, p. 73.

Butler

(ii) Then again <sup>though</sup> self-love and benevolence are distinct principles they necessarily imply each other, so much so that we cannot promote the one without considering the other. True self-love always implies the good of others and the good of others always implies the good of the self. In this sense self-love includes benevolence and conversely benevolence includes self-love, both having the same end. If we lack in benevolence, we equally lack in self-love though we may manifest much selfishness; if there is not too much benevolence, there is not too much self-love either. Indeed a great deal of unhappiness and misery in life is due perhaps more to lack of sufficient self-love than close attention to it. It may be mentioned here that Professor Broad in order to prove his contention that conscience rates benevolence higher than self-love points out that from a psychological point of view self-love and benevolence cannot be quite co-ordinate. He proves this point by saying that self-love gets something out of every transaction which the agent undertakes but benevolence does not. To take his own example, if I lose my temper and blindly strike a man, self-love gets something out of the transaction but benevolence gets nothing out of it. It seems to us that Professor Broad probably overlooks the signifi-

cance of Butler's self-love. We do not think that real self-love, which Butler means when he says self-love, will get anything out of the transaction instanced here. Butler would not have accepted the interpretation. Real self-love cannot get anything out of the transaction which an agent undertakes blindly or at the promptings of any impulse disregarding altogether the authority of self-love.

We conclude that in Butler both self-love and benevolence are equally important principles. The question whether conscience rates one principle higher than the other does not arise in Butler's account of human nature. Conscience would approve both courses of conduct provided the constitution of human nature is not violated.

Conscience is the highest principle in the hierarchy of the human constitution. Butler holds that no one can deny that there is such a principle of reflection or conscience in human nature. Its existence can be immediately experienced through introspection. Its existence in others can be inferred from their action, their behaviour. We all have an irresistible tendency to pass moral judgments both in regard to our own acts and in that of others, which unmistakably proves that all possess a moral faculty which approves or disapproves our acts. We may call it moral reason, moral

sense or divine reason. Butler calls it conscience. It is the sovereign principle to which all elements of human nature irrespective of their strength are subordinated. It is through this principle that all elements are finally organised and redirected. The passions and affections, no doubt, have power, but conscience alone has authority. "Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world".<sup>1</sup> No action can be said to be right unless the authority of this principle is recognised. "It is by this faculty, natural to man, that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself: by this faculty, I say, not to be considered merely as a principle in his heart, which is to have some influence as well as others; but considered as a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so".<sup>2</sup>

Although conscience is the highest principle to which one can appeal or look for guidance and advice in actual cases it is often overpowered by inferior principles like self-love and benevolence, just as they are often overpowered by particular passions and affections. However it should be remembered that though conscience does not often have full say, nevertheless it should. The fact that it is often overpowered, due to lack of necessary power, does not mean that

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 19,  
p. 64.  
2. do. do. do. sect. 11,  
p. 59.

it forfeits its moral right of making moral judgments.

It may be stated here that there is a good deal of controversy even among the modern writers about the <sup>relation</sup> relation between self-love and conscience in Butler. Some writers, to whom we shall have occasion to refer at the appropriate place, go so far as to hold that Butler is a rational egoist. The consideration of this problem will involve much discussion; and we shall therefore devote a separate chapter (Chapter III) to it.

## Chapter II.

### Butler's Refutation of Psychological Egoism.

In order to comprehend and appreciate fully Butler's refutation of the doctrine of universal selfishness it is necessary to know something about how the problem arose for him. Thomas Hobbes had published his Leviathan in 1651. In this he had advocated a moral theory on the basis of the analysis of human nature. But his account of human nature was so perverted that 'Butler regarded it as dangerous to public and private morals'.<sup>1</sup>

Hobbes was the most uncompromising advocate of selfish philosophy. He preached the doctrine of universal selfishness. Man is completely selfish, devoid of social feelings altogether. He thus struck the social affections out of the map of human nature and made self the ultimate object of all human action. Personal gratification is, according to him, the sole end of all human activity. This principle enunciated by Hobbes was pushed to its cynical extreme by Bernard Mandeville in his 'The Fable of the Bees' in which he gave perhaps the lowest estimate of morality.

Hobbes's theory of human nature was bound to rouse and stir the most violent reaction. It led to a tremendous amount of opposition and discussion which continued for more than a century and the ethics of the period is a series of attempts to demolish Hobbism.

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1. 'Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics', Edinburgh, 1910.  
Vol. III, p. 48.

The opposition to Hobbes's moral theory took three main directions. Ralph Cudworth, who was the most distinguished in the group of thinkers called the 'Cambridge Platonists', and Samuel Clarke were the first to question Hobbes's view of morality as being a mere matter of convention. Their aim is directed against Hobbes's view that morality is a mere matter of calculation and moral law is a collection of arbitrary state enactments. They held that there is something more about rightness and wrongness than mere external authority. Moral law is rooted in the nature of things. Morality is eternal and immutable and moral truths are unalterable like mathematical truths, independent of both human and divine will.<sup>1</sup>

The second line of opposition to Hobbes's moral philosophy is found in Richard Cumberland. As opposed to Hobbes's view of man as naturally evil and in a state of war when every man is enemy to every man,<sup>2</sup> Cumberland holds that man is not by nature at war with his fellow-beings. Every man is not enemy to every man. There is, according to him, no conflict between the good of the society and that of the individual.

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1. L.A. Selby-Bigge. 'British Moralists', Vol. II, Oxford, 1897, pp. 11, 248-249.

2. do. do. p. 291.

The fundamental principle of Cumberland's system of Ethics is that the greatest benevolence of every rational agent to all others is the happiest state of each individual, as well as of the whole.<sup>1</sup>

In Shaftesbury we find the third line of opposition to Hobbes's view. As opposed to Hobbes's that man is a completely selfish being, devoid of all social feelings, Shaftesbury holds that in addition to self-affections there are also natural or social affections in man's nature. Nay, more, according to him, there are also unnatural affections in human nature.

But Butler was probably not satisfied with all these criticisms directed against Hobbism.

Despite Shaftesbury's genuine desire to vindicate the existence of social affections in human nature Butler does not seem happy with his psychological analysis which he considers inadequate and in need of further and fuller examination

It appears that Butler was not satisfied with the criticisms of Cudworth and Clarke either. This is probably for two reasons. (1) Rather than criticising Hobbes, Cudworth and Clarke had substituted a new theory. They had in fact advanced a new theory of morality. (11) Butler was

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1. Richard Cumberland. 'A Treatise of the Laws of Nature', Eng. trans. by John Maxwell, London, 1727, Chap. I, pp.53,55

probably not happy with the a priori or rationalistic approach to morality, despite the fact that he considers it as one of the two ways in which the subject of morals may be treated.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that Butler wanted to bring morality closer to life which he felt could not be done by mere speculation or over-refinements. He says: "let me just take notice of the danger of over-great refinements; of going beside or beyond the plain, obvious, first appearances of things, upon the subject of morals and religion. The least observation will show, how little the generality of men are capable of speculations".<sup>2</sup>

Butler therefore himself takes up the task of refuting Hobbes's moral theory and in order to give it a final blow he decided to meet him on his own ground.

We may begin with Butler's critical examination of Hobbes's notion of 'benevolence'. Butler, while criticising Hobbes's interpretation of benevolence, makes a very judicious remark. He says those who exclude social elements altogether from the map of human nature have perforce, in order to conform to their theory, to give some such explanation of those facts of human mind, the existence of which they themselves cannot

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 7, p. 5.

2. do Vol. II, Sermon V, sect. 15, p. 106

deny. Butler says: "Suppose a man of learning to be writing a grave book upon Human Nature, and to show in several parts of it that he had an insight into the subject he was considering; .... that this learned person had a general hypothesis, to which the appearance of good-will would not otherwise be reconciled?"<sup>1</sup> In regard to this remark Professor Duncan-Jones rightly observes: "This remark, rather than the particular refutations, really gives the essence of the matter."<sup>2</sup>

Butler then proceeds to examine Hobbes's view of benevolence. Hobbes defines it thus: "There is yet another passion sometimes called love, but more properly good-will or charity. There can be no greater argument to a man, of his own power, than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs: and this is that conception wherein consisteth charity."<sup>3</sup> Against this view of benevolence Butler points out the difficulties, rather the absurdities that are involved in it. He says that if Hobbes be right how is it then that we sometimes wish good to another which we cannot do for him, yet we rejoice and feel delighted when some one else does it for him? Obviously in this case there is no opportunity for the exercise of power

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, pp. 35-36 (foot-note).

2. Austin Duncan-Jones. 'Butler's Moral Philosophy', (A volume of the Pelican Philosophy series), 1952, p. 109.

3. L.A. Selby-Bigge. (British Moralists', Vol. II, Oxford, 1897, p. 299.

on our part as we ourselves do not have any share in the transaction but the joy is there nevertheless. There is thus no denying that we all rejoice and feel delighted, unless of course we are evilly disposed, at the prosperity of others even though we have no hand in leading to their prosperity. Hobbes's account of benevolence cannot account for the existence of such a tendency in man, which undoubtedly every man has. By this crucial instance Butler conclusively proves that benevolence is not a mere exercise of power or egoism in disguise as Hobbes contends.

Again it sometimes happens that we often prefer to help A rather than B though we know full well that helping the latter would provide a greater exercise of power. As in the first instance, so here Hobbes's theory fails to account for such facts.

Furthermore, if Hobbes's view be true, if all acts spring from the mere desire to exercise power then there remains no distinction between acts of good-will and charity on the one hand and mischief and cruelty on the other. Because to do mischief is also to have delight in the exercise of power. Restraints are put on man's doing mischief, but they may not always be there. He could in those circumstances exercise greater power in doing mischief. Thus on this view charity and cruelty become one in essence as they both equally gratify our sense of power. This is a manifest absurdity. If

good-will and cruelty be both merely different modes of the exercise of power, as on this showing they are, then the very distinction between the two is obliterated and one cannot be preferred to the other. This is obviously an absurd proposition. Butler remarks: "These are the absurdities which even men of capacity run into, when they have occasion to belie their nature, and will perversely disclaim that image of God which was originally stamped upon it, the traces of which, however faint, are plainly discernible upon the mind of man".<sup>1</sup>

Butler does not stop here. He gives yet another blow to Hobbes's theory. He points out that the existence of benevolence can be proved by direct observation. "If any person can in earnest doubt, whether there be such a thing as good-will in one man towards another; let it be observed, that whether man be thus, or otherwise constituted, .... is a mere question of fact or natural history, not provable immediately by reason. It is therefore to be judged of and determined in the same way other facts or matters of natural history are: by appealing to the external senses, or inward perceptions, respectively, as the matter under consideration is cognizable by one or the other: by arguing from acknowledged facts and actions; .... and lastly, by the testimony of mankind."<sup>2</sup> Butler thus proves the existence of

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, p. 37 (foot-note).

2. do Vol. II, p. 37 (foot-note).

benevolence in man's nature.

Butler is equally damaging in his criticism of Hobbes's account of 'pity' to which we now turn. Hobbes defines pity thus: "Pity is imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man's calamity".<sup>1</sup> Butler examines Hobbes's account of 'pity' in Sermon five 'Upon compassion' and tries to point out the practical difficulties as he does in his examination of benevolence. Butler contends that if pity be regarded as the imagination of future calamity to ourselves proceeding from the sense of another man's calamity as Hobbes holds, then on this definition 'fear and compassion would be the same idea, and a fearful and a compassionate man the same character, which everyone immediately sees are totally different'.<sup>2</sup> It is obviously not true that fear and compassion are the same. Again were Hobbes's contention true, the conception of a compassionate man changes altogether. According to Hobbes's definition a compassionate man is he who fears for his own safety and the more he fears about himself the more compassionate he is. This is obviously contrary to our acknowledged facts of experience. Our practical

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1. Selby-Bigge. 'British Moralists', Vol. II, Oxford, 1897.  
p. 298.

2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, p. 94. (foot-note).

experience shows that one who fears very much his own safety is not usually sympathetic. Then again our attitude towards the compassionate and towards the timid or fearful is not the same. We often love, revere, and admire a compassionate being. We treat him with kindness and think very favourably of one who has been merciful and benevolent throughout the course of his life, if unfortunately he happens to fall into circumstances of distress, but surely we do not think so of one who is most concerned about himself and utterly callous to others' pain and suffering. Again Hobbes holds that we pity our friends in distress more than strangers. Butler here raises a very serious and sound objection. He points out that if this were so, it would then obviously mean that we feel more fear for ourselves when we see our friends in distress than when we see other people in the same condition. This is certainly not the case. It is no doubt true that we feel more compassion for our friends when we see them in distress than when we see strangers in the same plight but we do not see any reason why on that account we should fear more for ourselves. All this proves that pity is not the same as fear for ourselves as Hobbes says.

After having thus refuted Hobbes's notion of pity Butler proceeds to give his own view about it. Pity according to Butler involves three elements. (1) Real sorrow and concern (genuine sympathy) for the misery of our fellow creatures.

(2) Satisfaction from a consciousness of our freedom from that misery. (3) Reflection on our own liableness to the same or other calamities. Now in a particular case all these three elements may or may not be present or they may be present in varying proportions but according to Butler it is only the first by which pity is generally meant by the people. > Butler thus demolishes Hobbes's theory of universal selfishness. The fact is that Hobbes advocated egoistic philosophy and he thus forces sympathy, in fact all other such social feelings, to fit in with his general egoistic philosophy. Sir James Mackintosh remarks: "Such were the expedients to which a man of the highest class of understanding was driven, in order to evade the admission of the simple and evident truth, that there are in our nature perfectly disinterested passions, which seek the well-being of others as their object and end, without looking beyond it to self, or pleasure, or happiness. A proposition, from which such a man could attempt to escape only by such means, may be strongly presumed to be true."<sup>1</sup>

We have shown how Butler proves the existence of social affections in human nature. We shall just mention one point here. It seems to us that Butler is perfectly right in his view He has pleaded his case strongly and has established his point quite ably and satisfactorily. The fact <sup>that</sup> there are social feelings in human nature cannot be doubted, and that man by nature, as Aristotle held, is a social animal is perfectly true.

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1. Sir James Mackintosh. 'Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy', London, 1851, p. 31.

The inherently social character of man and the existence of natural social feelings, like parental care, genuine love and sympathy, and natural good-will in one man towards another cannot be denied. Man's everyday experience is a witness to this fact. Men do sometimes sacrifice their interest for their fellow creatures and thus that they do sometimes engage themselves in disinterested activities cannot be doubted. It is undeniably true that there is something like genuine attachment to family, to friends, to country and to mankind in every man. The entire history of mankind is a proof to this undeniable fact.

Mr. Bertrand Russel in the very introduction of his ripest work 'Human Society in Ethics and Politics' admits the existence of social impulses in human nature. He says: "Man is more complex in his impulses and desires than any other animal, .... He is a semi-gregarious animal. Some of his impulses and desires are social, some are solitary. The social part of his nature appears in the fact that solitary confinement is a very severe form of punishment; the other part appears in love of privacy and unwillingness to speak to strangers."<sup>1</sup> He again concluding his discussion remarks: "We must therefore admit two distinct elements in human excellence, one social, the other solitary. An ethic which takes

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1. Bertrand Russel. 'Human Society in Ethics and Politics', London, 1954, p. 16 (Introduction).

account only of the one, or only of the other, will be incomplete and unsatisfying."<sup>1</sup>

Again Professor Broad in a brilliant article<sup>2</sup> on 'Egoism as a Theory of Human Motives' has examined this question at great length and has given a very penetrating analysis of the different motives of human actions. He has therein given a number of examples to prove the existence of other-regarding impulses<sup>3</sup> in man's nature. One such example is worth quoting here. "Let us next consider the case of a man who subscribes anonymously to a certain charity. His motive cannot possibly be that of self-display. Can we say that his motive is to enjoy the pleasant experience of self-approval and of seeing an institution in which he is interested flourishing? The answer is, again, that these motives may exist and may be strong, but they cannot be primary and therefore cannot be his only motives. Unless he wants the institution to flourish, there will be nothing to attract him in the experience of seeing it flourish. And, unless he subscribes from some other motive than the desire to enjoy a feeling of self-approval, he will not obtain a feeling of self-approval. So here, again, it seems to me

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1. Bertrand Russell 'Human Society in Ethics and Politics', London, 1954, p. 17, (Introduction).

2. Hibbert Journal, Vol. XLVIII, No. 2, January 1950.

3. By other-regarding impulses, Professor Broad, means those impulses in which the primary emphasis is on the other person or thing and its states. p. 107.

that some of his motives must be other-regarding."<sup>1</sup>

These facts, I think, clearly show the existence of other-regarding impulses in human nature.

It may also be helpful to point out here that the whole case for egoism is based on the following considerations. It is a view which provokes a favourable reaction in almost every one who makes his first attempt at speculation about human motivation. It is a theory which appears plausible to almost every one at first sight when he is more or less uncritical. This is not to say that all advocates of egoism are uncritical. The fact is that, as we have already said, such philosophers force the interpretations of social impulses into accord with their theory. But there seems no doubt that to any one, who thinks deeply and examines critically and impartially the problem of human motivation, who considers the different situations and circumstances in which men are placed and the various ways in which they react to them, the various relations in which men stand to their family, relations etc. will undoubtedly see the inadequacy and the unplausibility of the theory of universal selfishness.

Another reason for the apparent plausibility of the egoistic philosophy seems to be that the element of self-interest is so strong in men. We are nearer to ourselves

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1. C.D. Broad. 'Egoism as a Theory of Human Motives',  
Hibbert Journal, Vol. XLViii, No. 2, January 1950, p. 110.

than we are to others. Self-love is nearer to man than other passions. Butler also probably realises this when he points out that all possible concessions would be made to this favourite passion whose cause is universally pleaded.<sup>1</sup>

There seems yet another reason for the seeming plausibility of the selfish theory. In most of our activities including those which are social and benevolent, the self-referential touch is there. It is difficult to point out cases where a self-referential element is altogether absent. This seems to be a very potent reason for the plausibility of this theory. The fact is that human nature is a composite of self-regarding and other-regarding impulses. In almost all men both the kinds of elements are mixed up so much that they both determine his particular line of action. Thus in actual life a man is neither perfectly and exclusively selfish nor perfectly and exclusively benevolent. An individual is denominated as benevolent or selfish according as the unselfish or selfish elements predominate in him. Hobbes's theory of universal selfishness ignores these facts of life.

It may also be useful to point out here that in criticising Hobbes's theory of universal selfishness Butler does not fall into the opposite error of ignoring private affections of human nature altogether. Without being eclectic

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 2, p. 186.

Butler gathers truth, which he had made the business of his life, from whatever source he finds it. He does not hesitate to agree with anyone when he is right. He recognises whatever elements of truth he finds even in Hobbes's theory but his originality and greatness lies in transforming them, and adapting them to his moral scheme.

We have discussed Butler's criticism of egoistic theory. We have also seen his own analysis of the sentiment of pity. But to understand more fully Butler's position, which entails a denial of psychological hedonism, it is useful, perhaps also necessary, to point out here a distinction upon which Butler lays considerable emphasis between particular passions and affections on the one hand and self-love on the other. Butler discusses this point in Sermon I and then again in Sermon XI, sections 3-7. Every man has a general desire of his own happiness, and self-love is that principle in human nature which aims at it. As we have already said it never seeks anything external for its own sake but only as a means to one's well-being and happiness. Particular passions and affections on the other hand aim at particular external objects. They rest in external things themselves.

Butler points out that the distinction between self-love and particular passions can be clear only if we bear in mind the means of their gratification. "Everybody makes a distinction between self-love, and the several particular passions, appetites and affections; and yet they are often confounded again. That they are totally different, will be seen by any one who will distinguish between the passions and appetites themselves, and

endeavouring after the means of their gratification. Consider the appetite of hunger, and the desire of esteem: these being the occasion both of pleasure and pain, the coolest self-love, as well as the appetites and passions themselves, may put us upon making use of the proper methods of obtaining that pleasure and avoiding that pain; but the feelings themselves, the pain of hunger and shame, and the delight from esteem, are no more self-love than they are any thing in the world".<sup>1</sup>

Butler is not satisfied with this.. He gives in the same chain a concrete illustration to explain this point.

"One man rushes upon certain ruin for the gratification of a present desire: nobody will call the principle of this action self-love. Suppose another man to go through some laborious work upon promise of a great reward, without any distinct knowledge what the reward will be: this course of action cannot be ascribed to any particular passion. The former of these actions is plainly to be imputed to some particular passion or affection, the latter as plainly to the general affection or principle of self-love."<sup>2</sup>

But though the object of self-love is the general happiness of the individual as a whole, yet this happiness can be obtained only through the gratification of particular passions and affections. In other words the general happiness which self-love aims at can be attained only through the enjoyment of those objects which are appropriate to our particular

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, p. 39 (foot-note).

2. do. do. do.

particular appetites, passions and affections. Thus self-love presupposes the existence of particular passions and affections. Butler says: "Happiness or satisfaction consists only in the enjoyment of those objects, which are by nature suited to our several particular appetites, passions and affections. So that if self-love wholly engrosses us, and leaves no room for any other principle, there can be absolutely no such thing at all as happiness, or enjoyment of any kind whatever; since happiness consists in the gratification of particular passions, which supposes the having of them".<sup>1</sup>

We have said that self-love cannot be satisfied without satisfying the particular impulses. It presupposes their existence and can find its expression only in and through them. But the converse is not always true. Particular impulses can be satisfied without self-love. These often become predominant and prevail over men who sometimes perform acts which self-love would not approve of. But though, as we have said, particular impulses can be satisfied without any regard to self-love they ought not to be. In the absence of the rational principle of self-love particular impulses might be either too weak or too strong to achieve their real ends. In either case they destroy the right relation among the different elements in human nature on which, according to Butler, virtue depends. In order therefore that the particular

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 6, p. 190.

impulses should realise their real ends it is absolutely necessary that these be subordinated to self-love, that they act under its guidance and control so as to maintain the balance and harmony in human nature upon which Butler always and everywhere insists.

Thus though the distinction between self-love and particular passions is clear enough, yet it is ignored by Hobbes, who identifies particular passions with self-love. Hobbes tries to explain away all particular affections by representing the whole life as nothing but one continued exercise of self-love. He reduces the entire human nature to the different forms and expressions of self-love. In opposition to Hobbes Butler maintains that the particular impulses are not different expressions of self-love. They are not directed to the pleasure of the self. Butler's thesis is contained in the significant proposition that "That all particular appetites and passions are towards external things themselves, distinct from pleasure arising from them".<sup>1</sup> Moreover particular impulses may and often do conflict with self-love. We sometimes under the influence of a particular impulse take a course of action which self-love would not approve.

It may be asked, how does this mistaken reduction of

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L. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 3, p. 187.

the particular impulses to different expressions of self-love come to be made ? Why does Hobbes, as do all egoists and hedonists, fall into this common error ? Butler holds that this is due to two confusions. The first is the confusion between the ownership of an impulse and its object. Impulses no doubt all belong to the self. They are all owned by the individual. But they do not all have as their object the individual self. Some impulses are, of course, self-regarding in the sense that they have as their object some change in the state of the self. Hunger, for example, is an impulse which has for its object some change in the state of the self. But there are some impulses which are other-regarding in the sense that they have as their object some change in the state of others. Sympathy, for example, is an impulse which has for its object some change in the state of the person sympathized with. Thus it is a mistake to think that since all impulses are owned by the individual, therefore they all have as their object some change in the individual self.

The second confusion arises from the fact that the satisfaction of any of my impulses gives pleasure and that the pleasure is my pleasure. It is true that the satisfaction of any impulse gives pleasure to the individual but it is not true that the object of any of these impulses is the general happiness of the individual who owns them. For instance, the satisfaction of sympathy or even malice no doubt gives

pleasure to the individual but it is not true to say that their object is the general well-being of the individual. The object of sympathy is the relief of another man's distress and that of malice the production of another's misery. Thus though the gratification of the particular impulses is very essential for the general well-being of the man's life as a whole, it is wrong to hold, as is commonly done, that the gratification of any impulse means the general happiness of the individual. The pleasure which the satisfaction of particular impulses entails is only a factor in the total or general happiness which self-love aims at, but surely it is not the object which particular impulses aim at. Thus the relation of particular impulses to self-love is as Professor Broad says; "that of means to end,<sup>or</sup> of raw materials to finished product".<sup>1</sup>

Before closing this chapter we would like to raise just one more point. Some moral philosophers have questioned the proper use of the words 'object' and 'external' in Butler. Professor Duncan-Jones says: "If we took Butler to imply that the objective of a passion is always external, it would hardly be possible to agree . . . . We may concede to Butler that the objectives of self-love are internal in the sense explained,

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1. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951, p. 66.

but we cannot deny that the objectives of particular passions may be internal also".<sup>1</sup> Again as regards the word 'object' he says: "Butler seems here to be accepting uncritically the colloquial use of the word 'object', when it is combined with words standing for desires or purposive actions. It will not always be possible to follow his usage, and when something less elliptical is needed the word 'objective' will be used."<sup>2</sup> Professor Broad also remarks: "In fact the object of an impulse is never, strictly speaking, a thing or person; it is always to change or to preserve some state of a thing or person".<sup>3</sup>

We shall first consider the use of the word 'external'. It appears to us that the very distinction between external and internal as made by Butler is ill-advised. We quite realise his anxiety to distinguish self-love from particular passions on which distinction his refutation of psychological hedonism depended. Butler perhaps feared wrongly that if the object or objective of any impulse be taken as internal, in that case it might be identified with individual's general happiness, in which case he might not be able to

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1. Austin Duncan-Jones. 'Butler's Moral Philosophy', (A volume of the Pelican Philosophy series), 1952, p. 50.
  2. do do do p. 49.
  3. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1952, p. 67

distinguish self-love from particular passions. In his anxiety to maintain this distinction Butler forgot the very obvious fact that the objectives of particular passions could be internal without being that general happiness which self-love aims at. The very fact that an objective is internal does not necessarily mean that it is the same as the individual's general happiness. Thus it appears that Butler probably misunderstood the thing. He should not have raised any distinction like external and internal which also seems uncalled for from the fact that he has already given one criterion to distinguish self-love from particular passions by characterising the former as 'general' and the latter 'particular'. Thus it appears, as we have already said, that the distinction between external and internal is ill-advised and uncalled for.

As regards the use of the word 'object' or objects which particular passions and affections aim at, we have to point out only one thing, that the modifications suggested in this connection may be perfectly justified in some sense but the question is 'do they affect Butler's main ethical teaching' ? It appears that the answer must obviously be 'no'. They do not make any important improvement on Butler's ethical theory. His main thesis in this context has been to show and to prove that the end or object which self-love pursues is not the same as that which particular passions and affections pursue.

Now whether we call the ends which particular impulses pursue as 'objects' as Butler does, or as 'objectives' as Professor Duncan-Jones does or say that they are 'always to change or to preserve the states of things or persons' as Professor Broad suggests makes no material difference to Butler's main ethical stand. Thus the modifications suggested here should not be taken in the sense that they correct Butler's ethical theory. They are simply another way and perhaps better way of expressing and putting the facts.

### Chapter III.

#### Virtue and Self-interest in Butler.

The relation between virtue and self-interest is a very complicated problem in Butler. Self-love is one of the principles about which there is a good deal of confusion among the writers on Butler's moral philosophy and thus their opinions on the issue of virtue and self-interest are very sharply divided. Professor Sidgwick, for instance, holds that in Butler self-love and conscience are co-ordinate principles. They both thus carry the same authority and self-love is not subordinate to conscience. He says: "There remain, then, Conscience and Self-love as the two authorities in the polity of the soul. With regard to these it is by no means Butler's view (as is very commonly supposed) that Self-love is naturally subordinate to conscience - at least if we consider the theoretical rather than the practical relation between the two. He treats them as independent principles, and so far co-ordinate in authority that it is not 'according to nature' that either should be overruled".<sup>1</sup> There are others again, for instance Professor Seth, who hold that in Butler virtue is synonymous with self-love. He says

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1. Henry Sidgwick. 'Outlines of the History of Ethics',  
London, 1886, p. 192.

"Virtue is not synonymous with benevolence, but in the last analysis it is synonymous with self-love. The latter is a reflective and reasonable principle of life; prudence and virtue are co-ordinate, if not coincident. In spite of the authority of conscience, and the intrinsic quality of that rightness which it approves, Butler's morality is not disinterested; its *raison d'etre* is the individual happiness to which it leads".<sup>1</sup> These interpretations are, as we shall try to show in this chapter, erroneous and ill-founded, because they are based on statements abstracted altogether from the context and background in which these statements are made. However, to assess Butler's final view on the problem of the relation between virtue and self-interest and thus to arrive at the correct estimate of his general ethical teaching, it is essential, especially in view of the very wide divergences among his critics, to examine this question in great detail.

But before proceeding further let us also see what some of the more recent writers on Butler, who either co-ordinate self-love with conscience or regard self-love as the highest virtue, say about it. Professor Prichard holds that Butler considered conduciveness to happiness to be the condition of

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1. James Seth. 'A study of Ethical Principles', Edinburgh, 1899, p. 176.

the performance of a duty. According to him it is a condition of our being bound to do some action that doing it would make for our happiness. Professor Prichard sums up Butler's view thus: "There seems to be no doubt then but that Butler considered that no act can possibly be really a duty unless it will be for our happiness".<sup>1</sup>

Mr. McPherson<sup>2</sup> also holds that Butler in his Sermons (including their preface) is an 'Ethical Eudaemonist'. By 'Ethical Eudaemonism' he means the view that one's own happiness or self-interest is the ultimate criterion of the rightness of an action. His own words are thus: "Butler's refutation of Hobbes in the earlier part of the Sermons has not prevented Hobbism from reappearing in a more respectable form as Butler develops his own doctrine. Butler has refined

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1. H.A. Prichard. 'Moral Obligation', (Essays and Lectures), Oxford, 1949, p. 97.
  2. Mr. Thomas H. McPherson in his article 'The Development of Bishop Butler's Ethics' Part I, published in Philosophy, Vol. XXIII, No. 87, October 1948, and Part 2, Vol. XXIV, No. 90, July 1949, holds that there are two different theories of ethics in Butler's work. In the Sermons, including the preface, Butler's theory is Ethical Eudaemonism and in the Analogy and Dissertation on virtue he develops the theory of 'Intuitionism', by which he means the view that we are immediately aware of the obligatoriness of particular actions in particular situations.

Hobbes's crude egoism, but he has not made it any the less egoism. Butler is a rational egoist, while Hobbes had tended to be an irrational egoist. . . . . If the ethical theory of the Sermons must be given a label, it had better be called Ethical Egoistic Eudaemonism. . . . Butler is an Egoistic Eudaemonist in that he believes that we ought to seek our own happiness".<sup>1</sup>

Now, all who hold that Butler considered self-interest as the sole criterion for virtue/<sup>support</sup> their view by quoting a few stray passages from Butler where he apparently seems to identify virtue with self-interest. The most important of these is the famous 'cool-hour' passage which occurs in Sermon XI 'Upon the Love of our Neighbour'. We quote here some of these as instances .

- (1) "Let it be allowed, though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and good, as such; yet, that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Philosophy, Vol. XXIII, No. 87, October 1948, p. 330.

2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 21, p. 206.

(2) "Reasonable self-love and conscience are the chief or superior principles in the nature of man: because an action may be suitable to this nature, though all other principles be violated; but becomes unsuitable, if either of those are".<sup>1</sup>

(3) "Conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way. Duty and interest are perfectly coincident; for the most part in this world, but entirely and in every instance if we take in the future, and the whole; this being implied in the notion of a good and perfect administration of things".<sup>2</sup>

We have pointed out above some of those interpreters of Butler who hold that self-love exhausts the entire contents of morality in him and we have also quoted those passages which they usually use to support their view.

We shall now come to those interpreters who hold that Butler does not mean to regard self-love as the sole determinant of virtue. Those who hold this view of Butler have all tried in their own way to explain those passages especially the cool-hour passage wherein Butler seems to identify virtue with self-interest. Before starting our own discussions in this

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 13, p. 76.

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connection, it may be useful in the interests of clarification to point out here how others have tried to interpret and explain the famous 'cool-hour' passage which is the most important of them and which has created so much confusion among the writers on Butler.

Interpreting this passage Professor Broad says: "I think it is clear from the context that he is not here asserting his own view, but is simply making a hypothetical concession to an imaginary opponent".<sup>1</sup> Professor Taylor remarks: "We must therefore conclude either that Butler has by a mere oversight allowed himself to make an incidental remark which is not really consistent with his considered position and forgotten to correct it, or, more probably, that the remark was not intended as more than a temporary concession to the prejudices of an audience".<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Mossner observes: "The passage does not fairly represent his true position".<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Spooner quoting the passage remarks that it "apparently makes the obligation of listening to conscience depend on its conduciveness to happiness; yet there is no doubt that, in the

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1. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951, p. 80.
  2. A.E. Taylor. 'Some Features of Butler's Ethics', Mind, Vol. XXXV, New Series, No. 139, July 1926, p. 297
  3. E.C. Mossner. 'Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason', 1936, p. 119.

main, Butler's position is just the opposite of this".<sup>1</sup>  
Professor Barnes referring to the passage says: "This has sometimes been interpreted to mean that we cannot convince ourselves that an action is a duty except by calculating that it will be for our interest to do it, and this because what makes an action a duty is its being to our interest. If this were the correct interpretation it would mean that this passage is not only inconsistent with the whole tenor of Butler's philosophy but is also self-inconsistent. .... I do not think Butler can have been guilty of such a gross contradiction".<sup>2</sup> Gladstone referring to the 'cool-hour' passage observes: "Doubtless this is true, when once we have been challenged and put upon our defence. But it need not be held to imply that the pursuit of 'right and good', of the noble and the true, requires to be waited upon, and as it were certified, by the continual presence and active consciousness of the idea that it will conduce to our personal happiness: which would indeed tend to bring down the pursuit itself from a higher to a lower plane".<sup>3</sup>

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1. W.A. Spooner. 'Bishop Butler', London, 1901, p. 111.
  2. W.H.F. Barnes. 'Joseph Butler: Moralists', The Durham University Journal, New Series, Vol. XII, No. 2, March 1951, pp. 43-44.
  3. W.E. Gladstone. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Oxford 1896, Vol. II, p. 206, (foot-note).

We have pointed out the views of others and in this respect perhaps we have gone further than what is absolutely necessary for our purpose here. However our own view with regard to Butler's account of the relation between virtue and self-interest is that he did not mean to co-ordinate self-love with conscience. He did not consider self-love as the highest or the sole principle of virtue. He regarded it as one of the general rational principles of human nature, superior not only in degree but in kind and nature to particular propensions, but ultimately subordinate to conscience. Our reasons for holding this view are the following:

We think that in interpreting any controversial expression, or a passage or even a book we must first lay down some general standards or tests. For instance when we want to interpret a book about which there has been some controversy, we must take into consideration how the problem which the book attempts to solve arose, and under what circumstances the book came to be written. This test or criterion must be applied in interpreting all those passages in Butler wherein he apparently seems to resolve all virtue into self-love. In this connection we should remember that the problem which confronted Butler was handed down to him by his predecessors of the seventeenth century. We have seen

that Thomas Hobbes had enunciated the principle of universal selfishness which was brought to its logical conclusion by Mandeville. From his frequent references to Hobbes, it appears that Butler's one main purpose in his Sermons at the Rolls Chapel was to demolish and overthrow Hobbism. ~~Thus~~ Throughout his Sermons Butler had Hobbes always before his mind's eye. Now if it is a fact, as we have tried to show that it is, that Butler's main purpose in his Sermons was to defeat and overthrow Hobbism, then bearing in mind the criterion which we have set up, any interpretation which goes to show that Butler identified virtue completely with self-love cannot be accepted, as it goes contrary to the main spirit in which the Sermons came to be delivered. It might be pointed out here and perhaps rightly that this argument does not carry us very far. Butler no doubt demolishes Hobbes's theory of universal egoism and vindicates the existence of social elements in human nature, but he admits self-love as permissible motive for action. This is perfectly true. Butler re-evaluates self-love. In fact an important purpose in his refutation of universal egoism is also to reinterpret self-love. According to Butler to act on the principle of self-love is virtuous. But the question with which we are concerned in this Chapter is whether even in his own sense Butler reduced all virtue to self-love, and to this our own answer, as already

given, is no.

It seems to us that the best way to interpret any controversial point is to judge it in its proper context. In interpreting these passages where Butler seems to hold self-love as the highest virtue, two factors should always be kept in view. They are (1) the temper of the age and (2) his own situation and practical purpose. It appears to us that in these passages Butler is reflecting the tendencies of the age. It has already been said that Butler's age was the age of reason. It was the age of individualism, and the majority of people would recognise no virtue higher than regard for their own self. Butler seems to realise this when he says: "It may be allowed, without any prejudice to the cause of virtue and religion, that our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us".<sup>1</sup> It is immediately after this that the famous 'cool-hour' passage occurs. It appears that in accordance with the tendency of the age Butler is trying to allow as many concessions as possible to this principle which is so universally strong in every man. Butler himself says that "for there shall be all possible concessions made to the favourite passion, which hath so much allowed to it, and whose cause is so universally pleaded: it shall be treated with the utmost

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 21, p. 206.

tenderness and concern for its interests".<sup>1</sup> Butler probably, consistently with the temper of the age, very strongly believed that happiness-loving men would not, under the circumstances in which they are placed in the world, act virtuously unless they also somehow believed that it would be to their interest. The word 'justify' which occurs in the 'cool-hour' passage does not in this context mean anything more than that reasonable and happiness-loving people would not justify to themselves any course of action unless they knew that it would be to their interest. This seems to be supported from the assurance he is giving to his audience, a promise as it were, that whatever inconsistency there is between duty and interest, shall be set right at the final distribution of things.<sup>2</sup> Thus it seems that Butler is here trying to provide an additional motive for the practice of virtue. Interest of the agent is an additional reason for doing an act which is duty. This is not to say that the interest of the agent is the reason, far less the only reason, why duty should be performed. It is only to reinforce the performance of virtue. That is all. Mr. Harrison rightly remarks: "More than enough food and drink may be bad for one, but more than enough reason for a statement does not make it false or invalid, nor does more than enough reason for an action make

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 2, p. 186.

2. do Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 12, p. 75.

it wrong or irrational. If one person has a duty to do something which is in his interest, and another has a duty to do something which is not, the first has better reason for doing the action he has a duty to do (though no better reason for doing his duty) than the second, though the reasons of both are sufficient".<sup>1</sup>

Another passage already quoted above in which Butler very much exalts self-love and thus seems to identify it with virtue occurs in the last section of Sermon III. In his emphasis on self-love Butler seems no less emphatic here than he is in the 'cool-hour' passage. But then what his real purpose here is may be seen clearly from his statement which follows immediately after this passage. He is here trying to prove that there is coincidence between virtue and interest. Butler is at pains to show that reasonable self-love and conscience always lead us the same way. It is only to emphasise this point that Butler exalts self-love. It is his peculiar technique, a point which we have explained elsewhere, that whenever he explains any theory he exaggerates it so much that he apparently seems inconsistent. But there is absolutely no reason for thinking that he treats self-love and conscience as co-ordinate principles.

Moreover it seems that probably Butler also strongly

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1. J. Harrison. 'Self-interest and Duty', The Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, May 1953, pp. 25-26.

believed that no moral theory which ignores self-love can meet with general acceptance. This seems to be an important reason why he considers prudence also as virtue. Thus in his emphasis on self-love Butler is merely reflecting the spirit of the age. After all, the speculative beliefs of an age very largely determine its moral character. He is thus trying to win over his sophisticated audience by impressing upon them that reasonable self-love (not mere selfishness) is not opposed to virtue. But from all this it is wrong to infer that Butler held self-love to be the sole criterion of virtue.

The second factor which has to be considered here is Butler's own practical purpose and the circumstances in which he worked. He was a practical preacher of righteousness and his aim was to make people virtuous and religious. Like the sagacious man he was, he did not neglect to appeal to the motives of men, and men are moved by prudential considerations. It would have been quite out of place for Butler to preach and talk all the time on 'disinterestedness and benevolence' when he knew well that his audience were more or less self-centered. He therefore touches their sentiment gently but effectively. He takes them by surprise, as it were, by telling them that he is one with them as far as regard to self-love is concerned, and thus tries to walk with them on

the same track. Butler, consistently with his general ethical teaching, in his heart of hearts believed that if people acted from reasonable cool self-love, which, he held, necessarily involved the good of others, much ground would be gained. It would ultimately lead people to virtue and religion.

Connected with these two factors, there is also a third factor which is very important in the sense that it goes a long way towards explaining Butler's appeal to self-love. He reinforces his theory of virtue by the hope of reward in this life and in the next. He also holds that God is the moral governor of this universe and that He has annexed rewards and punishments to right and wrong acts respectively. Not only this; while creating men God endowed them with a moral nature and also placed them in a situation which provides their nature enough scope to operate. Butler says: "Now from this general observation, obvious to every one, that God has given us to understand, he has appointed satisfaction and delight to be the consequence of our acting in one manner, and pain and uneasiness of our acting in another, and of our not acting at all; and that we find the consequences, which we were beforehand informed of, uniformly to follow; we may learn, that we are at present actually under his government in the strictest and most proper sense; in such a sense, as that he

rewards and punishes us for our actions".<sup>1</sup> The fact that virtuous actions are rewarded and vicious punished should not be understood to mean that reward and punishment are the criterion for virtue in Butler. In him there is the emphasis on virtue and not on reward. According to Butler an action is virtuous and therefore rewarded, it is not true that it is rewarded and therefore virtuous. Butler nowhere makes virtue dependent on reward though the latter accompanies the former. The point is that he held that things are so arranged that we were "so constituted as that virtue and vice are thus naturally favoured and discountenanced, rewarded and punished as such".<sup>2</sup> Consistently with his belief in the divine government of the world Butler infers that God will reward virtue. A man can take it more or less on faith that a virtuous life will be rewarded by God somehow but he must work 'without any distinct knowledge of what the reward will be'. This faith cannot be said to be a matter of calculation for the interest of the agent. It is, as we have already said, just to reinforce the performance of conscientious actions.

Again, were Butler an egoist, his answer to the questions - Why must I do what is right? What obligations are we under to attend to and follow conscience? would have been 'because it is to your interest'. But Butler instead answers, 'because it is the law of your nature'. Though it must be remembered

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part I, Chap. II, sect. 6, p. 52.

2. do. Vol. I, Part I, Chap. III, sect. 20, p. 79.

here that according to Butler to act according to nature is also to one's interest. From<sup>all</sup>/this it appears that Butler never held that self-love is the sole determinant of virtue.

Furthermore if it is held that Butler was a rational egoist and in him self-love and conscience are merely two names of the same principle, then not only does this go against the general trend of his moral philosophy, but his whole emphasis and insistence on the authority of conscience, which is rightly regarded as the key-stone of his whole moral philosophy, becomes superfluous or meaningless. We should bear in mind here a point which we shall explain at its appropriate place that while self-love approves an action because it is prudent conscience approves it because it is right.

It appears that Butler's frequent use of the expressions like 'duty and interest', 'virtue and happiness' have given some of his readers the impression that Butler considered all virtue to be identical with the agent's interest. This is a mistake. There are three points to be borne in-mind in this connection. The first is that Butler, as is clear from his tone in Sermon III, believed that the situation in which men are placed in this world

and the circumstances in which they work are such that their own real interest is always best served by virtuous conduct. In other words it is through virtue that man's real interest can be best served. Thus it appears that by his insistence and frequent use of the expression 'virtue and happiness' Butler is trying to convince his audience and make them pursue virtue, as that way lies their real interest. This does not mean that Butler reduced all virtue to self-love.

The second reason why Butler often speaks about the coincidence between duty and interest is that according to him virtue consists in following nature, which means the whole of human nature. Now self-love being one principle, though a very important principle in human nature, action done in consequence of it cannot be wholly virtuous but nonetheless it is partly so. An action done in consequence of self-love is thus a species of virtue. The sphere of self-love is a necessary part of the total sphere of virtue which is the empire of conscience. In this sense there no longer remains a question of conscience and self-love, but it becomes a question of virtue and a part of virtue, and between virtue and a part of virtue there can be no conflict. This explains the

coincidence between virtue and interest and this also shows that self-love is a part of virtue but by no means the whole of virtue as is wrongly thought by many.

The third point to be remembered in this connection is that Butler very genuinely desired that virtuous people should also be happy. In fact he believed that they are so even in this world;<sup>1</sup> at least the tendency in virtue to make people happy even in this world is manifest and 'the principles and beginnings of a moral government over the world may be discerned, notwithstanding and amidst all the confusion and disorder of it'.<sup>2</sup> But despite this tendency of virtue to make people happy Butler seems to realise that virtuous men in this world are not as happy as they deserve. Pleasures and pains in this world seem to be distributed without much regard to merit and demerit. He says: "Good men surely are not treated in this world as they deserve".<sup>3</sup>

But then Butler also strongly believed that there was some sort of unalterable correspondence between virtue and happiness which, though partial in this world, points to

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 10, p. 73.
  2. do Vol. I, Part I, Chap. III, sect. 4, p. 66.
  3. Fragment No. 9. MSS. 9815 British Museum, p. 28. Also printed in Bernard's Edition of 'The Works of Bishop Butler'. London, 1900, Vol. I, p. 307.

their complete correspondence in the next. Nay, the unalterable relation between virtue and happiness is a postulate, it is necessarily implied in the very moral order of the universe. Indeed it cannot be denied under the perfect administration of God because the very denial will mean the denial of the perfect administration. Butler says: "It is a manifest absurdity to suppose evil prevailing finally over good, under the conduct and administration of a perfect Mind".<sup>1</sup> Thus it appears to us that Butler, for the final reconciliation between virtue and happiness, passes from the field of ethics to that of religion. "A righteous government may plainly appear to be carried on to some degree: enough to give us the apprehension that it shall be completed, or carried on to that degree of perfection which religion teaches us it shall; but which cannot appear, till much more of the divine administration be seen, than can in the present life".<sup>2</sup>

Thus it seems to us that the statements, where Butler seems to identify virtue with self-interest, if taken in their proper and appropriate context mean simply that the individual happiness is the natural or we should say, the

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 12, p. 75.

2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part I, Chap. III, sect. 4, p. 66.

inevitable accompaniment of virtuous conduct. This is all that Butler in his repeated use of the expression 'virtue and happiness' seems to suggest. The statements do not entitle us to draw the conclusion that personal happiness is, according to Butler, the sole ground of virtue.

We shall now pass on to consider a few other important points which are necessary in this connection. Butler no doubt has said that there is coincidence between self-love and conscience, partial in this world and perfect in the next world. But this does not prove that self-love is identical with conscience. They coincide because they are both reasonable principles, they are both reflective and calculative. They run in the same direction - they prescribe the same course of action, there is no wonder in it, because they both act on reason. So far they are in the same plane. Butler seems perfectly right. He is only emphasising here the rational aspect of self-love and thus showing that reasonable self-love is not opposed or contrary to the dictate of conscience. This is all that Butler suggests here. He never means to say that self-love and conscience are identical in the sense that they carry the same authority. Coincidence does not mean identity. If for instance the Archbishop of Canterbury and a village curate both acting reasonably go the same way it will never

mean that the latter carries the same authority as the former. Professor Moore seems to agree with this view of Butler when he remarks: "Hence the fact that an action is really to my interest, can never be a sufficient reason for doing it: by shewing that it is not a means to the best possible, we do not shew it is not to my interest, as we do shew that it is not expedient. Nevertheless there is no necessary conflict between duty and interest: what is to my interest may also be a means to the best possible".<sup>1</sup> Thus in his insistence on the coincidence between virtue and interest Butler is only emphasising the rational aspect of self-love. He did not mean to treat self-love and conscience as co-ordinate principles.

Again the crucial test of whether self-love and conscience are identical or carry the same authority is to be found in those passages where Butler anticipates and suggests the course to be adopted in case there be conflict between the two. It may be pointed out here that Butler first of all sincerely believed that there can be no conflict between reasonable cool self-love and conscience but if there be, then what to do in that case? His answer is very clear and definite. We shall let Butler speak himself here also as we have very often done.

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1. G.E. Moore. 'Principia Ethica', Cambridge, 1954, p. 170.

"Whereas in reality the very constitution of our nature requires, that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination; enforce upon ourselves its authority, and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it".<sup>1</sup>

"Thus that principle, by which we survey, and either approve or disapprove our own heart, temper, and actions, is not only to be considered as what is in its turn to have some influence; which may be said of every passion, of the lowest appetites: but likewise as being superior; as from its very nature manifestly claiming superiority over all others: insomuch that you cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of faculty itself: and, to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it".<sup>2</sup>

From the passages quoted above two things are very clear. The first is that Butler interprets virtue wholly by reference to authority which according to him conscience carries in the highest degree. The second thing is that Butler here gives a very clear-cut indication that if there

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 19, p. 14.
  2. do Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 19, p. 64.

by any collision between self-love and conscience, the latter is to be taken as the paramount authority and self-love will always have to bow down before its supreme authority.

Again the view that Butler considered private happiness as the sole ground of virtue is contradicted by the fact that by virtue of the position self-love occupies in the human nature, it cannot finally determine our duty. We shall explain this point in two ways. Firstly, like other particular passions and affections self-love also has to act within its due degree. It has also its limit and bound. Butler himself very clearly says: "Every one of our passions and affections hath its natural stint and bound, which may easily be exceeded; .... This holds as much with regard to self-love as to all other affections".<sup>1</sup> This statement clearly suggests that self-love cannot determine our ultimate duty. It may also be noted here that in this context Butler treats self-love as no better than particular affections. An action done in consequence of self-love may become unnatural if, like particular affections, it goes beyond its limit and bound. Over-indulgence of self-love is as blameworthy as the over-indulgence of any particular passion since in either case the harmony, among the different elements of

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 7, p. 191.

human nature, which is the foundation of virtue, is destroyed. "Over-fondness for a child is not generally thought to be for its own advantage",<sup>1</sup> Butler cites as an example. Thus it is obvious that self-love, which has to work as much within its due limit as any other particular passion cannot be regarded as the sole determinant of virtue. But this is never the case with conscience. There is no occasion for its going beyond its limit and falling into error like other principles of action. Conscience is the over-riding principle and its principal task is to regulate and keep all other principles within their due limit and thus maintain the harmony and the right relation among the different elements in man's nature. Self-love, being also a reasonable principle, can act as guide, no doubt, but only as provisional or rough guide. Butler says: "For the natural authority of the principle of reflection is an obligation the most near and intimate, the most certain and known: whereas the contrary obligation can at the utmost appear no more than probable; .... without the former".<sup>2</sup> It is thus manifest that the final arbiter of our ultimate duty is conscience. Secondly it appears to me as we have already said that Butler treats self-love as no more than a general principle,

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XI, sect. 7, p. 191.

2. do Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 21, pp. 15-16.

superior to particular passions and affections.

Consistently with this view he holds that of the two principles of actions, (1) particular passions and affections and (2) self-love, the latter is a much better guide than the former and also that if men acted on the principle of self-love rather than on particular passions, it would prevent numberless follies and vices in the world. All this Butler himself very clearly says in his preface to the Sermons, which is worth quoting here for the clarification of the point we are at the moment considering. Butler says: "Upon the whole, if the generality of mankind were to cultivate within themselves the principle of self-love; ..... and if self-love were so strong and prevalent, as that they would uniformly pursue this their supposed chief temporal good, without being diverted from it by any particular passion; it would manifestly prevent numberless follies and vices. .... It is indeed by no means the religious or even moral institution of life. Yet, with all the mistakes men would fall into about interest, it would be less mischievous than the extravagances of mere appetite, will, and pleasure: for certainly self-love, though confined to the interest of this life, is, of the two, a much better guide than passion, which has absolutely no bound nor measure, but what is set to it by this self-love, or moral considerations".<sup>1</sup>

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 36, p. 27.

This passage, (quoted above) in which Butler regards self-love only as less mischievous than particular passions and by no means the moral institution of life, removes very clearly all illusions about the position of self-love in the hierarchy of human nature. It proves conclusively that he did not mean to regard it as the highest principle of morality.

Again Butler in his Dissertation on Virtue very explicitly says "that the faculty within us, which is the judge of actions, approves of prudent actions, and disapproves imprudent ones; I say prudent and imprudent actions as such, and considered distinctly from the happiness or misery which they occasion".<sup>1</sup> If this be so, as it is, then self-love cannot be regarded as a principle co-ordinate with conscience. The superiority of self-love lies only in this that conscience approves of those actions which are directed towards its gratification. This is all. Butler nowhere says that self-love has the sole supremacy over the passions and affections. Thus the superiority which self-love possesses is only in a limited sense. This, to our mind, clearly shows that in Butler self-love and conscience are not co-ordinate principles.

Then again the view that Butler reduced all virtue to self-love presents a practical difficulty. There are passages in Butler especially in Sermon XII 'Upon the Love of our Neighbour' where he seems to reduce all virtue to

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Dissertation on Virtue, sect. 11, pp. 406-407.

benevolence and which therefore cannot be explained consistently with the view suggested here. How can we resolve this difficulty? Can we say that Butler is contradicting himself here? We do not think that Butler can be guilty of such a gross contradiction. The point is, as we have been trying to establish, that Butler did not mean to identify virtue completely with self-love, nor did he mean, as we shall try to show in our next chapter, to identify it with benevolence. He is only trying to emphasise that actions done in consequence of self-love are also virtuous actions and he was thus encouraging his audience to work at least on the principle of reasonable cool self-love.

There is one more point to be noticed here. Mr. McPherson in his article referred to above makes a distinction between supposed self-love and real self-love and suggests that Butler's conscience, though opposed to and in conflict with supposed self-love, is identical with real self-love. It seems that even this distinction, which Mr. McPherson points out, does not help him very much to establish the case that Butler identified virtue with self-love. There are two things to be remembered in this connection. The first is that Butler always uses self-love in the sense of reasonable cool self-love. The second is that the whole point, in our opinion, hinges on this question: Is it that an action, done

in consequence of self-love, is considered virtuous even when it violates the authority of conscience ? The answer to this question must be in the negative and with this all attempts to prove that self-love is identical with virtue in Butler break down. The important point to establish is whether an action is or is not in line with the dictate of conscience. An action is virtuous or vicious according as to whether it is or it is not in line with conscience.

Then again there are clear passages in Butler wherein he has shown very clearly that private happiness is not the criterion of virtue.

"In truth, the taking in this consideration totally changes the whole state of the case; and shows, what this author does not seem to have been aware of, that the greatest degree of scepticism which he thought possible will still leave men under the strictest moral obligations, whatever their opinion be concerning the happiness of virtue."<sup>1</sup>

Numerous other such passages from Butler can be cited and we quote ~~above~~ in the foot-note a few which I think will be enough for our present purpose.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 22, p. 16.

Note (1) We may judge and determine, that an action is morally good or evil, before we so much as consider, whether it be interested or disinterested". Vol. II, pref. to Sermons, sect. 34, p. 25.

For all these reasons it seems obvious that it will be all wrong to characterise Butler as an Ethical Eudaemonist as Mr. McPherson does or as one who considered that no act can possibly be a duty unless it will be for our happiness as Professor Prichard believes. Butler no doubt held that private happiness was near and dear to every rational being, yet he never meant that it could be considered as the criterion of virtue. He nowhere states that it is the happiness producing character of acts that makes them right. On the contrary he believes as we have already said that the whole universe - the whole nature including human nature - is so constituted by God that if man acts according to his nature

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- (2) "In all common ordinary cases we see intuitively at first view what is our duty, what is the honest part".  
Vol. II, Sermon VII, sect.14, p.132.
- (3) "that this faculty was placed within to be our proper governor; to direct and regulate all under principles, passions, and motives of action. This is its right and office: thus sacred is its authority. And how often soever men violate and rebelliously refuse to submit to it, for supposed interest which they cannot otherwise obtain, or for the sake of passion which they cannot otherwise gratify; this makes no alteration as to the natural right and office of conscience."  
Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 19, pp.64-65.
- (4) "That your conscience approves of and attests to such a course of action, is itself alone an obligation. Conscience does not only offer itself to show us the way we should walk in, but it likewise carries its own authority with it, that it is our natural guide; the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature: it therefore belongs to our condition of being, it is our duty to walk in that path, and to follow this guide, without looking about to see whether we may not possibly forsake them with impunity."  
Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 6, p. 71.

it will automatically and necessarily lead to his happiness. Therefore all that a man need do, according to him, is to do his duty, which consists in acting according to the dictate of conscience which is the final and ultimate arbiter in morals.

It thus appears clear that despite all the concessions that Butler makes to the favourite passion - self-love, his ethical teaching that virtue does not lie merely in self-love but in the human nature as a whole remains unaffected.

We thus conclude that though, according to Butler, virtue always makes for the personal happiness of the agent, and virtue and interest in the end always coincide, yet virtue is to be pursued not for the sake of the happiness but because it is virtue.

## Chapter IV.

### Virtue and General Happiness in Butler.

We have already seen in our last chapter that virtue cannot, according to Butler, be equated with self-interest. If there is a clash between conscience and interest, the former always overrides. In the present chapter we shall try to see whether virtue can be equated with the promotion of general happiness. In other words we shall try to determine whether Butler considered producing the general happiness as the only virtue. As we have already said that there are a few passages in him which give the impression that he resolves virtue into benevolence, that he considers the promotion of general happiness as the sum of morals. However, before we begin our examination of this view let us quote here some of those passages on which it takes its stand. They are these:

"It is manifest that nothing can be of consequence to mankind or any creature, but happiness." <sup>1</sup>

"From hence it is manifest that the common virtues, and the common vices of mankind, may be traced up to benevolence, or the want of it."<sup>2</sup>

"It might be added, that in a higher and more general way of consideration, leaving out the particular nature of creatures, and the particular circumstances in which they

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 20, p. 224.

2. do. Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 22, p. 226.

are placed, benevolence seems in the strictest sense to include in it all that is good and worthy; all that is good, which we have any distinct particular notion of." <sup>1</sup>

"That mankind is a community, that we all stand in a relation to each other, that there is a public end and interest of society which each particular is obliged to promote, is the sum of morals." <sup>2</sup>

Now it seems to us as Professor Broad<sup>3</sup> also rightly points out that if these statements be accepted at their face value, Butler was a utilitarian; i.e., he thought that happiness is the only intrinsic good and that virtue consists in promoting it. But the question is, should we take these statements at their face value? Are we to hold that Butler preached that the utilitarian rule - that we should so act in any situation as to lead to the greatest happiness or least misery of everybody including the agent himself - should be taken as the rule of life? Butler, no doubt, refers to this rule a number of times, as we have just shown, but it must be observed that even here he is not very clear and distinct. His statements are not without reservation and qualification.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 22, p. 227.
  2. do. do. Sermon IX, sect. 7, p. 155.
  3. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951. p. 81.

In one of his statements quoted above he says "common virtues and the common vices of mankind, may be traced up to benevolence or the want of it." Then again he qualifies his next statement by saying "leaving out the particular nature of creatures and the particular circumstances in which they are placed." We notice also "whatever cautions and restrictions there are, which might require to be considered, if we were to state particularly and at length, what is virtue and right behaviour in mankind." <sup>1</sup>

Butler again in an explanatory note to the same Sermon in which he seems to reduce virtue to benevolence makes his view abundantly clear that the pursuit of general good is not the only virtue. He first utters important cautions: "As we are not competent judges, what is upon the whole for the good of the world, there may be other immediate ends appointed us to pursue, besides that one of doing good, or producing happiness." He continues to say: "Though the good of the creation be the only end of the Author of it, yet he may have laid us under particular obligations, which we may discern and feel ourselves under, quite distinct from a perception, that the observance or violation of them is for the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures." <sup>2</sup>

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 22,  
p.p. 226-227.

2. do. do. p. 226 (foot-note).

After having given these important cautions Butler next proceeds to explain his own ethical theory. Nothing could be clearer than Butler's own words about it. "For there are certain dispositions of mind, and certain actions, which are in themselves approved or disapproved by mankind, abstracted from the consideration of their tendency to the happiness or misery of the world; approved or disapproved by reflection, by that principle within, which is the guide of life, the judge of right and wrong. . . . . Fidelity, honour, strict justice, are themselves approved in the highest degree, abstracted from consideration of their tendency. . . . thus much however is certain, that the things now instanced in, and numberless others, are approved or disapproved by mankind in general, in quite another view than as conducive to the happiness or misery of the world." <sup>1</sup>

These unambiguous and categorical assertions of Butler are, to our mind, quite sufficient to dispel any illusion that he advocated the utilitarian rule as the guide of life.

It is not only in the foot-notes but also in the body of the Sermons and also in the Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue that Butler suggests that benevolence may be God's sole virtue but clearly it is not man's sole virtue. He says: "We have no clear conception of any positive moral attribute in the

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, pp. 226-227 (foot-note).

supreme Being, but what may be resolved up into goodness." Having said so much with regard to God he proceeds to say: "And, if we consider a reasonable creature or moral agent, without regard to the particular relations and the circumstances in which he is placed; we cannot conceive any thing else to come in towards determining whether he is to be ranked in an higher or lower class of virtuous beings, but the higher or lower degree in which that principle, and what is manifestly connected with it, prevail in him." <sup>1</sup>

This passage is significant in the sense that it makes it clear that even in regard to God; not to speak of men, Butler does not explicitly say that benevolence is His sole virtue. He only says that we have no clear conception of any other attribute, though it must be admitted that he seems inclined to hold that benevolence may be God's sole virtue but not of course man's.

Again Butler makes this view all the more clear and explicit in his Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue which is considered to be an indispensable document for the study of his ethical and moral teaching. The passage in which he emphatically asserts his view and thus removes any ambiguity or misunderstanding about it is thus: "Without enquiring how far, and in what sense, virtue is resolved into benevolence,

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 22, p. 227.

and vice into the want of it; it may be proper to observe, that benevolence, and the want of it, singly considered, are in no sort the whole of virtue and vice. For if this were the case, in the review of one's own character, or that of others, our moral understanding and moral sense would be indifferent to everything, but the degrees in which benevolence prevailed, and the degrees in which it was wanting. That is, we should neither approve of benevolence to some persons rather than to others, nor disapprove injustice and falsehood upon any other account, than merely as an overbalance of happiness was foreseen likely to be produced by the first, and of misery by the second." He then gives an example to explain this point. "Again, suppose one man should, by fraud or violence, take from another the fruit of his labour, with intent to give it to a third, who he thought would have as much pleasure from it as would balance the pleasure which the first possessor would have had in the enjoyment, and his vexation in the loss of it; suppose also that no bad consequences would follow: yet such an action would surely be vicious". He then proceeds to say: "The fact then appears to be, that we are constituted so as to condemn falsehood, unprovoked violence, injustice, and to approve of benevolence to some preferably to others, abstracted from all consideration, which conduct is likeliest to produce an overbalance of happiness or misery. And therefore, were the Author of nature

to propose nothing to himself as an end but the production of happiness, were his moral character merely that of benevolence; yet ours is not so. . . . The happiness of the world is the concern of him, who is the Lord and the Proprietor of it: nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavour to promote the good of mankind in any ways, but those which he has directed; that is indeed in all ways not contrary to veracity and justice." <sup>1</sup> Sir David Ross while quoting with approval the above passage from Butler's Dissertation on Virtue remarks: "I may be allowed to reinforce these criticisms of Utilitarianism by quoting some words from the most sagacious, if not the most consistent or systematic, of the British Moralists. . In his ripest work on ethics, the Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, Butler indicates more clearly than in the Sermons his distrust of the view which treats zeal for the general good as the only virtue. These weighty words of Butler's answer better to what we really think on moral questions, than a theory which makes the production of good at all costs the only duty."<sup>2</sup>

Butler is not satisfied even with those observations which we have quoted above. He goes even so far as to assert that "imagining the whole of virtue to consist in singly aim-

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Dissertation on Virtue, sects. 12, 13, 16, pp. 407,408,410.
  2. Sir David Ross. 'Foundations of Ethics', Oxford, 1939, pp. 77-79.

ing at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state" is a mistake, "than which none can be conceived more terrible".<sup>1</sup>

In the face of such emphatic assertions especially that in the Dissertation on Virtue, the view that Butler advocated a utilitarian rule of life cannot be maintained.

We shall not stop here. We shall proceed further to examine this question in some detail in the light of Butler's general ethical and moral teaching. The first thing which strikes us here is that the view that Butler considers benevolence as the only virtue and thus advocates a utilitarian rule of life involves a logical difficulty. Butler's main thesis is, as has already been pointed out, that virtue lies in acting according to the law of human nature. This law of human nature means again the law of the whole nature and not any one element of it. Now if it is held that Butler resolved all virtue into benevolence, it would mean identifying virtue with a part of human nature. Benevolence is only one element, though an important element of human nature, and obviously cannot be taken as the whole of nature. Thus the view that Butler reduced the entire contents of morality to benevolence must be rejected. It goes counter to his fundamental teaching - virtue lies in following human nature as a whole.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Dissertation on Virtue, sett. 15, pp. 409-410.

It may be pointed out against this argument that Butler always argues that we must always act according to conscience. But conscience is also one principle, though superior even to benevolence but none-the-less only one principle. This is undoubtedly true. But in reply it may be said, as we have already pointed out elsewhere, that conscience is the highest principle. It is in kind and in nature supreme over all others. Unlike the voice of benevolence, the voice of conscience is the voice of the whole nature of man. It is the voice of the total nature of man, not in the sense of the sum of the different principles but in the sense of a system or constitution. Thus the voice of conscience, unlike the voice of benevolence, is the voice of the whole character of man.

Again we can explain the same point in a slightly different way. The view that Butler advocates utilitarianism as the only rule of conduct ignores a fundamental point in his ethical teaching. Butler has repeatedly said that virtue lies in the harmony of the different principles of action, especially of self-love and benevolence. If it is so, as it is, then virtue cannot consistently and logically be identified with either of them alone. A character is not denominated virtuous or vicious from the predominance or lack of either benevolence or self-love taken singly, but from the harmony or disharmony of both. Butler says: "Of the degree in which affections and the principles of action; considered in themselves, prevail, we

have no measure." Immediately before that in the same passage he also says: "Love of our neighbour then must bear some proportion to self-love, and virtue to be sure consists in the due proportion."<sup>1</sup> Consistently with this view of virtue which Butler always and everywhere propounds any interpretation that he considered benevolence as the only virtue must be wrong. Such an interpretation cannot be maintained without causing violence to his fundamental ethical theory, namely that virtue consists in the harmony of human nature. Furthermore, in deciding whether or not Butler reduced virtue to benevolence we must always bear in mind one very important point, namely the method which Butler follows in his works. We have already seen in our last chapter on 'Virtue and Self-interest' how Butler exalts the principle of self-love so much as to seem to make it co-ordinate with conscience and exclude benevolence altogether from the dual sovereignty. Not only that, as we have already shown, he in his 'cool-hour' passage, already quoted, seems to go even so far as to subordinate conscience itself to self-love. Now when he returns to the discussions of benevolence in the Sermons 'Upon the Love of our Neighbour' he exaggerates benevolence and in his exaggeration of this principle he goes so far especially in Sermon XII, that he seems to identify it completely with virtue. But from

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 9, p. 217.

this emphasis we should not jump to the conclusion that Butler considers promotion of general happiness as the only virtue, as we have shown in our last chapter that from his considerable emphasis on self-love we should not come to the conclusion that he reduced virtue to self-interest. It was Butler's typical method or we can say his technique to exalt very highly the principle which was in hand and to our mind this accounts for a good deal of confusion in regard to his ethical teaching. Thus it seems quite obvious that it is just a matter of special emphasis which Butler is laying here on the agreement between virtue and happiness. He is only demonstrating to his audience the correspondence between virtue and altruism as he does elsewhere between virtue and self-love. In short Butler is only exalting benevolence here and is not equating it with the general happiness.

Again, as we have always been trying to suggest that to arrive at truth on any controversial point in Butler, or any other philosopher, we should not take his statements piecemeal or at their face value. Much confusion about him arises also from our taking his statements in isolation from their proper and appropriate contexts. It is interesting to observe here that almost all the statements of Butler, wherein he apparently seems to preach that the promotion of happiness is the only end of virtue, are to be found in his second Sermon 'Upon the Love of our Neighbour' where he is recommending to

his audience the practice of benevolence, in which, as Professor Broad<sup>1</sup> says, people of his time were sadly lacking. The only other place where we come across one such statement is his Sermon 'Upon forgiveness of Injuries' where also he is practically advocating the same principle. Butler does not repeat this idea anywhere else, which suggests that he did not seem to equate virtue with benevolence, because an author is apt to repeat and thus emphasise a point if he wants to treat it as fundamental, and wants his readers to pay attention to it. Thus, if Butler's method of explaining any principle, and the proper contexts in which he makes his statements, be borne in mind there is no doubt that it should be obvious to anybody who cares to understand him that he never meant to regard benevolence as the only virtue.

It may also be useful to point out here that Professor Sidgwick in a foot-note seems to suggest that Butler does not notice any possible want of harmony between benevolence and conscience in his first Sermon and then later changes his view in the 'Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue'. He says: "It may be interesting to notice a gradual change in Butler's view on this important point. In the first of his Sermons on Human Nature, published some years before the Analogy, he does not notice, any more than Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, any possible

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1. C.D. Broad, 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951.  
p. 81.

want of harmony between Conscience and Benevolence. A note to Sermon XII, however, seems to indicate a stage of transition between the view of the first Sermon and the view of the Dissertation."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Mossner also seems inclined to agree with Professor Sidgwick when he remarks: "Butler's closing admission in the Dissertation of the actual divergence in practice between the supreme faculty of conscience and the lesser faculty of benevolence marks the beginning of that distinction between 'intuitional' and utilitarian ethical theory, later of great importance in Paley and Bentham. Both sides of the debate appear inconsistently in Butler's works. In the Sermons he had held that the idea of benevolence included the utmost that man can do for man, the giving of happiness, a passage, that strictly interpreted, is very nearly as 'utilitarian' as Paley's famous definition of virtue. .... But Butler's contrary statement, (in the later Dissertation) indicates that he really regarded himself as an 'intuitionist' though he might be willing to grant that God is utilitarian."<sup>2</sup>

But a little reflection makes it clear that no such change seems to have taken place in Butler's ethical theory. The reasons for this are the following:

It has already been said above that Butler, in his anxiety to emphasise benevolence, no doubt, made a few such statements

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1. Henry Sidgwick. 'The methods of Ethics', London, 1901, p. 86 (foot-note).

2. E.C. Mossner. 'Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason', New York, 1936, p. 120.

as give the impression that he identified virtue with altruism. He probably himself apprehended some ambiguity about it and lest his emphasis on benevolence be misunderstood by his more careless readers, he appended a foot-note, already quoted above, to the same Sermon XII and in which he makes his view sufficiently clear that benevolence does not exhaust the entire contents of morality. It might be argued that the foot-note represents Butler's second thought. But we see no good evidence to suppose that the foot-note represents his second thought or that it is an improvement upon the theory which he advocates in the body of the Sermons. As we have already pointed out in Chapter I the preface and the foot-notes which Butler adds to the second edition of his Sermons should not be understood to mean that Butler's ethical theory underwent any change. These additions are only by way of explanation and clarification. Their sole purpose is to dispel obscurities and ambiguities about which there was much complaint by his readers when his first edition came out in 1726. The foot-note is thus just explanatory and nothing more. Butler himself refers to this fact when he says: "Thus much however will be allowed, that general criticisms concerning obscurity considered as a distinct thing from confusion and perplexity of thought, as in some cases there may be ground for them; so in others, they may be nothing more at the bottom than complaints, that everything is not to be understood with the same ease that some things are." <sup>1</sup>

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, pref. to Sermons, sect. 4, p. 4.

Again we do not find sufficient evidence to suppose that even in the Dissertation on Virtue Butler's ethical view underwent any change. Simply because there is a long interval between the publication of the Sermons (1726) and that of the Analogy (1736) to which the Dissertation on Virtue is an appendix, is no proof of the fact that Butler changed his view in his later work. There is, however, no doubt, that Butler is more emphatic in arguing against the utilitarian view in his Dissertation than in his Sermons. But the immediate reason of this emphasis, as it seems to us, was Hutcheson's 'Inquiry into Beauty and Virtue' the first edition of which came out just one year before the first appearance of Butler's Sermons and in which he had identified virtue with benevolence. It should be remembered here that Shaftesbury had also identified the two and it is needless to say that Butler was very well acquainted with this, but it seems he was then too much occupied with demolishing the Hobbsian theory of universal selfishness, which was then uppermost in his mind, to pay any attention to correcting the ethical theory of identifying virtue with benevolence. But when Hutcheson's 'Inquiry' came out in 1725 Butler's attention became drawn to it. But then it was too late for him to make any special reference to this point in his Sermons which had already been preached. But somehow, despite his foot-notes which he added to the second edition of his Sermons, the fear that careless readers might be misled into identifying virtue with benevolence lingered in his mind.

It is probably this fear which finds expression when Butler says that "But some of great and distinguished merit have, expressed themselves in a manner, which may occasion some danger, to careless readers, .... more terrible."<sup>1</sup> Butler probably out of courtesy avoids mentioning the names of the authors but we may safely assume that the authors here referred to are Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. Butler therefore in order to remove any confusion and misunderstanding on the part of his readers on the problem of the relation between virtue and benevolence makes some very clear and emphatic arguments in his Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue against identifying virtue with benevolence. This explains why Butler is more emphatic in arguing against the utilitarian principle in his Dissertation than he is in his Sermons. But from this emphasis it would be unjustifiable to draw the conclusion, as Professor Sidgwick and Mr. Mossner seem to do, that Butler changed his view in his Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue.

Again to hold that Butler reduces all virtue to benevolence is to overlook a very important point in him, namely the relation between self-love and benevolence, the coincidence between the private and the public end. In the very first Sermon where Butler is trying to enunciate the different principles of human nature, he points out very clearly that "I

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Dissertation on Virtue, sect. 15, pp. 409-410.

must however remind you that though benevolence and self-love are different; though the former tends most directly to public good, and the latter to private: yet they are so perfectly coincident, that the greatest satisfactions to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in a due degree; and that self-love is one chief security of our right behaviour towards society". He goes further and says that their relation is such "that we can scarce promote one without the other, is equally a proof that we were made for both."<sup>1</sup> This clearly shows that according to Butler self-love and benevolence involve each other and conscience very naturally accepts both the principles as virtuous. Thus consistently with this doctrine, which Butler advocates everywhere, he cannot identify virtue with benevolence alone without becoming contradictory and inconsistent.

Again when we come to Butler's 'Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue' we find the same principle being followed. Here also in his discussion on self-love he admits prudence as a virtue. He first defines prudence: "It should seem, that a due concern about our own interest or happiness, and a reasonable endeavour to secure and promote it, which is, I think, very much the meaning of the word 'prudence' in our language; it should seem, that this is virtue, and the contrary behaviour faulty and blamable: since, in the calmest way of reflection, we approve

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon I, sect. 5,  
p. 38.

of the first, and condemn the other conduct, both in ourselves and others." Having thus defined and discussed prudence at some length Butler concludes: "From these things it appears, that prudence is a species of virtue, and folly of vice".<sup>1</sup> Then when he turns to his discussion of benevolence he regards it as a virtue though not the only virtue. In fact Butler's main emphasis in the Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue has been to show that benevolence is not the only virtue, it is not the only end to be pursued. This clearly shows that Butler follows the same method, the same trend, throughout his work. He accepts both self-love and benevolence as virtuous in his Dissertation as he does in his Sermons but he does not identify virtue with either of these two principles completely. For all these reasons we hold that the fundamental ethical teaching of Butler is the same throughout his work, and there is absolutely no reason for thinking that he changed the ethical view which he had sketched in his Sermons, even at the more mature age at which he wrote his Dissertation on Virtue.

In the interests of further clarification it may be useful to distinguish here Butler's moral philosophy from that of Paley's moral philosophy. Paley defines virtue as "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness. According to this definition,

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, 'Dissertation on Virtue', sects. 8 & 10, pp. 404, 406.

'the good of mankind' is the subject, 'the will of God' the rule and 'everlasting happiness' the motive of human virtue."<sup>1</sup> According to Butler virtue consists in following human nature as a whole. Consistently with this theory he regards the pursuit of general happiness as virtuous. Nay, he strongly advocates the cultivation of the principle of benevolence. But unlike Paley, Butler does not consider the promotion of general good as the only virtue, the only end to be pursued by man. Again, though according to both Butler and Paley rewards and punishments are annexed to right and wrong acts respectively, Paley as opposed to Butler holds that the motive for obedience to the rule of right is derived from the consideration of rewards and punishments to be bestowed in future. Paley himself makes this point very clear in Chapter III, Book 2. He says: "Let it be remembered, that to be obliged, 'is to be urged by a violent motive, resulting from the command of another'. And then let it be asked, why am I obliged to keep my word? And the answer will be, because I am 'urged to do so by a violent motive', (namely, the expectation of being after this life rewarded, if I do, or punished for it, if I do not) 'resulting from the command of another', (namely, of God). ... Therefore, private happiness is our motive and the will of God our rule."<sup>2</sup> According to Butler, on the other hand, hope of

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1. William Paley. 'Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy', 11th edition, corrected, Vol. I, Book I, Chap. VII, p.41.

2. do. do. do. Book II, Chap. III, pp. 59-60.

reward and fear of punishment are no criterions for virtue. According to him actions are rewarded because they are virtuous, not vice versa.

It seems that Paley defines right in the sense of egoism. The promotion of private happiness, the hope of reward and fear of punishment in the next life is the motive for virtue according to him. But he subsequently turns out to be a utilitarian. He begins to enquire into the tendency of an action to promote or to diminish the general happiness.

In Book II, Chapter V Paley says, "that the method of coming at the will of God concerning any action, by the light of nature, is to inquire into the tendency of that action to promote or to diminish the general happiness."<sup>1</sup> As opposed to this view Butler holds that actions are in themselves approved or disapproved by mankind apart from any consideration of their tendency to the happiness or misery of the world.

From the above it is clear that Paley is manifestly a utilitarian and as opposed to him Butler is obviously an intuitionist. According to Paley the value of an action depends on the advantages which it brings with it. He says: "Actions are to be estimated by their tendency. Whatever is expedient is right. It is the utility of any moral rule alone

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1. William Paley. 'Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy', 11th edition corrected, Vol. I, Book II, Chapter V, p. 70.

which constitutes the obligation of it".<sup>1</sup> According to Butler on the other hand virtue does not consist in the mere calculation of actions with regard to their external advantages. These are not the sole consideration in judging the merit of an action. According to him, "virtue consists in a regard to what is right and reasonable, as being so; in regard to veracity, justice, charity, in themselves."<sup>2</sup> In short Paley makes virtue depend on the external consequences of actions. Butler, on the other hand, makes it depend upon the due operation of the human constitution. Paley is thus a utilitarian moralist, Butler, on the other hand, is a moralist of conscience.

It may further be pointed out here that the difference between Butler and Paley in regard to their attitude towards virtue depends very largely on the difference in their conception of human nature. Paley does not attach any great importance and dignity to human nature. He does not seem to recognise any distinction between the higher and the lower, between the superior and the inferior principles of human mind. On the contrary he assumes that men's passions and affections are the same in kind, though they differ in continuance and intensity. Butler on the other hand attaches so much dignity to human nature that he bases his entire conception of virtue on

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1. William Paley. 'Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy', 11th edition corrected, Vol. I, Chap. VI, p. 70.

2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part I, Chap. III, sect. 19, pp. 77-78.

it. According to him, as already explained elsewhere, there is a hierarchy of higher and lower principles and there is a difference of kind among them, quite apart from their difference in strength.

Dr. Rashdall in his article 'Bishop Butler' makes an observation which supports our view that he was not a utilitarian. He says: "When I taught Moral Philosophy in Oxford, I always recommended men to begin by reading Butler's Sermons, or some of them, and Mill's Utilitarianism as the typical representation of the two classical schools of Moral Philosophy. Butler is the typical champion of the Authority of conscience - the typical intuitionist."<sup>1</sup> We may sum up our discussion of this chapter by saying that from what we have said above it seems clear that though Butler recognises the duty of benevolence, he recognises that the pursuit of the happiness of mankind is virtuous, yet certainly he never means to regard the promotion of general good as the only virtue. It appears quite obvious from the general trend of his Sermons that he holds that there are certain obligations which are not comprised in benevolence.

Besides, Butler holds that the situations and the circumstances in which men are placed in the world are so

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1. Rashdall Hastings. 'Bishop Butler', 'The Modern Churchman', Vol. XVI, No. 12, March 1927, p. 689.

various, and knowledge is so limited, that it is extremely difficult to determine what actions will lead to the promotion of general happiness. Butler himself clearly says: "the whole end, for which God made, and thus governs the world, may be utterly beyond the reach of our faculties: there may be somewhat in it as impossible for us to have any conception of, as for a blind man to have a conception of colours."<sup>1</sup> Thus our data is so insufficient that we cannot reckon and tell in a particular situation what actions would result in most happiness. The notion of duty therefore cannot according to Butler arise from the mere contemplation of actions with regard to their external result (promotion of the general happiness of mankind) but must arise from the very constitution of man's nature. The requirements of the promotion of the happiness of mankind cannot all be understood and fulfilled by us in the circumstances in which we are placed, but we can all understand and also obey the voice of our conscience, which is the voice of our entire constitution.

It may be asked: What, then, in Butler's view, is the ultimate relation between virtue and the happiness of others? Butler does not seem to give any clear answer to this question. But it seems to us that this is not a question separate from

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part I, Chap. II, sect. 3, p. 50.

and independent of the question: What is the ultimate connection between virtue and private happiness ? Two points should be remembered in this connection. First, according to Butler, who believed in the organic nature of society, private good and public good are not opposed to each other. They involve each other and we cannot promote the one without the other. Secondly, according to him, a due concern about our own happiness and a reasonable endeavour to secure and promote it is as virtuous as is the promotion of the happiness of mankind. If we bear in mind these two points, we can see that in Butler the two problems - (1) virtue and private good (2) virtue and public good - virtually and ultimately resolve themselves into one, namely virtue and happiness, and in order to point out the ultimate connection between these two Butler leaves the field of morality and passes on to that of religion. Perhaps he would say, as we have already pointed out, that God has so made the universe and all things in it are so constituted and adapted to one another that if men simply act suitably to that nature which God has given them, there would be much happiness in the world and it would be an ideal place to live in. Butler strongly believed that in the divine moral government of the world virtuous actions invariably make for the happiness of men. "virtue as such, naturally procures considerable advantages to the virtuous, and vice as such, naturally occasions great inconvenience and even misery to the

vicious in very many instances."<sup>1</sup> If virtuous actions are sometimes followed by misery or vicious actions by happiness this is not because they are virtuous or vicious but because of accidental causes,<sup>2</sup> Because whether or not benevolence is the sole virtue of God, though Butler seems inclined to hold that it is,<sup>3</sup> he certainly had a "disposition to make the good, the faithful, the honest man happy."<sup>4</sup>

We thus conclude that in spite of all the emphasis which Butler lays on the promotion of general human happiness, virtue, according to him, does not wholly consist in benevolence and is not to be pursued merely for that purpose but because it is virtue and consists in following human nature as a whole. Butler's ethics is thus intuitional and not utilitarian: like Paley's.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part I, Chap. III, sect. 13, p. 72.
  2. do. do. Part I, Chap. III, sect. 38, p. 93.
  3. do. Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 22, p. 227.
  4. do. Vol. I, Part I, Chap. II, sect. 3, p. 50.

## Chapter V.

### Virtue as an End in itself in Butler.

We have already seen that according to Butler virtue consists neither wholly in self-love nor wholly in benevolence. Conscience, when approving or disapproving an action, considers both but is not identified with either. In this Chapter we shall first try to determine the nature of conscience. This is necessary for two reasons. (1) It is the most important principle, the very core of Butler's ethical doctrine. (2) There is a good deal of controversy among the writers on moral philosophy about its nature. For a correct interpretation of Butler's moral teaching therefore it is essential to discuss this question in some detail. Secondly after having determined the nature of conscience we shall try to explain Butler's doctrine of virtue which is its own end and is to be pursued for its own sake.

Butler defines conscience thus: "There is a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions. We are plainly constituted such sort of creatures as to reflect upon our own nature. The mind can take a view of what passes within itself, its propensions, aversions, passions, affections, as respecting such objects, and in such degrees; and of the several actions consequent thereupon. In this survey it approves of one, disapproves of another, and towards a third is affected in neither of these ways, but is quite indifferent.

This principle in man, by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions, is conscience; ..... so as to take in more".<sup>1</sup> Again he says: "But there is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his external actions: which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust: which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him, the doer of them accordingly".<sup>2</sup>

From the passages just quoted it is clear that in Butler's treatment of conscience, two aspects are very conspicuous. They are (1) cognitive and (2) authoritative. To these two Professor Broad adds a third aspect also. According to him conscience is also an active principle.<sup>3</sup> We shall, however, explain briefly these two important aspects of conscience one by one. We shall first deal with the cognitive aspect. Conscience as reflection is

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon I, sects. 7,8, pp.41-42.
  2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 10, p.59.
  3. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951, p. 76.

that faculty which judges the actions, characters and intentions of men from the point of view of their rightness and wrongness, goodness and badness. It distinguishes a deliberate act from an unintentional act. It makes allowances and takes the circumstances of men into account. When passing judgment upon actions conscience also considers and takes into account the **character** and disposition of the agent. After all no one can expect the same standard of behaviour from a child and from a grown up man, from a savage and from a civilized man, and from a lunatic and from a sane man. Butler's conscience considers all these and is thus a highly reasonable and reflective faculty. Professor Rashdall probably ignores this aspect of conscience in Butler when he observes: "He (Butler) assumes that our first intuitive, half-instinctive judgment upon the most complicated problem of conduct - prior to any reflection upon probable consequences, - will be infallibly true. He is disposed to look upon conscience as a sort of penny-in-the-slot machine. Not a moment's thought is necessary, put in your question: out jumps the answer ready-made, complete, cut and dried. Here he is obviously wrong".<sup>1</sup> Professor Rashdall overlooks the fact that conscience in Butler does a good deal of ratiocination and reflection before it passes any judgment about the rightness or wrongness of an act. It takes into

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1. Rashdall Hastings. 'Bishop Butler', The Modern Churchman, Vol. XVI, No. 12, March, 1927, p. 691.

account the calculations of all inferior principles before giving its final verdict in regard to any particular course of action.

It may be pointed out here that although it would seem that an action to be judged as right must have the approval of conscience, in actual life it is not always appealed to. It is not the case that in practical life every action is brought before conscience for its determination as right or wrong. Butler's conscience is, as Dr. Joad points out,<sup>1</sup> like a good headmaster or business manager who can absent himself from his school or business in the reasonable assurance that everything will go on in just the same way as it would have done had he been present. The fact is that Butler recommends and argues for the formation of habits or virtue.<sup>2</sup> When virtue becomes habitual and when the proper temper of it is acquired, then virtuous actions become easy, they become more or less automatic and instinctive. In such cases even action done in consequence of particular passions, not to speak of self-love and benevolence, are considered and taken as right because when habits of virtue are formed these do not violate the authority of conscience. Professor Broad puts this case mathematically when he says: "In a well-bred

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1. C.E.M. Joad. 'Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics', London, 1938, p. 200.

2. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part I, Chapter V, especially sects. 24 & 25, pp. 121-122.

and well-trained man a great deal of this organisation has become habitual, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he does the right things without having to think whether or why they are right. It is only in the hundredth specially perplexing or specially alluring situation that an explicit appeal to conscience has to be made".<sup>1</sup>

We now come to the authoritative aspect of conscience in Butler. In discussing this aspect he points out that conscience being the highest principle in the constitution of man it carries supreme authority along with it. By attributing supreme authority to conscience Butler means that its verdicts or pronouncements in matters of conduct are final. The very fact that conscience approves or disapproves a particular course of conduct constitutes a sufficient reason or as Professor Duncan-Jones says 'a prepotent reason'<sup>2</sup> for taking or not taking that course of conduct. Briefly Butler regarded conscience as the highest court of appeal. Then again it is also clear from this that conscience also carries obligation along with its authority. By its approbation or disapprobation of an action conscience puts us under an obligation to do or not to do it. The authority and obligation constitute part of the notion of conscience in Butler.

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1. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951, p. 79.

2. By 'prepotent reason' Professor Duncan-Jones means not merely a reason, not even a decisive reason merely but a reason of such a nature that it outweighs all contrary reasons. Vide Butler's Moral Philosophy, a volume of the Pelican Philosophy series, p. 77.

He himself very clearly says: "Take in then that authority and obligation, which is a constituent part of this reflex approbation, and it will undeniably follow, though a man should doubt of everything else, yet, that he would still remain under the nearest and most certain obligation to the practice of virtue; an obligation implied in the very idea of virtue, in the very idea of reflex approbation".<sup>1</sup>

It may be pointed out here that though conscience carries the natural authority with it, nay though it carries the supreme authority, it does not always carry the necessary power to enforce its authority, with the result that in actual life it is often overpowered either by self-love or by benevolence or by the particular passions just as self-love and benevolence are sometimes over-powered for the same reason by the particular passions and affections. This is what Butler seems to suggest when he says 'had it strength as it has right etc.' This, however, does not affect the moral right of conscience. Its authority is de jure but not de facto. The fact that conscience does not always have its full say, is often over-powered, does not mean that it forfeits its right to make pronouncements in matters of conduct.

It may be interesting to compare here Butler's conscience with that of reason in Plato's Republic. Plato assigns the same sovereignty to reason in the soul of man as Butler does

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Pref. to Sermons, sect. 22, p. 16.

to conscience in the hierarchy of the human constitution. Like conscience in Butler, reason in Plato is that "which rules and issues these precepts, that which possesses in itself knowledge of what is advantageous to each and all of those three principles".<sup>1</sup> Again just as according to Butler conscience, being the supreme principle in human nature, should rule, we find the same idea very clearly stated in Plato where it is asked, "Then is it not befitting that the rational part should rule, inasmuch as it is wise and has foresight for the whole soul, and that the spirited part should be its subject and ally?" and the answer is, "Certainly".<sup>2</sup> Thus we see that except for the difference in terminology Butler is in complete agreement with Plato in attributing sovereignty to the highest principle of human nature.

There is also another very important point about conscience which we should like to consider here. Butler more than once has referred to conscience as 'the viceroy of God within us'. He holds that it is our natural guide and has been assigned to us by the Author of our nature, i.e. God. Again Butler presses this point strongly and emphatically in his Analogy when he says: "And thus, God having given mankind a moral faculty, the object of which is

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1. Plato. 'The Republic', Eng. Trans. by A.D. Lindsay, 1954, p. 131. (Everyman's Library, No. 64).

2. do do do p. 131.

actions, and which naturally approves some actions as right, and of good desert, and condemns others as wrong, and of ill desert; that he will, finally and upon the whole, reward the former and punish the latter, is not an assertion of an abstract truth, but of what is as mere a fact, as his doing so at present would be".<sup>1</sup> It seems that by attributing divine origin to conscience Butler probably means to suggest that the voice of conscience is not an arbitrary voice of an arbitrary principle, but it is the voice of a principle of eternal righteousness. In other words it is the voice of an eternal righteous Being. By attributing divine origin to conscience Butler is contemplating the Deity through the moral nature of man and by emphasising our obedience to conscience he is vindicating the truth that God who possesses the highest moral virtues is the only proper object of human affections. We shall further develop this point when we compare Butler with Madhusūdana. However from what we have said it is clear that Butler's ethics, through his doctrine of conscience, reaches its climax and final completion in religion. Spooner observes in this connection: "Butler assumes that the God whom conscience reveals to us is the perfect expression or impersonation of that moral law which we find written in our hearts; the absolute embodiment of all those qualities which we feel ought to prevail in ourselves,

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part II, Chapter VIII, sect. 26, p. 369.

and which call forth our enthusiastic admiration as we contemplate them when exemplified in our fellow-men".<sup>1</sup>

We have considered Butler's view about conscience in its different aspects. We shall now consider it in some detail in the light of the various criticisms that have been made of it.

We shall first consider Professor Whewell's view of Butler's treatment of conscience. He points out that Butler did not mean to treat conscience as a faculty, separate and independent of the rational faculty. He holds that this is an erroneous view prevalent among many and is due mainly to Butler's own use of the 'Supreme' or 'Supremacy' to describe conscience. We shall let Professor Whewell himself speak about it. He says: "But it will be evident to an attentive reader, that such a supremacy of conscience was not intended by Butler. He did not hold an original and independent faculty of conscience, whose decisions were to be accepted as rules of right action. With him, conscience was a faculty, if you choose, but a faculty, as reason is a faculty; a power by exercising which we may come to discern truths, not a repository of truth already collected in a visible shape. Conscience, indeed, is the reason, employed about questions of right and wrong, and accompanied with the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation which by the nature of man, cling

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1. W.A. Spooner. 'Bishop Butler', London, 1901, p. 118.

inextricably to his apprehension of right and wrong".<sup>1</sup> He further says: "If conscience be the supreme judge of right and wrong, whose conscience is to be taken?"<sup>2</sup> He also questions the appropriateness of the use of the word 'Supreme' for conscience which he considers, as has already been said, as the root cause of the erroneous view that conscience is an independent faculty.

Mr. Townsend seems inclined to hold the same view when he says: "Conscience' is used by Butler as a synonym of 'the principle of reflection'". A little later he again says: "The reader of the Sermons, however, need be in no doubt that the author means to point to an internal principle of organization, whether he calls it conscience or a principle of reflection".<sup>3</sup>

Professor Raphael<sup>4</sup> also in an article seems inclined to maintain a similar view of Butler's conscience.

It does not seem true that Butler held conscience to be mere reason or reflection. It is no doubt true that he does not clearly explain the nature of conscience or the moral faculty. He leaves it very vague and remains indefinite on

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1. W. Whewell. 'Butler's Three Sermons on Human Nature and Dissertation on Virtue', Cambridge, 1848, p. 9, Introduction.
  2. do do do p. 8, Introduction.
  3. H.G. Townsend. 'The Synthetic Principle in Butler's Ethics', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. xxxvii, No. 1, October 1926, p. 83.
  4. D.D. Raphael. 'Bishop Butler's view of conscience', Philosophy, Vol. XXIV, No. 90, July 1949.

this important problem, even in his later work 'The Analogy'. Call it moral reason, moral sense or divine reason, though he himself calls it 'conscience'. It is also true that Butler often calls it 'the principle of reflection' which gives the impression that conscience is mere reflection and not an original and independent faculty. But then it must not be forgotten that he also at many places calls it 'the approving or disapproving faculty' which shows that he recognises an element of emotion as included in the idea of it, as is the element of reason. The fact appears to be that Butler took the existence of conscience as an established fact and he felt certain that everybody would understand what he means by conscience or moral faculty. In the very first Sermon he says: "It cannot possibly be denied, that there is this principle of reflection or conscience in human nature".<sup>1</sup> Again in his Dissertation on Virtue he says: "It is manifest great part of common language, and of common behaviour over the world, is formed upon supposition of such a moral faculty".<sup>2</sup> As Butler assumed the existence of conscience and believed that this could not be denied by anybody he thought it probably unnecessary to go into the detailed analysis of it, to show what processes were involved in it. Moreover the controversy between feeling and reason had not arisen when Butler delivered

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon I, sect. 8, p. 42.

2. do do Vol. I, Dissertation on Virtue sect. 2, p. 399.

his Sermons. However, it appears obvious from Butler's various statements that conscience combined in it both reason and feeling. Conscience, according to Butler, also reflects in difficult cases. It does a good deal of ratiocination. It takes into account the circumstances and the capacities of men and then determines whether or not an action is in conformity with nature. After all these are over it accords its approval or disapproval in regard to a particular act. It may also be pointed out here that while bestowing approval or disapproval conscience is not guided by any end as self-love or benevolence are, for God alone knows the end if there is any which it is its function to promote. Thus the element of the feeling of approval or disapproval is, as it appears to us, more important; at least it is not less important than the element of reason or reflection in regard to the rightness or wrongness of a particular action. Thus it appears quite obvious that Butler did not mean that conscience is just a synonym of reason. Reason is, no doubt, a very important aspect of conscience, or, we should say, an essential aspect of it, but as we have already seen it is also an essential aspect of both the inferior principles - self-love and benevolence. Thus reason cannot be identified with conscience any more than it can with self-love and benevolence.

There seems to be another reason why Butler puts so much emphasis on reason. He was acquainted with the moral sense theory of Shaftesbury, though he does not appear to be very

happy about it. Anyway, the influence seems to be there on Butler when he says: "Now obligations of virtue shown, and motives to the practice of it enforced, from a review of the nature of man, are to be considered as an appeal to each particular person's heart and natural conscience: as the external senses are appealed to for the proof of things cognizable by them. Since then our inward feelings, and the perceptions we receive from our external senses, are equally real; to argue from the former to life and conduct is as little liable to exception, as to argue from the latter to absolute speculative truth".<sup>1</sup> As it appears to us Butler by his emphasis on reason and by calling conscience 'the principle of reflection' is trying to avoid the narrowness of the moral sense theory. He is trying to show that the judgments of conscience are not subjective. They are not based on emotional qualities - pleasure and pain only. He rather wants to show that the pronouncements of conscience are objective and that way he also gives them a touch of universality.

Moreover, that Butler considered conscience as an independent faculty, and not a mere synonym of reason, is also supported by the fact that he believes that reason alone and by itself cannot provide the sole and adequate rule for the guidance of life. He rather apprehends that too much speculation is apt to lead men away from the path of virtue. He

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 3, p. 53.

feels that there is a moral danger in entering into elaborate speculation. He says: "That which is called considering what is our duty in a particular case, is very often nothing but endeavouring to explain it away. Thus those courses, which, if men would fairly attend to the dictates of their own consciences, they would see to be corruption, excess, oppression, uncharitableness; these are refined upon - things were so and so circumstantiated - great difficulties are raised about fixing bounds and degrees: and thus every moral obligation whatever may be evaded. Here is scope, I say, for an unfair mind to explain away every moral obligation to itself".<sup>1</sup> Butler makes this point all the more when he says: "Reason alone, whatever any one may wish, is not in reality a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man, ... upon his heart".<sup>2</sup> These passages clearly show that Butler does not regard reason as the sufficient motive for virtue. On the other hand he regards conscience as the sole determinant of virtue. Thus conscience cannot be treated as mere reason.

Then again a statement which Butler himself makes in Sermon VI 'Upon Compassion' makes it clear that he means to regard conscience as a separate and independent faculty. He says: "In such a compliant state of mind, reason and conscience will have a fair hearing; ... at this season".<sup>3</sup>

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon VII, sect. 14, pp. 132-133.
  2. do. do. do. Sermon V, sect. 4, p. 98.
  3. do. do. do. Sermon VI, sect. 13, p. 119.

Lastly we shall refer to the elastic statement which Butler makes in the Dissertation upon Virtue "Whether called conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason; whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart; or, which seems the truth, as including both".<sup>1</sup> The ambiguity and the elasticity of the sentence leaves the door open for various interpretations and in fact it has been interpreted differently by different people. It seems that Butler's idea probably is that so long as we act according to conscience, which to him was an undeniable fact of experience, it does not matter much what terminology we use for it. But then as it appears to us that the truth also comes out of his lip towards the end of the sentence when he says 'as including both'. As we have pointed out above, conscience according to him includes both reason and feeling. It thus cannot be said to consist in mere reason. It is a moral faculty, a separate and independent faculty.

Thus though in Butler's treatment of moral actions these two words 'reflection' and 'conscience' are usually combined, they unite in order to make moral pronouncement, which, as we said above, is probably the main reason for confusion, but there seems absolutely no reason to think that they are synonymous. Butler feels convinced that reason alone cannot carry

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Dissertation on Virtue, sect. 2, p. 399.

us through whereas conscience, when habitually exercised, acts instinctively without any reflective operation. It must be borne in mind here that Butler always emphasises the cultivation of virtue so that it may gradually become habitual. Mr. Rogers also makes an observation in this connection which throws some light on the problem we are discussing. He says: " 'Conscience', which since Bishop Butler has shown a tendency to displace 'reason' in their terminology, is for its more enlightened advocates a form of reason; but under the influence of the moral sense conception it becomes a special form, or 'faculty'. And on the whole the change perhaps is an improvement. At least the term 'conscience' calls attention to the fact that moral reason has a peculiar subject matter which sets it apart from other rational pronouncements; and until this is clearly recognized no advance in analysis is possible".<sup>1</sup>

Professor Whewell as we have already indicated above also questions the appropriateness of the use of the word 'supreme' to describe conscience. But there seems absolutely nothing inappropriate about it. The fact is that in Butler's analysis of the human nature the different elements and principles stand in a hierarchical order and conscience being on top of them all, Butler calls it the supreme principle. Being at the head conscience in Butler also has the highest

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1. A.K. Rogers. 'Morals in Review', London, 1927, p. 272.

or supreme authority. This is the sense in which, we think, Butler uses the word 'supreme' and in his own way he seems perfectly justified.

Professor Whewell again while pointing out the inappropriateness of the word 'supreme' argues that since conscience itself is subject to the supreme rule which enjoins all virtue and duty and which is the law of God, it cannot thus have the supreme authority.

This argument loses all its force when we bear in mind the divine origin of conscience. Butler holds that conscience is the mouth-piece of God. God Himself speaks to men through conscience. It was put into man by God to point out to him his duty and to make him do it. Conscience is thus the divine in man. Its law is the same as the law of God. Conscience does not derive its credentials from any higher authority. On the contrary it carries with it its own credentials. Thus there seems nothing wrong in conscience having the supreme authority.

Moreover by using the word 'supreme' Butler probably also means to vindicate and demonstrate the separate and independent existence of the moral faculty or conscience.

We have tried to show that Butler considered conscience as an independent moral faculty, and also that it is the supreme judge in morals as it carries along with it the highest authority. We shall now consider one important question that is generally raised in this connection. It is

often asked, in fact the question is, as we have seen, also raised by Professor Whewell, if all of us have a conscience or moral faculty which tells us what is right or what is wrong in a particular situation, then why are there diversities in moral judgments ? Why is it that our moral judgments differ from individual to individual, from country to country and from age to age ? In such divergences whose conscience is to be taken as supreme ?

It seems that the objection overlooks a very important point that at least potentially the fundamental characteristics of conscience are the same in all individuals. It is not that the conscience of X tells him that Y should do such and such, or that the conscience of Y tells him that X should do such and such. The fact is that when a man's conscience determines an action as right, that action is considered right generally. In other words when the conscience of an individual determines an action as right, that action would be right for everybody in the same situation. This also shows that the distinction between rightness and wrongness which conscience makes is not based upon ~~individual~~ feelings and beliefs. It is on the other hand based on an objective criterion. But since this argument does not get over the difficulty that people's consciences do not agree. we shall pursue this discussion further.

Butler, as it appears to us, was himself well aware of this difficulty and he also seems to have anticipated this

objection when he says, "the appearance there is of some small diversity amongst mankind with respect to this faculty, with respect to their natural sense of moral good and evil; and the attention necessary to survey with any exactness what passes within, have occasioned that it is not so much agreed what is the standard of the internal nature of man, as of his external form. Neither is this last exactly settled".<sup>1</sup> Perhaps because of such objections which, Butler probably anticipated, he avoids using the word 'infallibility'. He never ascribes it to conscience, although it is generally thought that his doctrine implies it. By doing so Butler leaves the door of conscience open for its further education and development. In fact Butler, as it appears, never held that the conscience in all individuals is equally developed. He never means to hold that a child has as developed a conscience as a grown up or that a lunatic has a conscience as developed as that of a sane man, or even that a savage has conscience as fully educated and developed as that of a civilized man. He was quite aware that the internal nature of all men is never quite settled, never equally educated and developed. Thus it seems that so long as the differences are there in the internal nature of man, the diversities in moral judgment will be there.

But Butler held that these differences in the internal

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 2, p. 52.

nature of man do not matter very much. Men are in general very much alike. He says: "Yet we understand one another when we speak of the shape of a human body: so likewise we do when we speak of the heart and inward principles, how far soever the standard is from being exact or precisely fixed".<sup>1</sup>

Collins remarks in this connection: "Butler was prepared to meet the real difficulty which lies upon the threshold of his doctrine, - that conscience is a shifting rule, varying with the various stages of civilisation - with age, with country and even with climate. The standard of the internal nature of man is not 'exactly settled', he admits: neither is that of his external shape and stature. Yet practically we all understand what is meant when we speak of the one or the other. He is even prepared to allow with Wollaston that conscience has its rudimentary stage, and that morality has therefore been progressive. But he is scarcely so bold or so clear on this point as we might wish him to be".<sup>2</sup>

Then again the diversity in our moral judgments is due very largely to circumstances, situations and matters of fact and not so much due to differences in the internal nature of man. Conscience or moral faculty according to Butler does take into account the circumstances, and when these and other matters of fact vary, its moral pronouncements also vary

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 2.  
p. 52.

2. W. Lucas Collins. 'Butler', Edinburgh and London, 1890,  
p. 85. (Blackwood's Philosophical Classics).

accordingly. For instance, we may adopt some criterion in regard to a particular field of moral experience. Subsequently we may have to change the criterion when the scope of the field increases. This does not disprove the fact that conscience is the judge in matters of conduct. This only proves that conscience does not make moral judgments blindly irrespective of any consideration of the situation and the circumstances.

Sir David Ross observes: "Yet on examination the diversity of opinion on moral questions is found to rest not on disagreement about fundamental moral principles, but partly on differences in the circumstances of different societies, and partly on different views which people hold, not on moral questions but on questions of fact".<sup>1</sup>

Professor Taylor also remarks: "There are ultimate moral disagreements, but they only cover a minority of the cases, and even they are, in the main, disagreements about axiomata media, not about principles".<sup>2</sup>

From all these it is clear that the diversity of opinion on moral questions does not contradict Butler's main ethical theory that conscience does provide guidance to men in matters of conduct. It does tell them with regard to a particular course of conduct whether it is right or wrong. It seems true and probably Butler also would have agreed that if the situations and circumstances and other matters of fact be the same, if men be free from bias, prejudices and partialities

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1. Sir W. David Ross. 'Foundations of Ethics', Oxford, 1939, p.18

2. A.E. Taylor. 'Some Features of Butler's Ethics', Mind, Vol. XXXV, New series No. 139, July 1926, p. 288.

which influence and pervert moral judgments, there is no doubt that the pronouncements of a reasonably developed moral faculty or conscience will be the same in almost all cases. Butler says: "For, as much as it has been disputed wherein virtue consists, or whatever ground for doubt there may be about particulars; yet, in general, there is in reality an universally acknowledged standard of it".<sup>1</sup>

We have considered in detail Professor Whewell's view of Butler's treatment of conscience. We shall now consider an important criticism which Sir James Mackintosh makes. He remarks: "The most palpable defect of Butler's scheme is, that it affords no answer to the question, 'What is the distinguishing quality common to all right actions?'. If it were answered, 'Their criterion is, that they are approved and commanded by Conscience', the answer would find that he was involved in a vicious circle; for Conscience itself could be no otherwise defined than as the faculty which approves and commands right actions".<sup>2</sup> This criticism is again repeated by Sir Leslie Stephen.<sup>3</sup> It is necessary to notice a few points in this connection. The first is that Butler considers conscience as the final arbiter on moral questions. It has

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, 'Dissertation on Virtue' sect. 3, P. 399.
  2. Sir James Mackintosh. 'Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy', London 1851, p. 58.
  3. Sir Leslie Stephen. 'History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century', Vol. II, London 1876, p. 50.

the supreme authority. Its pronouncements are ultimate. The very fact that conscience approves an action constitutes sufficient and conclusive reason for doing it. No further reason is to be sought for it. After all we cannot ask the why of everything. We cannot ask the why about the judgments of conscience which are final and ultimate.

Again, it appears that the criticism overlooks a very important point in that it does not consider that ultimately the verdict about the rightness or wrongness of an action depends upon its approval or disapproval of the moral faculty. It is true that Butler does not give any definite criterion of right actions, he does not point to any common quality of right actions. But even if there was one, the question of approval or disapproval remains there. It is not enough that our speculative reason discovers and perceives the common quality of right actions, it is also essential that our moral faculty should approve of them. Thus it seems fairly clear that whatever the criterion for right actions be taken to be, they must finally be approved by conscience - they must bear the seal of approval of the office of conscience. Thus it does not seem to us that Butler's doctrine involves an argument in a circle.

Moreover it must also be borne in mind here that the fact that conscience approves an action should not be taken to mean that it creates morality. Conscience only makes moral actions possible by trying to bring harmony among the

different elements of human nature. But it does not create morality just as the watch does not create the time it measures. Conscience only creates proper environment and atmosphere for virtuous actions. Butler himself says: "That which renders beings capable of moral government, is their having a moral nature, and moral faculties of perception and of action".<sup>1</sup>

We have discussed the nature of conscience in some detail and in this connection we have also examined certain criticisms and objections. We are now in a position to ascertain in what <sup>does</sup> virtue consist according to Butler. What constitutes morality according to him? In the light of what has been said above and also in the previous Chapters we can see clearly that according to Butler virtue does not lie in any external end, it does not lie in the attainment of this or that particular thing or even a set of things. Nor does it lie in the realisation of any one internal principle of human nature. We have seen that virtue consists neither wholly in self-love nor in benevolence. If there is a conflict between these, there is nothing in the nature of either which gives it authority to resolve it. In what does virtue lie then? What is its end? Butler's answer is that virtue lies in acting according to the dictates of conscience. It is only by an appeal to conscience, which is endowed with an overriding authority that the conflict between self-love and

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Dissertation on Virtue, sect. 1, p. 397.

benevolence can be resolved. But it may be asked: is not conscience only one principle of human nature? Have we not just said that virtue does not lie in the realisation of any one internal principle? Are we not contradicting ourselves? In reply it may be said that the contradiction is only apparent. We forget Butler's account of human nature. It is not a mere sum of the different principles of action. It is a system, constitution or hierarchy. Conscience, being the head of the constitution, represents the whole being. Butler's human nature is a polity in which conscience is supreme. Its voice is the voice of the whole character and personality. Considered thus conscience is not merely only one principle of human nature. Life according to it means life according to the whole nature. When Butler says that virtue lies in following conscience he means conscience in this sense. Butler's reply to the question as to the end of virtue is that it is its own end and should therefore be pursued for its own sake.

We thus conclude that according to Butler virtue is an end in itself. It is to be pursued not for the sake of any ulterior end but because it is virtue. While self-love approves an action because it is prudent, benevolence approves it because it is conducive to the happiness of others, but conscience approves it because it is right.

We have concluded the main discussion of the Chapter but before we finally close it we should like, in the interests of further clarification, to bring out one or two more points.

The first is that a conscientious life which Butler advocates is an integrated life, and harmonious because in it all the elements of human nature are well-balanced, well-adjusted and well-unified. In this life an individual is not at the mercy of his desires and inclinations. He is not like a shuttle-cock driven to and fro by them. It is a highly reasonable life. With the further growth and development of conscience a man's life also becomes richer. As his conscience becomes more and more educated, as it learns more and more from past and the present experience, his life also becomes fuller and richer. It becomes more and more illuminated. Besides, in a conscientious life all the elements are so regulated and directed as to realise the end or purpose for which they have been implanted in man by God.

The second point which we want to bring out briefly here is Butler's view on the relation between ethics and religion. We have seen that Butler sometimes leaves the field of morality and passes on to religion. We think it therefore necessary to elucidate this problem a little further.

Butler's conscious purpose seems to be to derive morality from the psychological nature of man, to distinguish the spheres of morality and religion and thus to give the former an independent basis as well as a separate field of speculation. But it appears that despite all his conscious purpose to establish morality on a basis of its own apart from the support of religion Butler himself does not seem to be fully satisfied

with this empirical account of morality, and probably feels that it should have some supernatural basis and support. This view is supported from the whole tenor of Butler's moral philosophy. To understand this position fully it will be useful to remember a few things here. The first is that Butler's whole metaphysical outlook was religious, which in this context means Biblical. As we have seen, he believed in a personal God, endowed with perfect moral virtues. This point by itself does not help us very much because a man may believe in a personal God and yet propound an ethical system independent of religion. But Butler also held that the world is morally ordered and that God is its Moral Governor. He rules the world morally, rewarding virtue but punishing vice in exact proportion. Furthermore, Butler also believed in a future life and held the general doctrine of religion, that our present life is a state of probation for a future one; that we have scope and opportunities for that good and bad behaviour, which God will reward and punish hereafter. In Sermon II Butler clearly refers to this when he says that if man violates the law of nature and does not listen to his conscience (the voice of God within us) he will be suitably dealt with in the life hereafter. Then again towards the end in Sermon III he refers to a future life when he says that all shall be set right at the final distribution of things. All these have not only great ethical significance, but constitute the very postulates of Butler's ethical thought, and to understand fully

his moral philosophy the consideration of these general postulates and assumptions of his thought is very essential.

The fact appears to be that Butler by emphasising religion in matters of conduct is probably trying to give, as he always does, a double support to virtue. He is trying to plant morality on a securer ground, on a more stable foundation. If we divorce morality from God's authority and His commands as embodied in the Scriptures, we are apt to ignore its demands, especially when we are not rationally able to explain them, which we finite beings cannot always do as "the works of God, and his scheme of government, are above our capacities thoroughly to comprehend".<sup>1</sup> Again, "there may be infinite reasons for things, with which we are not acquainted".<sup>2</sup> On the other hand if the demands of morality be based on God's authority, if we believe that they reflect God's will, we shall submit to them even when we cannot fully comprehend their implications, feeling assured that these must be good as they have emanated from God.

But perhaps the relation between morality and religion goes deeper in Butler. Probably morality can only be satisfactorily explained and fully vindicated from the standpoint of revelation, of Christianity. This should not be understood to mean that, according to Butler, a man cannot be moral unless

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XV, sect. 6, p. 263.

2. do do Vol. I, Part II, Chapter I, sect. 3, p. 188.

he is religious, or that statements about duties can only be deduced from theological statements about God. What we want to say is that according to him one cannot be 'completely good' and 'fully moral' without performing certain religious duties. Butler's whole course of Sermons at the Rolls and more particularly Chapter I, Part II of his Analogy confirms this view. In addition to moral duties, which arise out of nature of the case and which can be known independently of Scripture, there are certain positive duties also which are enjoined upon us and which can be known from Scripture only. Butler says: "Positive duties do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command; nor would they be duties at all, were it not for such command, received from him whose creatures and subjects we are".<sup>1</sup> He does not stop here. According to him to obey these positive precepts is a moral obligation and these therefore should be fulfilled. Butler says: "it is highly necessary that we remind ourselves, how great presumption it is, to make light of any institutions of divine appointment; that our obligations to obey all God's commands whatever are all absolute and indispensable; and that commands merely positive, admitted to be from him, lay us under a moral obligation to obey them: an obligation moral in the strictest and most proper sense".<sup>2</sup> Besides there are certain religious

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part II, Chapter I, sect. 26, pp. 202-203.

2. do do Vol. I, Part II, Chapter I, sect. 34, pp. 208-209.

duties which arise from the very relation with the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit - the Sanctifier. Religious duties may be either positive duties or moral duties. These are the obligations which we owe to them and which must be fulfilled. Butler says: "In Scripture are revealed the relations, which the Son and Holy Spirit stand in to us. Hence arise the obligations of duty, which we are under to them".<sup>1</sup> From all this it seems clear that to be completely good and moral the performance of certain religious duties is absolutely necessary.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler' Vol. I, Part II, Chapter I, sect. 17, p. 197.

## Chapter VI.

### Virtue and Human Nature in Madhusūdana.

In keeping with the ancient Hindu tradition Madhusūdana Sarasvatī does not mention the time and the period when he lived. This has naturally given rise to some controversy among the writers on Madhusūdana with regard to the period when he flourished. Mr. Telang concludes: "I think we may safely lay down the proposition that Madhusūdana Sarasvatī probably flourished about the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century of the Christian era".<sup>1</sup> Professor Modi believes that "Madhusudana lived between 1495 and 1555 A.D."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Divanji holds that 1540 to 1647 is probably the life-time of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī.<sup>3</sup> Without going into this controversy which is not so much to our purpose we may point out here that Mr. Divanji seems nearer the truth as he bases his conclusion on the most recent researches.

Madhusūdana was born at Kotālipada, a suburb of the Faridpur district in eastern Bengal. His original name was Kamalnayana. He was one of the four sons of Purandrāchārya, the others being Śrināth, Yādavanda, and Vāgīśchandra. Shortly after the com-

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1. K.T. Telang. 'A note on the Age of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī', Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. X, No. XXX, p. 375.
  2. P.M. Modi. Eng. Trans. of 'Siddhanta Bindu'. Baroda (India), 1929, p. 27 (Introduction).
  3. P.C. Divanji. Eng. Trans. of 'Siddhanta Bindu of Madhusūdana', Baroda (India), 1933, p. XXV, (Introduction).

pletion of his studies Kamalmayana came in contact with Viśveśvara Sarasvatī at Benares and was initiated into the fourth order (Śannyāsa) and received the name of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī.

Thus Viśveśvara Sarasvatī was what is technically called the 'Āśrama Guru'<sup>1</sup> of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī.

The following works of Madhusūdana are well known: Vedānta-Kalpa - latikā, Advaita-Siddhi, Advaita-ratna-rakṣana, Advaita-manjari, Ātma-bodha-ṭikā, Ānanda-mandākinī, Kṛṣṇa-Kutūhala nāṭaka, Prastnāna-bheda, Bhakti-sāmānya-nirūpana, Gūdhārtha-dīpikā, Bhakti-rasāyana, Bhagavata-Purāna-Prathama-Śloka-Vyākhyā, Veda-Stuti-ṭikā, Śāndilya-Sūtra-ṭikā, Śāstra-Siddhānta-lesa-ṭikā, Saṃkṣepa-Śārīraka-Sāra-Saṃgraha, Siddhānta-Bindu and Hari-līlā-Vyākhyā.

But the most important of these works, in many of which Madhusūdana propounds bhakti creed, are (1) Advaita Siddhi and (2) Gūdhārtha-dīpikā. Advaita Siddhi is a metaphysical treatise and is mainly devoted to the objections raised against the monistic theory of Śaṃkara Vedānta. We are however concerned mainly with Gūdhārtha-dīpikā in which he expounds his ethical and moral philosophy. It may be stated here that Gūdhārtha-dīpikā is a commentary on the Bhagavadgītā which is one of the earliest ethico-religious works of the Hindus. Regarding this commentary Mr. Telang remarks: "One of the most famous commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā is the Gītāgūdhārthadīpikā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. It is a most learned and elaborate work, and is in extent very nearly double

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1. By Āśrama Guru is meant the spiritual preceptor who initiates a man in the fourth order of life namely śannyāsa.

the well-known Gītā Bhāshya of Śankarāchārya".<sup>1</sup> Professor Modi also observes: "His critical powers were considerably developed as his literary activities increased in later life and by the time he wrote his Advaitasiddhi and Gudharthadipika he had reached the zenith of his powers and become a great independent thinker".<sup>2</sup>

With this brief sketch of Madhusūdana's life and works we now proceed to discuss his philosophy of action. But before starting a detailed study of it, we would like to mention by way of background a few points here which we think necessary to enable the readers to follow the general trend of his ethical teaching. The first point is that the ethics of Madhusūdana is taught against the background of the Supreme end of life namely mokṣa or liberation. Madhusūdana at the very beginning of his commentary<sup>3</sup> makes this point sufficiently clear. There are four ends of life recognised in Hindu philosophy: (1) Dharma (2) Artha (3) Kāma and (4) Mokṣa. These can be rendered by duty (dharma), economic activity and material well-being (artha), enjoyment (kāma), and emancipation or spiritual freedom (mokṣa). Broadly speaking these are the four categories into which all human objectives can be divided. But it should be borne in mind here that these ends or objectives of human life are not separate and independent of

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1. K.T. Telang. 'A note on the Age of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī', Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. X, No. XXX, p. 368.
  2. P.M. Modi. Eng. Trans. of 'Siddhanta Bindu', Baroda (India) 1927, p. 7 (Introduction).
  3. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā, p. 4.

one another. The realisation of artha and k̄ama should always be in accordance with dharma which is the means of attaining mokṣa. It may also be mentioned here that Madhusūdana holds that mokṣa or bliss alone is the Supreme goal of life to which the other three ends are only subsidiary.

Dr. Mees explains the interrelatedness of the four ends of life thus: "The Scriptures propound a fourfold end: Artha, K̄ama, Dharma and Mokṣa. They are psychological tendencies which have to be purified and perfected, or in other words: socialized. Artha is the trend to (perfection of) wealth and material well-being: it is and has to be manifested as subsidiary and subservient to the second: K̄ama which is the trend to (perfection of) feeling and desire, of sensuous and sensual experience, this is and has to be manifested as subsidiary and subservient to Dharma, the trend to mental (incl. moral) perfection. All are subsidiary and subservient to Mokṣa, spiritual liberation".<sup>1</sup>

It may be useful to point out here that in Hindu ethical thought very great emphasis is laid on dharma and as we have already mentioned both artha and k̄ama should be realised only in accordance with it. A man should never overstep the limits of the moral law to realise these ends. It is only when thus realised that these ends (artha and k̄ama) can act as progressive stages to the realisation of mokṣa, the Supreme goal of life. That probably is why in Hindu ethical thought dharma is mentioned first

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1. Gualtherus H. Mees. 'Dharma and Society', The Hague, Holland, 1935, pp. 25-26.

among the four ends of life.

The second point about Madhusūdana's moral philosophy, which is in fact the general standpoint of the whole non-dualistic Vedānta philosophy, is that it is due to ignorance of the true nature of self, Brahman and the world that all miseries and evils of life arise. It is our ignorance about the real nature of these (self, Brahman and the world) that constitutes our bondage to the world, that is, to the wheel of birth and death. In short, ignorance of the nature of truth is the root cause of all ills and evils from which man suffers in this world.

Just as ignorance is the cause of all ills and evils in life, so knowledge about the true nature of self, Brahman and the world is the only cure, the only way to get final release from the bondage to the wheel of birth and death. In other words knowledge of the true nature of Reality alone can bring mokṣa or liberation which results not only in the destruction of all ills and evils in life but in the attainment of positive bliss. It should be borne in mind here that according to non-dualistic Vedānta bliss is the very nature of the self. The self is Reality, Consciousness and Bliss (Sat, Citta, Ānanda). It is because of our ignorance that we do not realise it. It is covered by ignorance and can be realised only through knowledge.

This knowledge or wisdom (jñāna), which is a means to perfection, does not mean intellectual knowledge. It means spiritual, intuitive knowledge and cannot be easily and cheaply attained. It can be achieved only through hard sacrifice and rigorous

discipline. It can come only at the end of a long and arduous moral and spiritual discipline. This arduous moral and spiritual discipline, necessary for wisdom, consists in the freeing of the mind of all distractions and the purging of the heart of all its impurities.

It may be pointed out here that there are two kinds of knowledge - (1) The lower (aparā) and the higher (parā). The first or the lower knowledge (aparā-vidyā) consists of the knowledge of the Vedas, phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, astronomy etc. In short it consists of the knowledge of all sciences and arts. The second or the higher knowledge (parā-vidyā) is that knowledge by which the Supreme is realised. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad<sup>1</sup> Nārada approaches Sanat-kumāra and confesses to him that in spite of the fact that he has mastered all the sciences and arts, he has not known the self and is thus still not free from sorrow. Sanat-kumāra having heard from him as to what he has read imparts to him the parā-vidyā which alone is the means to spiritual freedom.

Madhusūdana holds that there are three paths or disciplines by which mokṣa can be realised. The first of these disciplines is called 'the discipline of action' or 'Karma-yoga'. According to it the seeker must perform all his functions, domestic, social and religious, disinterestedly and without expecting the enjoyment of their fruits. In other words he should perform his functions surrendering all their fruit to God.

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1. 'Chāndogya Upaniṣad', 7.1. 1-3.

The second is called 'the discipline of devotion' or 'Bhakti-yoga'. According to it the seeker is required to be exclusively devoted to God, looking upon Him as his sole refuge. His whole mind is directed towards God alone. Not paying any attention to any object of desire, the devotee worships God who is endowed with all power, glory and lordship.<sup>1</sup> Complete devotion and resignation is by itself sufficient for God to confer His grace on him, to purify his heart and kindle the light of knowledge within him.

The third discipline is called 'the discipline of knowledge' or 'Jñāna-yoga'. According to it, the seeker tries to realise the identity of the individual self with the ultimate self, there being really no difference between them. He practises the difficult processes of hearing (śravaṇa), reasoning (manana) in order to remove any doubt that there may be regarding their truth. The last process meditation (nididhyāsana) is practised to put an end to the normal activity of the mind so that the direct realisation may be had.

Of these three disciplines, the last is the hardest. Also everybody is not fit to take up that discipline. Because of this some are not prescribed this and for them only the other two are recommended.

It may be useful to point out here the distinction between knowledge and the discipline or path of knowledge. The two are not the same thing. The discipline of knowledge is only one of

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', Commentary on verse 1, Chapter VII, p. 239.

the three methods through which knowledge can be attained. But according to Madhusūdana even the successful pursuit of the discipline of action and that of devotion ultimately result in the dawning of "knowledge" (through the grace of God) which as we have said above, alone can bring mokṣa.

Incidentally it may be mentioned here that Madhusūdana, by holding that there are three disciplines or methods for attaining mokṣa, seems to recognise a very important truth. He holds that all the three main aspects of human life - thinking, feeling and willing - are equally good. They are all equally important in the sense that any of these can lead to the attainment of the Supreme moral ideal. Dr. Radhakrishnan seems to hint at it when he remarks "Madhusūdana Sarasvatī considers that the Gītā adopts the three methods indicated in the Upaniṣads, karma or work, upāsana or worship, and jñāna or wisdom, and devotes six chapters to each in succession. Whatever be the truth of it, it emphasises the three great divisions of conscious life".<sup>1</sup> In regard to this remark we would like to say that the important point here is not that Madhusūdana simply emphasises the three divisions of conscious life but rather the fact that he considers all these aspects as equally important as leading on to the realisation of the Supreme goal of life.

Then again there is another important psychological truth which seems implied here. Madhusūdana not only attaches equal

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'Indian Philosophy', Vol. I, London, 1951, p. 554.

importance to each phase of conscious life but he also seems to emphasise their inter-relatedness. This inter-relatedness among the different phases of conscious life may be seen in his notion of bhakti or devotion. According to him bhakti is an independent means to mokṣa,<sup>1</sup> and also helps the approach to the other two disciplines, Karma-yoga and Jñāna-yoga.<sup>2</sup> Bhakti thus links together karma and jñāna. Madhusūdana holds<sup>3</sup> that that is the reason why bhakti is described in the intermediate six chapters of the Bhagavadgītā and the path of action and that of knowledge in the first and last six chapters respectively. This point has been expressly stated by him in his Bhakti-rasāyana.<sup>4</sup>

It may also be pointed out here that Madhusūdana differs from the other great non-dualistic Vedāntic commentators on the Bhagavadgītā on the point of emphasis and the place of devotion in spiritual ethics. He also holds<sup>5</sup> that the path of devotion is superior even to the path of knowledge and the superiority of the former lies in the fact that it leads to the realisation of truth more quickly than the latter, there being no difference in the conception of spiritual freedom achieved through either. We wish to make it clear here that devotion implies duality between the

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', Commentary on verse 16, Chapter VII, p.250, also Commentary on verse 1, Chapter IX, p. 280.
  2. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', Commentary on verse 66, Chapter XVIII, pp. 510-512.
  3. do do (Introduction).
  4. 'Bhakti-rasāyana', Calcutta, 1913, pp. 6-7.
  5. 'Advaita Siddhi', Bombay, 1917, Chapter IV, p. 897.

devotee and God to whom devotion is offered, while knowledge does away with all duality, which as we have seen is not real ultimately. Madhusūdana propounds the view that liberation is difficult, almost impossible to achieve even for those who follow Jñāna-yoga except through the grace of God which can be received only by those who have attained the purification of their mind and heart and are devoted to God. Being devoted to God is, however, part of the process of the attainment of liberation. Madhusūdana emphasises the purity of mind and heart because the impure mind is disturbed and restless and thus cannot reflect the light of pure consciousness which is the nature of Reality. This reflection is possible only when the mind is cleansed and freed from all impurities. Probably this is why Madhusūdana holds that the main, rather the only, purpose of morality is the cleansing and the purification of the mind.

The third point about Madhusūdana's moral philosophy which in fact is implied in our second point but which we want to emphasise here again is that ethical disciplines do not directly lead to knowledge. Morality is only a remote or mediating cause, it is only a means to spiritual life and progress. Morality is thus only a necessary condition for spiritual knowledge which alone can bring mokṣa. It is here that Madhusūdana's philosophy of action is clearly seen. Moral life is a preparatory stage in a man's spiritual life. When man has reached the end of his life's journey and has become spiritually perfect, morality as such ceases for him. Duty as such has no meaning for the liberated soul. He

is beyond all categorical imperatives. While morality consists in doing one's duty from a sense of duty, a free or liberated man cannot be said to have any work to do from a sense of duty. This, however, does not mean that the liberated being gives up all works. This only means that he does not work under the constraint of obligation but through spontaneous love for mankind. Unethical actions are impossible for him. He works for the maintenance of the world-order because even God Himself who is its sustainer never ceases from action. In short the life of a free soul is a life of service to others. He works for the welfare of others and his actions follow spontaneously from the fullness of his heart without their being any sense of obligation.

Thus actions though they can be interested, must be disinterested in order to be ethical and moral but ultimately and eventually they must become spontaneous and free out-pourings for the general good of humanity and of the world at large from the liberated man's nature. This is Madhusūdana's philosophy of action.

We have briefly indicated the general background of Madhusūdana's philosophy of action. We shall now proceed to discuss it in detail.

Madhusūdana holds that morality lies in acting according to one's position in society. It consists in doing one's duty according to one's station in life. By the phrase 'station in life' Madhusūdana means only the caste to which one belongs in life. He admits the division of men into four castes - brahmin, kṣattriya, vaiśya and śūdra. These four castes constitute the

four principal parts of the Hindu society. The precedence of these castes is in the order enumerated above. The earliest reference to the division of Hindu society into four classes is found in the R̥g Veda. It is described in the Puruṣa sukta, a section of the R̥g Veda, as having come out of the different limbs of the body of the creator himself. Manu says: "There is no fifth caste".<sup>1</sup> Āpastamba also holds that there are four castes only.<sup>2</sup>

The institution of caste has an important social bearing and occupies a most important place in the life of the Hindus. It has very largely coloured their outlook on life. But the history of the origin and development of the caste-system which is peculiar to India is very complicated. Its origin is lost in obscurity. It is very difficult to give any precise and scientific definition of caste. Dr. J. Muir observes: "the sacred books of the Hindus contain no uniform or consistent account of the origin of castes; but, on the contrary, present the greatest varieties of speculation on this subject".<sup>3</sup> The popular belief however held among the Hindus with regard to the institution of caste is, as Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer says, "that the main divisions of castes are of immemorial antiquity and in fact coeval with creation".<sup>4</sup>

In regard to the origin of the institution of caste our

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter X, verse 4.
  2. Āpastamba. 'Dharma-sūtra', I.1.1.3.
  3. J. Muir. 'Sanskrit texts', Vol. I, London, 1872, p. 159.
  4. Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer. 'Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals', Madras, 1935, p. 71.

author, Madhusūdana, relies upon the view expressed in the Bhagavadgītā that the division of men into four castes was made by God Himself in accordance with their characteristic qualities and specific duties.<sup>1</sup> The division of men into four castes is thus a natural division made in accordance with their intrinsic qualities and function. Its underlying principle is probably the division of labour and is intended to keep the social fabric in a harmonious condition.

The division of men into four castes is thus not an arbitrary division. This is based on the hard reality, the concrete facts of experience that the different individuals are not all alike in their nature (svabhāva). Men differ in respect of their quality and capacity, character and conduct. The division of men into four castes is in accordance with this difference in their quality, character and aptitude. It is thus clear that the caste-system is based on a principle. It is based on admitted inequalities in the physical, mental and spiritual make-up of people constituting the society. In short the classification depends on types of human nature. Each of the four classes has certain well-defined characteristics though they should not be regarded as exclusive. Dr. Ketkar rightly remarks: "It is preponderance of various qualities that determines the birth of man as a Brāhmana or a Shūdra".<sup>2</sup>

We have said that the caste is determined by the intrinsic

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1. 'The 'Bhagavadgītā', Chapter IV, verse 13.

2. Shridhar V. Ketkar. 'History of caste in India', Vol. I, New York, 1909, p. 114.

qualities in human nature. It is determined by the preponderance of various qualities in man's nature. Now what are these qualities ? What is their nature ? How do they determine the birth of man in a particular caste ? These are some of the questions which naturally arise here and it is to a discussion of these that we shall now turn.

There are three guṇas called sattva, rajas and tamas which are present in all individuals. These 'guṇas', which are usually rendered as 'qualities', spring from prakṛti. There is no being, indeed no object in which these guṇas are not present. In the Bhagavadgītā it is clearly said: "There is no entity either on earth or in heaven among the gods which is free from these guṇas born of prakṛti".<sup>1</sup> It may be pointed out here that the Sāṃkhya philosophy does not regard guṇas as qualities merely. According to it these are the ultimate subtle entities or substances which constitute the whole cosmic nature or prakṛti as it is called in Indian philosophy. The three guṇas are thus the constitutive elements of prakṛti according to Sāṃkhya philosophy.

But since we are mainly concerned with the ethical implication of the guṇas, and probably this is the application of the guṇas in the Bhagavadgītā also, we shall use, for the purpose of our thesis, sattva for goodness, rajas for activity and passion, and tamas for darkness. We may also refer to Mr. Widgery's remarks here which he makes in regard to the application of the guṇas in ethics. He says: "No exact translation of the term guṇas seems possible, but

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā', Chapter XVIII, verse 40.

as applicable within the realm of the moral life it may be interpreted in general as qualities, tendencies, or states of active consciousness".<sup>1</sup>

To understand fully the nature of these guṇas or qualities we shall now try to explain briefly their main characteristics. Of the three guṇas, the first is sattva. It is laghu and prakāśaka. It is pure and produces goodness, happiness and knowledge. It also produces harmony, order and peace. The second is rajas. It is active (cala) and of the nature of passion. It is the source of all craving and attachment. It thus binds men by attachment to action. The third is tamas. It is heavy (guru) and produces viśāda. It arises out of ignorance and deludes all mortals. It leads to indolence, sloth, laziness and negligence. It binds men by developing these qualities in them. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pala explains the characteristics of the guṇas which may throw some more light. "The characteristics of the quality of light or sattva, are purity, illumination and freedom; those of heat or rajas, are passion, activity, craving (for power and glory) and attachment to rank and position; while those of darkness or tamas, are ignorance, error, idleness and inertia".<sup>2</sup>

It may also be mentioned here that these qualities cannot be directly perceived. Their existence can only be inferred from

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1. Alban G. Widgery. 'The Principles of Hindu Ethics', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XL, No.2, January 1930, p. 233.
  2. Bipin Chandra Pala. 'The Ethics of the Bhagavadgītā', The World, Vol. VIII, No. XXXI, September 1899, p. 531.

their effects. Furthermore, these guṇas always go together and are intermingled with one another. They are closely related as the flame, the oil and the wick of a lamp. Thus all people possess all these guṇas. But it must be remembered that they do not possess them in the same degree. The proportion of these guṇas vary from individuals to individuals. It should always be borne in mind here that in the interrelation of the three guṇas it is always the one or the other that predominates in each human being and the nature of the man is determined by the predominating guṇa. Men are called sāttvika, rājasika, or tāmasika according as the one or the other prevails in him.

From the nature of the guṇas and their characteristics we can see clearly that it is the prevalence of these guṇas that determines the nature of man's activities. It is the predominance of one or the other of these guṇas that makes all the difference to the spirit in which the possessor performs his work. The man in whom sāttva predominates, and is thus of sāttvika nature, works without any attachment. He is free from all egotism, full of zeal and firmness. He is not disturbed from the effects of his passions and affections. He does not work for the sake of any reward in this life or in the life hereafter. He does his work in the spirit of duty because it ought to be done. The man of rājasika nature is always swayed by passions. He is selfish and always desirous of the fruits of his actions. Unlike the man of sāttvika nature he is moved by joy and sorrow. He is full of joy in success and ~~and~~ bitterly grieved in failure.

The man in whom tāmas prevails is dull and inert. He acts mechanically and follows the common routine blindly. His activities are undertaken without any regard to capacity and consequences. He is dilatory, slow to act and gets very easily depressed. He acts in complete obedience to his passions and affections. The mind of such a man is confused and deluded.

From what has been said above there is one deduction which obviously follows and which we should always bear in mind. It is that no human being can be either wholly or purely sāttvika or rājasika or tāmasika. These are extreme cases and are rarely, if ever, found in practical life. Human conduct almost invariably partakes of the nature of rajas and is in varying degree nearer either to sāttvika or tāmasika.

It may also be pointed out here that though all the guṇas or qualities are present in all individuals of all the four castes, yet a particular caste is characterised by the quality prevailing among all the individuals constituting that caste. Madhusūdana in his commentary on verse 13 of Chapter IV<sup>1</sup> points out that the brahmins are sāttva-pradhāna, kṣatriyas are sattva-upsarjana-rajah-pradhāna, vaiśyas are tamah-upsarjana-rajah-pradhāna and śūdras are tamah-pradhāna. It is very difficult to give an exact english translation of the word 'upsarjana' which Madhusūdana uses here and which he uses again in his commentary on verse 44 of Chapter XVIII<sup>2</sup>, but it may be rendered as subsidiary or subserv-

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', p. 136.

2. do do p. 495.

ient for convenience.

We have discussed in some detail the nature and characteristics of the three guṇas. We can now see clearly how caste is determined by the character of man, by his nature, by his characteristic qualities, or to express it technically, by his predominant guṇas. A man is born in a particular caste according as he develops one or the other of the three guṇas. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan "The kind of birth depends on the character we have developed. We are born in celestial regions, or as men on earth, or in the animal world, according as we develop character in which sattva, rajas or tamas predominates".<sup>1</sup> We can thus see how the birth of a man in a particular caste is determined by his nature or by his predominant guṇa.

In order to understand the full implication of the caste-system we have to pursue our discussion still further. It is necessary to point out here that it is one's own karma that determines one's predominant guṇa just as the latter determines one's birth in a particular class. This brings us to the doctrine of karma. The fact is that the institution of caste is very closely connected with the doctrine of karma and the theory of the transmigration of soul or re-birth. All these three namely the guṇas, the doctrine of karma and the theory of re-birth justify the caste-system. We have already considered in some detail the 'three guṇas' and their nature. We shall now proceed on to consider the other two - the doctrine of karma and the theory of re-birth.

The doctrine of karma is one of the most important ethical

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'Indian Philosophy', Vol. I, London, 1951, p. 552.

theories in Indian thought. It is accepted even by the Baudha and the Jainas though they do not believe in the authority of the Veda. Since there is a good deal of confusion and misunderstanding about this doctrine it is necessary to consider it in some detail.

'Karma' means action and the phrase 'doctrine of karma' means that every action has its reaction, its result. According to this doctrine every action done whether good or bad produces its effect and the effect which it produces is not only physical but also mental and moral. An action affects the tendencies, dispositions and character of the agent and according to the doctrine of karma these are all conserved in the organism. Nay, they are also carried over so that every individual gets his due here or hereafter. The doctrine has thus both retrospective and the prospective aspects. It is a principle of continuity. It is continuous with the past and goes on into the future. To borrow a metaphor, the individual's life, according to the doctrine of karma, is not a term but a series. This process cannot stop unless the ultimate goal of life is realised, unless man reaches the end of life's journey which is spiritual realisation.

But karma is often identified with fate and the doctrine of karma with fatalism. Even a great thinker like Professor Keith remarks: "The conception of Karman serves indeed in an excellent way to defend and protect the established order of things, but it is essentially fatalistic, and fatalism is not for a normal mind a good incentive to moral progress. If, on the other hand, the

doing of an evil deed is restrained by the thought that it will be punished in another life, it is equally true that reflection shows that the actor has really no option in his acts and is an absolutely predetermined person, whose former acts produce his present motives and reasonings without the possibility of intervention of any kind on his part".<sup>1</sup> This confusion is perhaps due to misconception about the true nature of the doctrine. It is a travesty of the truth about the doctrine of karma. Far from meaning fatalism the doctrine stands for man's freedom. It is not incompatible with free will. In fact it involves and implies it. The doctrine of karma vindicates the essential righteousness of the universe. It is no other than the moral counterpart of the Scientific Law of Causation. We can say it is the Law of Ethical Causation. As you sow, so you reap is its main principle. It vindicates the truth that man himself is responsible for his suffering and happiness, he is himself the architect of his destiny, the arbiter of his fate. The doctrine of karma thus explains all the inequalities in life. Instead of throwing the blame on others for what we are and have or have not, the doctrine teaches that we are ourselves responsible for our present state. It is a vindication of cosmic justice. The doctrine of karma thus illustrates the truth that moral life is not a chaos. Men are not the sport of a cruel chance. There is no room for caprice here. The accidents of birth and fortune in this world are but the rewards

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1. A.B.Keith. 'The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads', Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 32, 1925, p. 596.

and punishments of our own deeds in the past life. According to the doctrine of karma there is a spiritual continuity. The present life is the beginning of another into which we carry with us what we do here. The new life starts just where the old life ends. Academically speaking, the doctrine of karma thus vindicates the principle of the eternal law of cause and effect in the moral life of man.

There is, however, a certain amount of determination involved in the doctrine of karma. But this does not mean exclusion of all freedom. The present life in its beginning is no doubt determined by the past but it can be changed for the better or worse by our efforts in course of our present life. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "Life is like a game of bridge. The cards in the game are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to past karma but we are free to make any call as we think fit and lead any suit. Only we are limited by the rules of the game. We are more free when we start the game than later on when the game has developed and our choices become restricted. But till the very end there is always a choice".<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the full implication of the freedom of man's will involved in the doctrine of karma, it is necessary to pursue our discussion a little further. According to Hindu thinkers there are three kinds of karma. (1) Sancita (2) Prārabdha and (3) Agāmi or Kriyamāna. ~~Sancita~~ <sup>Sancita</sup> is all the ~~accumulated~~ karma of the past, that is those karmas which have not yet started producing

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'An Idealist view of Life', London, 1951, p. 279.

their reactions. Prārabdha is that portion of the past karma which has started producing its reaction. Agāmi is the coming karma which includes also the karma that is being gathered at the present time. This is usually illustrated with a beautiful analogy. Let us imagine a bow man with a quiver containing arrows and that he is taking aim at a target. Let us further imagine that he has already shot an arrow and he is about to shoot another. In this analogy the bundle of arrows contained in the quiver stands for sancita karma, the arrow he has shot for prārabdha karma and the one he is about to shoot for agāmi karma. Just as the bow man has perfect freedom in regard to the arrows in the quiver and the arrow he is about to shoot, so also man has perfect freedom in regard to the <sup>n</sup>sancita and agāmi karmas. He can influence their reactions by good deeds in course of his present life. But he has no freedom as far as prārabdha karma is concerned. He cannot influence its reaction. Once the arrow has left the bow it must have its course. So also the past karma which has begun producing its effect must have its course. But man can control his future. In regard to prārabdha karma our own author Madhusūdana goes so far as to say<sup>1</sup> that even the grace of God cannot exhaust it. Prārabdha karmas are exhausted by themselves after the individual concerned has experienced their good or bad results.

There is yet another misunderstanding about the doctrine of karma. It is said that, it is individualistic and there is no room

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1. 'Advaita Siddhi', Bombay, 1917, Chapter IV, pp. 892-893.

for social service under its rigid law. This is perhaps a misconception of the actual position. It is no doubt true that the ultimate value namely mokṣa has to be attained by every individual himself. But the question is: how to reach the stage when mokṣa can be attained? This stage can be reached only in and through fulfilling one's appointed functions as one's contribution towards the common good. It is only when all works are done in a spirit of service to humanity that man can prepare himself and is able to travel on the spiritual path. Consistently with this spirit Hindu thinkers condemn selfishness and egotism and argue for the performance of selfless work. Thus social service is not only not inconsistent with the doctrine of karma but is enjoined as a means to spiritual freedom.

The theory of transmigration of the soul or re-birth is a corollary to the doctrine of karma. As we have already shown above, the differences in the tendencies, dispositions and character of men at birth are due to differences in their past karmas which obviously implies past birth. Again since all actions do not bear fruit in this life man has to take another birth in order to 'enjoy' the residual karmas. Every jīva thus has to pass through a series of births and deaths. Thus the law of karma implies future birth.

There is an objection often raised against the ethical significance of the theory of re-birth. It is pointed out that in the absence of memory between successive reincarnations or births, the different incarnations would be nothing short of different persons

and with this the entire juridical motive of incarnation stands abrogated. Without memory the point of retributive justice is nullified and the whole penal purpose of re-incarnation is defeated thereby. In reply it may be pointed out that the criticism is based on a misunderstanding of the theory. It ignores its real significance and purpose. The point is that re-incarnation is an ethical postulate. It is the fabric of the whole moral structure, and its validity is in no way conditioned by empirical evidences. It is a belief in the moral order of the universe and in this context the absence of memory does not render it an absurdity. What is important in the theory of re-birth is the conservation of the moral values. The juridical and penal aspects of the theory are only subsidiary and need not be pressed too far and given too high a premium.

We shall conclude our discussion of the doctrine of karma by showing its implication to the institution of caste. We have seen that the doctrine of karma suggests that the responsibility for the particular caste into which an individual is born rests with the individual himself since the nature of man on which caste depends is ultimately determined by the nature of his deeds. Those whose conduct has been good attain good births and those whose conduct has been evil attain evil births. It is one's own actions in the past life that have determined one's present existence and again one's actions in the present existence will determine one's future life. Caste is thus determined ultimately by the eternal and inexorable law of karma. Furthermore, the doctrine of karma not

only explains our inequalities in the social status but it also offers a message of hope and sounds a note of warning. It proclaims that an individual's rise and fall in the social scale in the next life depends entirely upon his performing good or bad deeds in the present life. A man may be promoted or relegated according to his good or bad deeds respectively. Even a śūdra may by good conduct attain to the highest spirituality. Manu admits the possibility of such a change and he gives elaborate rules in this connection.<sup>1</sup> In Chapter IX, he specifically says: "A śūdra who is pure, the servant of his betters, gentle in his speech and free from pride and always seeks a refuge with Brāhmaṇas attains in his next life a higher caste".<sup>2</sup>

We have seen that the division of men into four castes is based on the differences in their nature (svabhāva). In this connection we have also considered how man's nature is ultimately determined by his conduct, by the nature of his work. We shall now try to see that corresponding to these differences in their nature, their duties and responsibilities are also divided. Each caste has a particular set of duties called caste-duties. The brāhmins have one set of duties, the kṣatriyas another and so with the vaiśyas and śūdras. Every man is required to discharge his duties according as he belongs to one or the other of these four castes. These caste-duties have an important social bearing and are described in the Bhagavadgītā in Chapter XVIII, verses 42-44.

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter X, verses 57-65, especially 58 & 65.

2. do Chapter IX, verse 335.

These have also been described by various other Hindu law givers.

The duties of the brahmins born of their nature are: control of the inner organ or antaḥkaraṇa (śama); control of the outer organs or senses (dama); austerity meaning worship of gods, teachers and those who know the Vedas (tapas); purity (śauca); forgiveness (kṣamā); sincerity (ārjava); knowledge of the meaning of the Vedas (jñāna); skilfulness in karma-ḥanda, that is knowledge of the Vedic rituals and realisation of unity with Brahman (vijñāna); and faith (āstikya). The natural duties of the Kṣatriyas are: heroism (śaurya); smartness (tejas); power of endurance (dhṛti); skill (dākṣya); not to flee in battle (yudhe cāpy apalāyana); making

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Note: Dr. Ketkar narrates an incident from his personal experience which we quote here because it goes a long way and throws considerable light on the relation of the doctrine of karma and the institution of caste. He says: 'I once met a mahāra, who, fearing that I was going near him and that my purity might then be defiled in case I touched him, and that he might incur the sin of defiling my purity, cried out at once and made his caste known to me. I got into conversation with him. I found that Mahār, though illiterate, could repeat many verses of Tukaram, Namdeo and Chokhamela. He appeared to be well acquainted with the theories of Karma and Bhakti, and of the transmigration of souls. He believed that though he was a Mahār in that birth, by some mis-doing in his past life, he was going to become a Brahmana in the next birth, as he felt the desire for learning Sanskrit, and reading Gītā and Purānas. He conceived that these desires were clear indication of the better birth which he was going to get in his next life!'

A History of Caste in India. Vol. I, New York, 1909, p. 115 (footnote).

gifts (dāna); and power of controlling others (īśvara bhāva). The natural duties of the vaiśyas are: agriculture, trade and rearing of cattle, and service of the three upper castes through manual labour is the natural duty of śūdras.

It may be stated here that Madhusūdana after enumerating the dharmas or duties of brahmins says<sup>1</sup> that these may be the duties of all people belonging to all the four castes when they are sātत्वika. It is true that these are the natural duties of brahmins because in them sattva predominates, but for those also who are not brahmins these may become duties when there is a preponderance of sattva in them and that is why they also come under the category of 'common duties'. He quotes a few authorities on this point. Most of them list forgiveness, purity, charity, self-control, truthfulness etc - all duties of the brahmins - as the common duties of all.

The central idea that underlies this division of labour on the basis of the natural quality and capacity of men is probably that since all men are not alike in their nature and capacity they are not all suited for the same type of work and it is no use employing a man in a task which is alien to his nature. The same individual cannot be equally successful as a ruler, warrior or tradesman. One who is eminently suited for one kind of work may be, in fact often is, quite unsuited for another kind of work. The present psychology of vocation is a witness to this fact.

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', Commentary on verse 42, Chapter XVIII, pp. 492-494.

Professor Hanumantha Rao has rightly remarked: "A system of ethics which serves a more serious purpose than that of a mere formal textbook ought to take into consideration individual differences, social and psychological. The same duties that are enjoined upon the teacher cannot be enjoined upon the trader; the duties prescribed to one who serves in the army cannot be prescribed to one who serves in a factory or on a farm. It is this principle of relativity that is at the basis of the Hindu class-morality".<sup>1</sup> There seems much truth in these observations as far as we can see. After all we cannot allot any task to a man irrespective of any consideration whether or not he is equipped for it, whether or not he is psychologically and otherwise suited for it.

There seems another important ethical principle that underlies the division of labour on the basis of differences in nature. Society is one organic whole and in this society there are broadly speaking four types of nature and answering to them there are four broad kinds of functions and duties. Society can be held together and its progress can be maintained only when each unit contributes its share by properly performing the functions assigned to it. It is this principle of integration and co-ordination that probably lies at the back of the institution of caste. The society can be compared to an organism. Just as the well-being of the organism depends on the proper functioning of its different parts, so also the maintenance and progress of the society depend on the proper

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1. G. Hanumantha Rao. 'The Basis of Hindu Ethics', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, October 1926, p. 31.

functioning of its different units. If the stomach quarrels with the head it is not the stomach or the head alone that suffers but the entire organism including these parts. So if one unit quarrels with another it is not only this or that unit which suffers but the entire social structure is paralysed. There is no question of superiority of the one unit over the other. Just as all parts of the organism are equally necessary and important for its well-being so also all the social units have their equal necessity and importance for the well-being of the society. There is thus no emphasis on the differences in the nature of functions or duties. The main emphasis is on the performance of one's dharma born of one's nature according to the position one occupies in society because it is then only that one can promote the stability and progress of the society.

In addition to the institution of caste and the caste-duties there is another principle of division of life which it is necessary to point out here. Just as human beings are divided into four castes, so human life is divided into four stages and like every caste, every stage has its corresponding duties and responsibilities. These stages are: brahmacarya, gārhasthya, vānaprastha and sannyāsa. Manu also accepts these four stages or as they are also called 'orders' of life. He says "The student, the householder, the hermit and the ascetic, these constitute four separate orders".<sup>1</sup> The first stage of life is the life of a student. According to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad a student lives in the house of his teacher

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter VI, verse 87.

for twelve years<sup>1</sup> or for a series of years<sup>2</sup> during which he studies the Vedas. This period is devoted to the building up of the body and the training of the mind both intellectually and morally. One of the most important disciplines of this stage is continence. It is the stage when everyone is required to equip himself well for the succeeding stages of life. The second stage is the stage of gārhasṭhya (householder). This stage is the most important and it is generally regarded as the foundation of all the other stages. Just as air is essential to life, so is the householder essential to the life of all those who belong to the other three orders. This is the stage when man develops what we can call a social life which brings with it greater social responsibilities and obligations. In this stage man marries and begins to lead a family life. He is thus not alone but has his wife and children too. In addition to his family obligations he has to fulfil certain social obligations also. The third stage, called vānaprastha is the stage when man relinquishes his family duties and obligations. In this stage he is absolved from the responsibility of home and retires into the solitude of the forest to meditate on the higher problems of life. The main objective of this stage is to escape from the bustle of life. It is really a transitory stage of partial renunciation leading to the last stage called the stage of

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1. 'Chāndogya Upaniṣad', IV. X.I.

2. do do IV. IV.5.

sannyāsa. It is the final stage of life's journey. In this stage man rises above the narrow circles of clan and country and wanders far and wide. He works for the welfare of the entire humanity. It is the stage when he cultivates the knowledge of God to be united with Him which is the crown and glory of all life.

Viewed in one way the four āśramas are successive stages for taking man to perfection. These are the steps to the attainment to the ideal of mokṣa. As we have already said each of these stages has special duties and for each of these an ideal type of moral character is enjoined. The moral qualities attained in the earlier stages are carried over as a basis for the development of the qualities of the succeeding stage of life. Though normally one has to pass through the four stages successively, it is not absolutely necessary. In special and extraordinary cases it is permissible to take up sannyāsa even after the first stage. For instance Śaṅkara renounced from the stage of brahmacarya. Buddha renounced from the stage of gārhasthya. Our own author Madhusūdana took sannyāsa from the stage of brahmacarya.

It may also be pointed out here that besides the caste-duties or varṇa-dharma and the duties of the different stages of life (āśrama-dharma), there are also laid down the common duties of men called the sādharana-dharma or sāmānya-dharma. These have great ethical importance and may well said to be the foundation of the Hindu moral life. These common or ordinary duties are cardinal virtues and are obligatory equally for all individuals irrespective of distinctions of varṇa and āśrama. These are to be cultivated

by all to the best of their abilities. The idea being that morality is not incumbent on any one individual or class. The Hindu scriptures give several lists of these cardinal virtues. The author of the Bhagavadgītā calls these virtues as godly virtues and according to him these are: "fearlessness, purity of thought, steadfastness in knowledge and action, alms-giving, self-restraint, sacrifice, study of the Scriptures, austerity, uprightness, non-violence, truth, freedom from anger, the spirit of dedication, tranquility, aversion to slander, compassion to living beings, freedom from greed, gentleness, modesty, steadiness, courage, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, freedom from malice and arrogance".<sup>1</sup>

Manu enumerates these common virtues as "steadiness (dhairya), forgiveness (kṣamā), self-restraint (dama), non-stealing (cauryā bhāva), sense-control (indriya-nigraha), wisdom (dhī), learning (vidyā), truth, (satya), and freedom from anger (akrodha)".<sup>2</sup>

We have explained all the three kinds of dharma or duties - varṇa-dharma, āśrama-dharma and sāmānya-dharma - recognised by Hindu thinkers including our author. But it must be borne in mind that the main emphasis of the author of the Bhagavadgītā is on varṇa-dharma or caste duties and it is with these that we are mainly concerned.

Before we conclude our discussion of this topic and pass on to compare Madhusūdana with Butler, it is useful to point out one

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā', Chapter XVI, verses 1-3.

2. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter VI, verse 92.

thing here. We have said that according to Madhusūdana one's dharma or duty is determined by one's nature or svabhāva. Virtue according to him lies in fulfilling the functions of life that are in accordance with the capacities, turn, character and the consequent position which a man occupies in the society. But Madhusūdana says in his comment on verse 24 of Chapter XVI<sup>1</sup> and he refers to it again in verse 15 of Chapter III<sup>2</sup> that the injunctions and prohibitions of the Scriptures determine what should be done and what should not be done. In other words our duties are determined by the Scriptures. Apparently it seems that this not only goes against our main contention that according to Madhusūdana duty is determined by one's nature but also this may lead some to believe that he is setting up an external standard of duties which has nothing to do with human nature. But this is not the case. For in his commentary on verse 13 of Chapter IV<sup>3</sup> Madhusūdana accepts that the four castes have been created by God Himself. This verse should be read along with verses 41-44 of Chapter XVIII<sup>4</sup> where the functions of the four castes are enumerated. The fact that the four classes are created by God in accordance with the predominating quality of nature and the consequent function shows that one's duty is ultimately determined by one's nature.

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā, pp. 434-435.

2. do. p. 105.

3. do. p. 136.

4. do. pp. 490-497.

It may be asked here that if it is nature which determines duty then why is it said that to obey the injunctions of the Scriptures constitutes our duty. The reply to this is that the arrangement of God with regard to duty according to one's nature is the very thing that the Scripture also teaches. In other words Scriptures are only records of God's arrangement with regard to men's duty according to nature. It may also be remembered here that according to the Hindu conception the Vedas are not compositions of any finite human being. They are eternal (nitya) and impersonal (apaurusheya). They are eternal truths revealed by God Himself. Thus what is taught in the Vedas does not in any way contradict what God says about His creation of the four castes. Indeed the Vedas, as we have just said, only record the same fact. Thus we can say that duty is determined by nature but is known from the Vedas.

B. A comparison between Butler's and Madhusūdana's account of Virtue and Human Nature.

We shall now proceed to compare Madhusūdana with Butler. Apparently there is no similarity between the ethical and moral teaching of the two thinkers. The phrases 'station and its duties', 'institution of caste' and 'caste-duties' etc. which are so frequent in Madhusūdana are altogether alien to the moral philosophy of Butler who has endeavoured to deduce morality directly from the analysis of human nature. But then we should remember that for Madhusūdana also one's duty is ultimately based on one's nature, svadharma is based on svabhāva. We have seen that in Madhusūdana the division of duties is based on differences in the qualities and character of men. The duties of brahmins, kṣattriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras have all been prescribed according to their innate qualifications and capacities. Those who are strongly endowed with purity of thought and powers of reflection are brahmins; those gifted with heroism and chivalry are kṣattriyas; those strongly inclined towards the practical business of life are vaiśyas and those in whom none of these qualities are highly developed are śūdras. Corresponding to these differences in their qualities or nature their duties respectively are: cultivation of spiritual knowledge, guiding others on religious matters, the study and teaching of the Vedas; protection of people against oppression, maintenance of the law and order, supporting the righteous and suppressing the wicked; tending cattle, agriculture and trade; service to the members of the other three

classes. Thus according to Madhusūdana when a man is asked to perform his class duty, he is asked to do something which is appropriate to him, which is in accordance with his nature. In other words, it is following the law of his own being, his svadharma.

Butler's fundamental ethical teaching is, as we have already shown, that virtue consists in following nature and vice in deviation from it. He analyses human nature to derive morality from it and his analysis reveals that there are in it particular impulses and above them there are the two superior general principles of self-love and benevolence. On top of all these there is the sovereign principle called conscience. Butler says: "Every bias, instinct, propension within, is a real part of our nature, but not the whole: add to these the superior faculty, whose office it is to adjust, manage and preside over them, and take in this its natural superiority, and you complete the idea of human nature".<sup>1</sup> According to Butler to follow conscience is to follow the law of one's own being. It is to follow one's nature as a whole. To appreciate this point in Butler we must remember his conception of human nature. It is not merely a collection of different faculties and impulses, nor is it a mere balance or harmony between self-regarding and other-regarding impulses. He sees human nature as a system and points to an order in it. There is in it a

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 1, pp. 67-68.

natural subordination of the lower to the higher. When Butler says that to follow conscience is to follow the law of one's own being, to follow nature as a whole, he means this system or hierarchy in which conscience occupies the highest place and to which all other elements of human nature are naturally subordinate. According to him an action becomes wrong when the order or system is violated, which in this context means when the authority of the higher principle in nature is disregarded. Butler himself summarises this position in the last section of his last Sermon 'Upon Human Nature' thus: "The nature of man is adapted to some course of action or other. Upon comparing some actions with this nature, they appear suitable and corresponding to it: from comparison of other actions with the same nature, there arises to our view some unsuitableness or disproportion. The correspondence of actions to the nature of the agent renders them natural: their disproportion to it, unnatural. That an action is correspondent to the nature of the agent, does not arise from its being agreeable to the principle which happens to be the strongest: for it may be so, and yet be quite disproportionate to the nature of the agent. .... And the correspondence arises from the action being conformable to the higher principle; and the unsuitableness from its being contrary to it."<sup>1</sup>

It may be pointed out here that when Madhusūdana says that

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 13, pp. 75-76.

virtue lies in doing one's duty or dharma born of nature he also like Butler means human nature as a whole which according to him is determined by the prevailing *guṇa* or quality. It is the predominance of one or other of the three *guṇas* which determines the fundamental character or nature of man. It should be remembered here that according to the general Hindu ethical thought all human nature has been broadly divided into three classes, *sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*. Every man belongs to one or the other of these three divisions according as he develops predominantly one or the other of the three *guṇas* - *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas* - in his nature and his fundamental character or nature as a whole becomes accordingly. Every man's moral conduct is thus relative to his own fundamental nature. In the *Bhagavadgītā* there is a good deal of emphasis on the performance of one's own dharma which is in accordance with one's fundamental nature.<sup>1</sup>

Madhusūdana in his commentary on this verse is very emphatic on the pursuance of one's dharma which is in accordance with one's nature. He insists that it must be pursued however imperfect it may be. No man should try to imitate another man's dharma however perfect it might appear to be. He goes so far as to say that death in one's own law of nature is better for a man than victory in an alien movement. It is dangerous to follow the law of another's nature.

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1. The *Bhagavadgītā*, Chapter III, verse 35.

The idea behind this emphasis on the performance of one's own dharma is probably that there is no use employing ourselves in tasks which are alien to our nature, for which we are unsuited by our nature or svabhāva.

Thus we see that there is a fundamental similarity between Butler and Madhusūdana. They both agree as far as their fundamental ethical teaching is concerned. Virtue according to both is ultimately determined by human nature. According to both we must act with nature. Rightness of an act consists in following one's nature and wrongness in deviation from it. Thus 'follow nature' is the dictum of both Butler and Madhusūdana.

There is another very important point of similarity between the ethical teaching of the two thinkers. It is not only that they preach the same doctrine, namely 'follow nature', but they also agree in advocating the control of the lower impulses of human nature. According to both desires, wishes and inclinations should be disciplined and not crushed. To develop this point it is necessary to go into some detail. Madhusūdana holds (and in this he is supported by other Hindu thinkers) that man is a bundle of instincts, desires and impulses and these constitute the spring of all actions. They are at the root of all our activities. Manu says: "Not a single act here (below) appears ever to be done by a man free from desire; for whatever man does, it is the result of the impulse of desire."<sup>1</sup> But though desires seem to be universal

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter II, verse 4.

and at the back of all our activities, yet to act solely from desires is never laudable. Madhusūdana like Butler holds that morality consists in the control, regulation and organisation of the different elements of human nature. He seems in complete agreement with Butler in holding that men are men not merely because of their impulses, inclinations and desires, some of which they share with brutes, but mainly because of reflection or conscience which is peculiar to us men only. If we act solely from impulses and desires we cease to be men and are brought down to the level of brutes. In other words if we do not govern our impulses, we become victims of them, and our lives become as aimless as those of the animals. In order to be man, therefore, one should exercise reason and reflection, and through them harmonise the diverse elements of human nature by giving them due weight within their limits. Madhusūdana in his commentary on verses 60, 62 and 63 of Chapter II<sup>1</sup> points out the evil effects of the senses when uncontrolled and consequently emphasises the necessity for controlling them. He refers to this again in his commentary on verse 21 of Chapter XVI<sup>2</sup>. The desires and attachments (kāma), anger (krodha) and greed are said to be the three gates of hell. Dr. Radhakrishnan also remarks: "Inclinations must be overcome

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', pp. 86-88.

2. do. p. 433.

or else they drag us on without resistance. The mere push and pull of desire must yield place to the calm and quiet of reason. The divine element of reason should leaven the whole nature of man. Rational life is, then, the life in which the senses are curbed and confined within their proper limits".<sup>1</sup>

It may be interesting to point out here that the Pali work 'Dhammapada' is also full of similar ideas. "There is no fire like passion, there is no shark like hatred, there is no snare like folly, and there is no torrent like greed".<sup>2</sup>

In the interests of further clarification it may be useful to refer here to two other systems of Indian philosophy which are practically at two extremes in respect of their ethical teaching. One of them is the Cārvāka system of philosophy. The Cārvākas like the Epicureans are extreme hedonists. They lay emphasis on sensuousness even to the neglect of reason and will. Their philosophy is more or less only an argument for giving full and free expression to the passions and desires, a surrender to the impulses and desires of the moment.<sup>3</sup> Some of the well-known Cārvāka maxims are:

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'The Ethics of the Vedānta', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, January 1914, p.170.

2. 'Dhammapada', Chap. XVIII, verse 251, Eng. Trans. by F. Max Muller, Sacred books of the East, Vol.X, Oxford, 1881, p. 62.

3. Note. We are aware that there were among the Cārvākas a few Susiksitās who, in spite of admitting that pleasure is the only good in life, believed in the quality of pleasures. They would rather see a drama or read poetry than revel in mere feasting and drinking. But here also our main point remains valid because their maxim was still the same as that of the other less cultured cārvākas namely that pleasure is the summum bonum of life.

"Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may die".

"A sure piece of cell is better than a doubtful coin of gold".

Professor Hopkins quotes a passage to explain the Ārvāka philosophy. "The old Ārvāka or materialist of the sixth century B.C. said bluntly: Be as licentious as you please; live for pleasure; there is no punishment hereafter. Indulge your appetites; this is your only chance to do so. God and soul are myths; the priest is a hypocrite; the body dies and then you end. Be happy while you live; to be virtuous is to be a fool",<sup>1</sup>

As opposed to this Ārvāka system, there is the Jaina system of philosophy. It is, as we have said, at the other pole. The Jainas do not allow any room for passions and desires in the life of the ascetics who are bent on attaining perfection. They hold that these are at the root of all evils in life. They therefore advocate and argue for their annulment and eradication. It must be admitted, however, that in Jaina ethics certain allowances are made for the ordinary householders, that is, for those who have not renounced worldly life and become ascetic. But it may still be held that the trend of the Jaina ethics ultimately is towards asceticism. Dr. Radhakrishnan, explaining their moral philosophy, remarks:

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1. E. Washburn Hopkins. 'Ethics of India', Yale, 1927, p. 206.

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"The ethical system of the Jainas is more rigorous than that of the Buddhists. ... True freedom consists in an independence of all outer things".<sup>1</sup> At another place he again remarks: "Both Buddhism and Jainism admit the ideal of negation of life and personality. To both life is a calamity to be avoided at all costs. They require us to free ourselves from all the ties that bind us to nature and bring us sorrow".<sup>2</sup> Our purpose is not to explain the ethics of the Cārvāka and Jaina systems of philosophy. Our main purpose here is to show that the ethical teaching of both Butler and Madhusūdana avoids these extremes. Life according to them consists neither in extreme intellectualism nor in extreme sensualism. In the former case it becomes too ascetic, practically a negation of life and in the latter case it becomes blind as it is devoid of intelligence. Both Butler and Madhusūdana therefore advocate a system of ethics which is opposed to both the ethics of pure sensibility as we find in the Cārvākas and the ethics of pure rigorism as we find in the Jainas. They both admit and recognise the importance of feelings and desires in the economy of the human constitution, and they both give them their due place in the moral scheme of life. The impulses are not bad in themselves. They are bad when uncontrolled and when they disregard the authority of the higher principle. Butler says: "Every bias,

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'Indian Philosophy', Vol. I, London, 1951, p. 326.

2. do. do. Vol. I, London, 1951, p. 329.

instinct, propension within us, is a real part of our nature".<sup>1</sup> Again in the preface to the Sermons he clearly points out that particular passions when uncontrolled have no bound, no measure. Butler goes so far as to say that mere appetites, by which he probably means uncontrolled appetites, are extravagant. He says: "Yet,..it (self-love) would be less mischievous than the extravagances of mere appetite, will and pleasure: for certainly self-love, though confined to the interest of this life, is, of the two, a much better guide than passion, which has absolutely no bound nor measure but what is set to it by this self-love, or moral considerations".<sup>2</sup> Butler says again: "And as in civil government the constitution is broken in upon, and violated by power and strength prevailing over authority; so the constitution of man is broken in upon and violated by the lower faculties or principles within prevailing over that which is in its nature supreme over them all".<sup>3</sup>

In Madhusūdana this point is clear from the fact that in Indian philosophy kāma (enjoyment) is recognised as one of the four ends (though a subsidiary end) of life. We have said before that kāma, krodha (anger) and lobha (greed) are the three gates of hell. Madhusūdana in his commentary on verse 37 of Chapter III<sup>4</sup> describes kāma as the great enemy of man and as that which is the cause of all evils in life. But kāma here,

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1. 'The works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 1, p.67.
  2. do. do. Pref. to Sermons, sect. 36, p. 27.
  3. do. do. Sermon III, sect. 1, p. 68.
  4. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', pp. 120-121.

we think, means unregulated kāma. It is enjoyment under unlawful conditions. In other words it means the satisfaction of desires without any control and guidance of intellect or buddhi. It is the gratification of such unregulated desires which is the cause of all evils in life. But when kāma is said to be one of the ends of life it means regulated kāma. It is enjoyment under lawful conditions, the satisfaction of desires under the guidance and control of reason.

It is true that at one stage desires have to be given up. The preparation for mokṣa demands that desires for worldly values must cease sometime, at some stage of man's moral progress. But then it does not mean that desires are to be killed or suppressed. What happens is that buddhi becomes so purified and so turned towards God that there is no place for desires in man's life. They disappear automatically. At this stage man transcends the sphere of ethics. We have said all along that Madhusūdana recognises a stage which is beyond ethics. But before that stage is reached, so long as man is within the sphere of ethics, there is no question of killing desires though the teaching is quite emphatic that they must be controlled. We thus see that the ethical and moral teachings of both the thinkers are in essential agreement in this that they both insist that impulses are not to be destroyed but they should be properly subordinated and kept within their limits.

We have explained the ethics of both Butler and Madhusūdana against the background of the Jaina ethics. To avoid any misunderstanding and confusion about it we think it necessary

to explain it a little further.

It is true that sannyāsa as ān āśrama, that is to say, a stage of life is recognised in Hinduism. It may even be said that all life moves towards this stage of life and also that in this one has to renounce worldly values. But even in the stage of sannyāsa rigorism is not so emphasised as is in Jainism. Renunciation is essentially an inner detachment and withdrawal of consciousness from false identification with things of the world. This certainly prevents the sannyāsi from seeking what the ordinary man lives for. But in his actual way of life the sannyāsi does not revel in suppressing his physical needs and healthy life. Indeed when it is said in the Bhagavadgītā<sup>1</sup> that he renounces all activity it is also said that he still does whatever is necessary for the maintenance of his physical life. What we have said in the thesis about the ethics for the general man is not inconsistent with the view expressed here. For sannyāsa is a stage which is not strictly speaking ethical yet for which all ethics is a preparation. Ethics and morality are to be practised by the people in the first three stages of life; this does not mean that the sannyāsi can lead an unethical life but only that having gone through the processes of high ethical training he has no need of it any longer.

There is yet another very important point of similarity between Butler and Madhusūdana. It is not only that they both insist on the control and regulation of the lower impulses but they both hold that there is a supreme principle in human

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1. 'Bhagavadgita', Chapter IV, verses 20-21.

nature through which these impulses should be controlled and guided. Virtue according to both thus consists in the regulation of the impulses by the supreme principle. Butler calls this principle 'conscience', in Madhusūdana it is enlightened intellect or buddhi. Buddhi plays the same role in Madhusūdana as conscience does in Butler. We have already discussed the role of conscience in Butler's moral philosophy in some detail. Let us therefore first point out here briefly how buddhi plays an important role in the psychological scheme of the Bhagavad-gītā which Madhusūdana accepts and propounds.

Kṛṣṇa says in the third chapter of the Bhagavadgītā that there is a path of knowledge (Jñāna-yoga) to the supreme good which path philosophers follow. But there is also a path of action (Karma-yoga) which men of action follow. In this Karma-yoga buddhi is the ultimate path-finder. According to the Sāṃkhya philosophy which the Bhagavadgītā accepts so far as it goes, buddhi is the highest element in the subjective being of man. Therefore the elements which are lower than buddhi should be controlled and guided by it. Buddhi is also that principle in which, as shown by the Sāṃkhya philosophy, the light of Puruṣa is reflected. It is this reflection which is known as spiritual illumination or knowledge. It thus becomes essential for man to purify buddhi so that it can become properly capable of reflecting the light of Puruṣa (spirit). From the ethical point of view it is that principle in man which decides in a given case what is to be done and what is not to

be done. It is buddhi that decides and sets its sanction on one or the other among the many suggestions of the lower elements of human nature. Buddhi decides what is safe for the soul and what is dangerous, what binds man and what sets him free. It is thus this principle which decides in a particular situation what is right and what is wrong, what should be and what should not be done. The development of buddhi thus becomes an ethical task of man.

In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad<sup>1</sup> buddhi or intellect has been compared to the driver of a chariot. Just as the driver of the chariot controls its movements, activities, directions etc. so also buddhi is that principle which controls, guides and regulates the activities of the other elements in human nature. Now since buddhi is that principle whose guidance is ultimately decisive it has to be properly developed. It is enlightened or sāttvika buddhi alone that can see things in their right prospective, that can rightly distinguish between right and wrong and thus decide whether or not a thing is to be done. Much emphasis is therefore laid on the steadiness of buddhi. If man is always disturbed by desires, his buddhi also continues to be unsteady and unsettled. This disturbed buddhi, not cleared of all obscuring tendencies, cannot make a right distinction between what should or should not be done and as such cannot act as a proper guide to conduct. It is incapable of reflecting the light of Puruṣa (spirit) and we may say in the

1. 'Kaṭha Upaniṣad', I. III. 3-9.

context of the Bhagavadgītā, of God.

From what we have said above we can see the parallel between Butler's conscience and buddhi. This parallel is strikingly brought out by the fact that conscience is the highest principle in human nature just as buddhi is in the Bhagavadgītā's scheme of psychology. Every man should therefore try to bring under the control of his buddhi all his lower impulses and inclinations and act according to it. He should thus bring order and harmony in his psychological life through the exercise of intellect or buddhi. Butler always and everywhere strongly argues that we must act according to conscience which is the chief principle in human nature. According to him any action in which the authority of this highest principle is violated must be wrong. An action can be right only when man acts according to the principle.

Furthermore, conscience is the voice of God according to Butler. It is that principle which apprehends God and His purpose in the world. For a Karma-yogī also buddhi is the chief instrument of knowing God's will and carrying it out. Again just as in Butler conscience can be over-powered by inferior principles so also in Madhusūdana buddhi can be, in fact, often is clouded and over-powered by other inferior elements of nature. When thus over-powered, buddhi is unable to make a right discrimination between virtue and vice, right and wrong. In this state it often takes vice as virtue and out of ignorance perceives all things wrongly. Thus accord-

ing to both Butler and Madhusūdana an action is right if and when it is in accordance with the highest principle of nature and it is wrong when that principle is disregarded.

We have pointed out the fundamental points of similarity between the two thinkers. But there are also some points of difference which we shall try to bring out here. The first point of difference is that though both derive morality from human nature yet their conception of it (human nature) is not exactly the same. In Butler there is emphasis on the psychological make-up of man's nature. According to him human nature, as we have shown, is made up of several particular passions and general principles. These different principles of action are all arranged in a natural hierarchical order and virtue lies in acting according to this hierarchy. An action becomes unnatural and therefore wrong when this hierarchy is disturbed. In Madhusūdana the emphasis is on the fundamental characteristics of man. As we have already pointed out, according to Hindu ethical thought men are broadly divided into three classes - sāttvika, rājasika and tāmasika according as the one or another of the three guṇas predominates in them. It is the predominance of these guṇas that determine man's fundamental nature. The caste-duties, which every man is required to perform according to the position which he occupies in society, are based on the fundamental nature of man. Thus virtue according to Madhusūdana consists in doing one's appointed duties born of nature which in this context means

one's fundamental nature.

There is yet another point of difference between the two thinkers. Butler assumes too much uniformity in human nature. No doubt he also admits the differences in the inner constitution of man but it seems to us that in spite of all these he appears inclined to hold that men are all alike in their nature. Butler says: "If it be said, that there are persons in the world, who are in great measure without the natural affections towards their fellow-creatures: there are like-wise instances of persons without the common natural affections to themselves: but the nature of man is not to be judged of by either of these, but by what appears in the common world, in the bulk of mankind".<sup>1</sup> Madhusūdana on the other hand while recognising certain uniformity in human nature also stresses variations in human beings. In fact this is a very important point in his ethical teaching. There are no doubt certain common duties which are incumbent on all human beings but the caste-duties are based on men's inequalities in their fundamental nature at the moment of birth. Since men are not alike in their nature, their functions or duties cannot be the same. It is keeping in view these differences in the natural qualities, capacities and tendencies of men that, as we have already shown above, their duties are prescribed. It must also be remembered here that probably it is because of these differ-

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon I, sect. 13, pp. 47-48.

ences in human nature that when Madhusudana says 'follow nature' it specifically means 'follow your nature' (svabhāva).

It must be remembered, however, that despite all these differences which are matters of detail only, the fundamental ethical teaching of both Butler and Madhusūdana remains the same. According to both virtue lies in following nature. A natural action, according to both, is a virtuous action. Again they both advocate and argue for the control, and regulation of the lower elements of nature. And lastly according to both an action is right if it is in accordance with the highest principle of human nature and wrong when that principle is disregarded.

## Chapter VII.

### A. Virtue and Self-interest in Madhusūdana.

In the last chapter we have explained what the duties of men belonging to the different classes are and also how they are determined. Now the question arises how and in what spirit these duties should be carried out. Are we to perform them for the sake of satisfying our own interest? Are we to do them with a view to gaining private and selfish ends? In this chapter we shall concern ourselves mainly with these questions.

In order to understand the full significance of these problems that confront us in this chapter it is necessary to go to the root or the central idea that underlies them. We have said that Madhusūdana holds that salvation or mokṣa is the highest end of human life. The attainment of mokṣa is the ideal towards which the entire Hindu thought moves. "All life", as Dr. Radhakrishnan says, "is set to the music of this ideal".<sup>1</sup> Mokṣa literally means release or freedom, freedom from the wheel of births and deaths. It is transcending the standpoint of mere individualism and rising to an impersonal universalism. The destiny of all men is to realise this supreme ideal which can only be attained when they rise above the narrow and the finite and completely identify themselves with God. It must be borne in mind here that Hindu thinkers including our author believe in and

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'The Hindu Dharma', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, October 1922, p. 7.

affirm the reality of the eternal the attainment of which means release or freedom from rebirth. It is that status of being in which the individual is superior to time, to birth and death. It is a new mode of being, an altogether transformed life. In other words spiritual life is not the extension of the ethical and moral life. It is a new dimension in which things are viewed from an eternal point of view.

But the conception of the highest aim of life and how it can be attained has not always been the same in Indian thought. This has undergone a process of gradual evolution in the history of Hindu ethical thought from the Vedic period to that of the Bhagavadgītā. The same word salvation or mokṣa has been employed but in different senses.

During the Vedic period salvation meant the attainment of happiness in heaven by the performance of religious rites as prescribed in the Vedas. At this period the performance of duty or dharma which included sacrifices and rituals was prompted by a desire for rewards either in this life or in the life hereafter. During the period of the Ṛg Veda, Hindus prayed for prolongation of life and prosperity here, and for happiness hereafter.<sup>1</sup> Nivṛtti or renunciation was not considered as an essential condition for the attainment of salvation.

When we come to the Upaniṣadic period we find that there

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1. A.B. Keith. 'The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads', Harvard oriental series, Vol. 32, pp. 479-480.

is a distinct change in the conception of salvation. The Upaniṣads present a spirit of revolt against the egoistic view of the Vedas which advocated the performance of rituals for the sake of rewards and punishments. The idea of attaining happiness through the performance of sacrifices and rituals fades into insignificance during this period. The view that the world is full of sorrow and suffering occupies the minds of the thinkers and therefore the problem of liberation and the emancipation of the soul from the bondage of saṃsāra<sup>1</sup> becomes very important at this period. The different systems of Indian philosophy which developed at this period all discuss and explain in their own way the attainment of liberation from bondage. The idea of renunciation of the world and retirement from all the activities of life gains predominance at this period. Speculation on the mysteries of life and death becomes very conspicuous and the attention of the Upaniṣadic thinkers is centered mainly upon the human soul. According to them salvation can be attained only by following the path of nivṛtti or cessation from activities. Renunciation thus becomes an indispensable means of attaining salvation. The logic of the Upaniṣads seems to be that since all action binds, every action is a source of bondage committing the soul to the empirical world and preventing its union with God, the

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1. In Hindu ethical thought expressions like 'saṃsāra', 'the cycle of birth and death', 'jagat' and 'the wheel of time' etc. are employed to indicate the non-substantial character of the universe.

emancipation of the human soul from the bondage of saṃsāra is possible only through renunciation of the worldly activities.

It may be urged here that the Īśa Upaniṣad<sup>1</sup> advocates a life of activity as opposed to the life of renunciation. It says that a man should try to live a life-span of a hundred years by constantly performing actions. In reply it may be pointed out that Īśa Upaniṣad no doubt seems to advocate an active life, but truly speaking it is not an active life, at least not the type of active life that we find advocated in the post-Upaniṣadic period. It seems to us that in it there is an echo of the performance of Vedic sacrifices, the works enjoined in the Vedas. It cannot therefore be said to represent the general attitude of the Upaniṣads, which is the attitude of renunciation from worldly activities. Professor Ranade referring to this passage in the Īśa Upaniṣad rightly points out that though the passage tells us that "we should spend our life-time in doing actions, the actions that are here implied have no further range than possibly the small circumference of 'sacrifice'; and further, the way in which, even in the midst of a life of action, freedom from contagion with the fruit of action may be secured is not here brought out with sufficient clearness".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Farquhar also remarks:

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1. Īśa Upaniṣad, 2.

2. R.D. Ranade. 'A constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy,' Poona (India), 1926, p. 298.

"According to the early Upanishads, all actions, whether good or bad, compel the soul to be reborn to undergo requital, and only inaction can lead to Release".<sup>1</sup>

But in order to assess the proper attitude of the Upaniṣads it is fair to go into the texts themselves. (1) Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says<sup>2</sup> that 'one who lives a life of peace, self-restraint, quietness (cessation from activity) and of patient endurance and detachment sees the Ātma within himself. Evils do not overtake him for he over-comes all evils. Evils do not burn for he consumes all evils. Free from evil, free from impurity and free from doubt, he becomes a knower of Brahman.

This passage from the Bṛhadāraṇyake Upaniṣad clearly shows that an aspirant must live a calm, peaceful and quiet life in order that he may be able to realise the Brahman. Here are a few passages from other Upaniṣads which do not directly speak of giving up all activity but in which the entire emphasis is laid on the development of the spirit and in which there is nothing about the performance of any activity.

(1) Chāndogya Upaniṣad says that 'it is the self (Ātman) that is below and above, behind and before, on the right and left. The self indeed, is this world. He who sees like this, thinks like this, understands like this, becomes one who delights in

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1. J.N. Farquhar. 'Karma! its value as a doctrine of life',  
Hibbert Journal, Vol. XX, No. 1, October 1921, p. 25.

2. 'Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad', IV, 4. 23.

the soul, sports in the soul, consorts with the soul, enjoys the soul; he becomes free and moves as he pleases in all the worlds'.<sup>1</sup>

(II) Again Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad says that 'a man who knows that it is the self (Ātman) that shines forth in all things begins to play with the self, and to enjoy the self, for that indeed constitutes his action. Thus he becomes foremost among those who know the self'.<sup>2</sup>

From the above it seems clear that the attention of the Upaniṣadic thinkers was centered on the self and their aim was solely directed to a systematic search after the ultimate Reality. They occupied themselves almost wholly with the philosophic wisdom of self-knowledge which could be gained through renunciation of the world. Thus renunciation or cessation from worldly activity is considered necessary for the attainment of salvation. But this conception of salvation seems incompatible with the practical and social life. It goes against the demands of the society which advocate a vigorous and active life. The Bhagavadgītā at this stage comes to our help. It seeks a formula and provides us with a solution which brings about a happy compromise between the two incompatibles - renunciation of the world and active life in it, and the demands of society. According to it there is a way of performing actions in which they do not bind. If all

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1. 'Chāndogya Upaniṣad', VII. 25-32.

2. 'Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad', III. 1. 4.

actions are performed selflessly and disinterestedly then these do not bind the soul in the sense in which selfish acts do. In fact by so doing a man is freed from the bondage of karma and finally attains liberation. The solution which the Bhagavadgītā thus offers is that salvation can be achieved in and through the performance of one's own duties according to one's station in life without any expectation of reward. A man should do the duties allotted to him by his nature and his social status but he should not act with any selfish motive of gain to himself. Rather, he should do them in the spirit of service to God and should offer the fruits of his actions to Him. It is not actions themselves but the desire for result, the desire to enjoy the fruits of actions, that binds man. Thus we see that the Bhagavadgītā changes the entire conception of human actions. It views them from a higher point of view. It spiritualises or idealises the whole human activity. Dr. Schweitzer rightly observes: "The charm of the Bhagavad-Gītā is due to this idea of spiritualised activity which springs only from the highest of motives".<sup>1</sup>

It should be remembered here that in the Bhagavadgītā the word 'renunciation' is retained but it changes its connotation. The spirit of renunciation is preserved without abandoning the worldly activity, Renunciation here does not mean renunciation of activities, renunciation of life in the world. It means renunciation of selfishness, egoism and renunciation of

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1. Albert Schweitzer. 'Indian Thought and its Development', London, 1951, p. 191.

the fruits of actions. True renunciation means detachment from the fruits of all actions. Thus it is the renunciation in action and not the renunciation of action that is emphasised here. It is the desire for the results of works which is the cause of re-birth and which should therefore be renounced but not the works as such. It is not complete inaction, which is an impossibility, but actions fully and freely done without subjection to sense and passions which are the secret of perfection, and which are therefore emphasised here. The fundamental teaching of the Bhagavadgītā is that 'we must act in such a way that our actions do not bind us' and it may in a sense be said to be an improvement upon the life which we find advocated in some of the Upaniṣadic texts. As we have already said, according to the Bhagavadgītā it is not all actions that bind man, only interested actions, actions done with egoism, selfishness and hope of reward, that do so. Disinterested and selfless actions, far from binding, through the purification of buddhi and spiritual insight that follows such actions, lead to the realisation of self. This is probably the unique contribution of the Bhagavadgītā to the philosophy of action.

Dr. Maitra probably refers to the synthesis and the happy compromise which the Bhagavadgītā brings about between the two paths - the path of Pravṛtti and the path of Nivṛtti - action and renunciation, when he remarks "Shankara's higher path of nibṛtti or cessation from activity presents only a negative ideal which leads necessarily to spiritual bankruptcy. It

implies in its later stages the cessation of all duties including nityanaimittika or unconditional duties as well as the kāmya or conditional duties. (The nature of these duties is explained in the foot-note). It is therefore a condition of spiritual void without content, i.e., the negation or death of Spirit. Such nibṛtti or cessation according to the Gītā cannot be an end-in-itself and can be recommended only as preparatory to the attitude of disinterestedness and detachment. The highest ideal is that which fills this void of nibṛtti or cessation with concrete content, .... the ideal or plane of nibṛtta-karma or disinterested performance of duty for duty's sake. It is the plane of karma without material motives".<sup>1</sup>

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Note. Kāmyakarma or conditional duties are those duties that are performed by the agent only when there is a desire for a particular end. These are also called optional duties or actions. It is the pleasure of the agent, not his duty, to perform such an action. But if he undertakes the performance of such an action he must not violate moral laws. Such duties or actions presuppose a subjective motive of a personal nature. For instance only those who aspire to go to heaven or to attain mundane objectives like the birth of a son or the attainment of wealth are to perform relevant sacrifices. The unconditional duties on the contrary are obligatory in themselves independent of personal motives. These duties must be performed in accordance with moral law. Their non-performance causes harm. Such duties fall into two classes, viz., (1) the nitya-karmas or duties which are unconditionally obligatory for all time and (2) the naimittika-karmas or duties which are the unconditionally obligatory only when their nimittas or special occasions arise. For instance the daily prayer is an unconditional, nitya duty: it must be done every morning and evening without fail. Bathing in the Ganges in a solar or lunar eclipse, however, is an unconditional naimittika duty: it is unconditionally binding only on the occasions of the eclipse. In either case, however, the duties are unconditionally binding, i.e., obligatory independent of any personal motive of the agent.

1. S.K. Maitra. 'The Ethics of the Hindus', Calcutta, 1925, p. 109.

We have seen how there has been a gradual change in the conception of salvation or mokṣa from the Vedic age till the time of the Bhagavadgītā and in this connection we have also indicated how the Bhagavadgītā fills in the void created by the Upaniṣadic doctrine of nivṛtti or cessation from activity with its principle of disinterested and selfless performance of duties of life. We shall now proceed to discuss Madhusūdana's view about self-interest which is in line with his own emphasis on devotion or bhakti and with the general teaching of the Bhagavadgītā in this respect. At the very outset it may be pointed out that one of Madhusūdana's primary ethical teachings is that there is no virtue in performing an action with any selfish motive of gain to the agent. One should not perform any act with any selfish desire and motive. Madhusūdana argues for the renunciation of all considerations for the private and individual self. He decries the very idea of self-interest and everywhere advocates the doctrine that one must perform the duties of his station in life assigned to him by his nature without any attachment, without any selfish consideration. All work is evil if it be rooted in selfishness and therefore the abandonment of all personal desires and motive is insisted upon by him. He always advocates the ideal of detachment and disinterestedness which means having no self-interest. Actions are good and virtuous only if they are free from the tinge of selfishness and are performed as religious acts in the spirit of love and surrender to God.

We may also point out here that freedom from egoism and selfhood is, in fact, the key-note of the whole Indian ethical thought. The idea behind this emphasis on the abandonment of all egoism and selfishness is that actions done with personal desires and motives bind man, keep him confined to this temporal world of becoming, and thus prevent him from attaining the Supreme end namely mokṣa or spiritual freedom. In short, all actions ordinarily bind their doers by creating attachment to their result, therefore those who act should relinquish all attachment to the result.

Not only the desire for fruits of action but also the idea that man is the agent, the doer has to be given up. The teaching is that man must have the knowledge that it is prakṛti, the cosmic energy that does everything. This knowledge completes the process of renunciation of fruits of action. So long as we claim personal agency for all actions and desire their fruits we get entangled in successive embodiments through countless ages. We should therefore, as we have just said, renounce not only all desires for the fruits of actions including the meritorious ones, but we should renounce all personal agency for actions and dedicate them to prakṛti or God. In so far as man is able to efface himself and attribute every thing to God he escapes the inevitable results of actions.

It may also be pointed out here that according to the Bhagavadgītā<sup>1</sup> he is the true Yogi who sees inaction in action

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā, Chapter IV, verse 18.

and action in inaction. He sees inaction in action because he is ever active yet he does not claim to be the doer of the action. Again, he sees action in inaction because though he does not claim to be the doer of actions, yet he is really active in the sense that he does them in the proper spirit. The whole idea is that the complete effacement of the ego is essential if truth is to be realised. Every taint of individuality should disappear for the realisation of self or God.

In the Bhagavadgītā such persons as act from selfish motives are called deluded and fools. Madhusūdana in his commentary on verses 42-44 of Chapter II<sup>1</sup> denounces vehemently those deluded people who follow the Vedic injunctions for attaining svarga or heaven. Such people perform the Vedic sacrifices through passions, desires and aversion and think that there is nothing greater than these. Madhusūdana argues that an aspirant should transcend the sphere of Vedic sacrifices performed out of motives of self-interest. Śāṅkara commenting on these verses and criticising those who work for heavenly rewards points out that such persons are unwise; 'they are wanting in discrimination. They are enamoured of the Vedic passages composed of many a praise to gods and unfolding various ends and means. They hold that there is nothing else besides works which are the means of attaining svarga (heaven), cattle, and other such objects of desire. They are full of

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', pp. 74-75.

desires and are ever in pursuit of them. Their chief and final goal is svarga. They talk words, fine like a flowery tree, very pleasant to hear. Thus talking these foolish people wander in the saṃsāra. They regard pleasure and power as necessary; they are in love with them and have identified themselves with them. Their intelligence and wisdom are blinded as it were by this speech abounding in specific acts. In their mind no conviction of a resolute nature, no wisdom concerning Sāṃkhya or Yoga will arise'.<sup>1</sup>

Again Madhusūdana in his commentary on verse 49 of Chapter II<sup>2</sup> strongly argues for the performance of selfless actions, performance of actions without any desire for their fruits. He says that those who make fruit their motive and do not work without attachment are wretched (atyantadīna). They take their birth again and again in a continuous cycle of saṃsāra. Those who work without any attachment and renounce the fruit of action are eventually released from the bondage of re-birth and attain to the state which is free from all ills.

It may be interesting to point out here the agreement of the Bhagavadgītā with the Upaniṣadic view on this point. Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad<sup>3</sup> also calls such persons who work for heavenly

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1. 'The Bhagavad-Gītā with the commentary of Srī Śankarāchārya! Eng. Trans. by A. Mahādeva Sāstri, Mysore (India), 1901, p. 52.
  2. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', p. 79.
  3. 'Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad', 1.2.10.

rewards deluded. According to it the foolish who regard sacrifices and works of merit as most important and gloat over these as the highest good proceed again and again to old age and death. These deluded people, not knowing any other good, after enjoying the fruits of their good deeds in heaven, again enter this human world or a still lower one (of animals). Thus those who perform good works get their reward no doubt, but they are not united with God and are therefore regarded as fools in comparison with the higher spiritual souls who seek God only.

The point to be borne in mind is that the aspirant or the man who seeks divinity should renounce his lower aims, his private and personal aims. He should renounce not by withdrawing himself from the world and thus forsaking his worldly duties which are allotted to him by his nature nor merely doing them either for worldly or heavenly rewards but by doing them in a spirit of selflessness or disinterestedness and as a matter of duty. He should perform actions to which he is born because they ought to be done, because there is a moral necessity to do them as a service to divinity and because if done in this spirit, without any hope of reward, they free him from his bondage to the saṃsāra and make for his spiritual freedom and liberation. To explain this point fully it may also be stated here that the ascetic gives up all work in his search for the truth but that is not the proper way to cultivate the spirit. As we have already said it is not by renouncing work

but by renouncing in work that we can cultivate the spirit. No one should renounce his duties toward the world but should do them in a spirit of selflessness. Works done in this spirit helps the attainment of knowledge by producing in the aspirant the spirit of dispassion for material things. Again the ritualist performs actions but not in the right and proper spirit, the spirit of renunciation. He performs his actions in the hope of a reward either here or hereafter which, far from leading to liberation, only intensifies his feeling of egoism and separateness. But he who works as a moral necessity, as a service to divinity, without fostering selfishness, is illumined with the divine light of serenity. He is freed from all taint of individuality, all the stains of selfishness are erased, because he works for God alone and he dedicates all fruits to Him. He is thus freed from the bondage of saṃsāra and ultimately becomes one with God, which is the Supreme ideal of life.

Thus the whole ethical and moral teaching is, in a sense, staked on the question of 'desire and motive'. An action done from personal motives causes bondage to karma and re-birth and prevents the realisation of the Supreme moral ideal. Professor Narsimham seems to suggest this when he remarks: "The whole doctrine centres round 'desire', the essential nature of the power personal self; because, desire is in its various degrees of subtleness, so to say, the most powerful of our enemies,

which blinds us from perceiving the true nature of Reality".<sup>1</sup>

It may be useful to refer to the view of Rāmānuja here. Madhusūdana accepts that it is possible even in this life to attain a stage of such spiritual development (Jīvanmukti) that even though activities may continue, the duties as duties cease for the man who has attained it. Rāmānuja however does not agree with Madhusūdana on this point. According to him moral and religious duties continue all through life because Jīvanmukti is not possible to attain. But what is of interest in this context is that he also emphasises the principle of discarding all selfish motives and desires and doing everything as duty. According to Rāmānuja there are punya-karmas or works of religious merit which though not directly, yet eventually, lead to divine knowledge. There are also papa-karmas or works of religious demerit which are positive obstacles to divine knowledge. The point which we want to emphasise and bring out here is that Rāmānuja also believes and holds that even punya-karmas (not to talk of papa-karmas) if done from personal and selfish motives become positive obstacles to the attainment of divine knowledge. So according to Rāmānuja also as it is according to Madhusūdana, all acts including the meritorious and religious should be accomplished disinterestedly, that is, free from interested desires for reward and happiness. It is

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1. P. Narasimham. 'The Vedantic Good', <sup>Mind,</sup> Vol. XXIV, New Series, No. 93, January 1915, p. 51.

only when even the religious acts are performed from a sense of duty that they become means which qualify man for the spiritual life.

We have seen how Madhusūdana and other Indian thinkers all with one voice preach and argue for the renunciation of selfishness and egoism and advocate the principle of detachment and disinterestedness. We shall now pass on to consider some of the objections that have been and that are still raised against the doctrine of detachment in the performance of one's normal functions of life.

Professor McKenzie in his book 'Hindu Ethics' raises certain objections to this theory. To follow fully the discussions of these objections it may be useful to quote some of his statements here. He says: "The wise man should do his appointed work, it is said, without regard to the fruit of works, in the same spirit as the Supreme performs His works. What does unattachment to the fruit of works here mean? In some places at any rate one is forced to the conclusion that it involves the idea, as an essential element in it, of absence of purpose. In the Bhagavadgītā we have a conception of the world different from the orthodox Sāṃkhya. ... (According to the Bhagavadgītā) the phenomenal world is no longer the outcome of the mere lighting up of Prakṛti by Puruṣa, but it is created and continued under the direction of the Supreme. We seem to be forced to the conclusion that God created the world, imposing laws upon nature and upon man, and yet that in all this He remained free from attachment, not loving His creation, not

seeking the fulfilment of any purpose through it; but at the same time, man's dharma, established by the Supreme without attachment, is to be performed by man with similar absence of attachment. The finite world, and dharma with it, thus lose all meaning. ... In the light of this statement we can see that we cannot without some qualification say that morality receives in the Bhagavadgītā a positive content. It certainly does so, but it is a content cold and lifeless, fixed and immutable, not a content which becomes ever richer and more vital to him who seeks to perform it. ... (Then again) the emphasis (in the Bhagavadgītā) is rather on those (virtues) connected with absence of attachment than those connected with the performance of positive duty." <sup>1</sup>

Dr. Schweitzer also while comparing the teaching of the Bhagavadgītā with the speculative philosophy of J.G. Fichte remarks: "In the Bhagavad-Gītā, on the other hand, man plays a part in the drama from a blind sense of duty, without seeking to find out its meaning, and, along with that, the meaning of his own action". <sup>2</sup>

These criticisms may perhaps arise from an inadequate comprehension of the idea that lies behind the ethical thought of the Bhagavadgītā, and in fact of the whole Vedānta philosophy, the school of Indian philosophy to which our author Madhusūdana belongs. Why Madhusūdana lays considerable emphasis

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1. John McKenzie. 'Hindu Ethics', Oxford, 1922, pp. 132-133.

2. Albert Schweitzer. 'Indian Thought and its Development', London, 1951, p. 192.

on absence of attachment or as Professor McKenzie calls it 'unattachment' should be understood in relation to the Supreme ideal of human life, the ideal of self-realisation. Equanimity of mind, detachment and self-control are the necessary conditions for spiritual life. It is through the cultivation of these that the highest good can be realised. The development of such an attitude is thus not only essential but an inevitable pre-requisite to the realisation of God. The equanimity or stability of mind is possible only if we work through unattachment and self-control. The non-attached man is he who has developed dispassion to the material objects and whose senses are completely under his control. He is one who works without any thought of the enjoyment of consequences. He is not at the mercy of his passions and affections. He thus being free from affection and aversion obtains peace and stability of mind, harmony and tranquility and thus eventually realises the self. On the other hand if we work with attachment, if we work with a desire to achieve some private and personal ends to which there is no end then our mental harmony and equilibrium is upset and with this all evils arise in life. In the Bhagavadgita attachment to objects of sense is regarded as the root of all evil. From the attachment to objects arises desire. Desire prompts man to activity. If he is frustrated in his efforts he becomes angry. Anger breeds delusion and delusion leads to the loss of reason and with the

loss of reason the man himself is utterly ruined. Work with attachment thus far from helping man in any way ultimately brings about his ruin by breaking the peace and stability of his mind. It is to escape this doom that the cultivation of detachment is emphasised. Thus it is clear from what has been said above that it is only through unattachment, through the perfect control of the senses that proper conditions for the realisation of the highest good of life can be brought about. "Therefore, without attachment perform always the work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment".<sup>1</sup> This is why Hindu ethical thought abounds in praise of unattachment or performance of selfless acts.

It seems to us that this is also the reason why so much emphasis has been laid on the necessity of becoming 'St̥hita-prajña' which means one whose mind is fixed and steady. The man who has his prajña fixed is not troubled in sorrows and is not eager to gain pleasure. He is one from whom desires, fears and anger have fallen away. He has no attachment on any side and is indifferent in prosperity and adversity. He withdraws his senses from their object on every side as a tortoise does its limbs. Such a man attains true peace, true contentment. It is only when the mind is at peace with itself, fixed, unruffled and filled with contentment that deep contemplation

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā', Chapter III, verse 19.

and through it the realisation of the Supreme end of life is possible.

We may explain it in a slightly different way. 'To attach' means to bind or to fasten. Thus actions done with attachment are those that bind men. It may be asked here, to what do they bind or fasten men ? The answer is that they fasten them to the spatio-temporal world, the world of becoming. Such actions fetter men to the chain of births and deaths. Again to detach means to unfasten or to release. Detached actions are those actions that unfasten or release men. Unfasten from what ? From their bondage to this empirical world. Thus we see that actions with attachment are those that bind men to karma and re-birth and prevent them from attaining union with God. On the other hand actions with detachment are those that enable men to free themselves from the bondage and thus gain spiritual freedom.

We may explain the same point yet in another way. What do we mean by life ? What does it really consist in ? Does it consist in mere satisfaction of desires and enjoyment of pleasures ? Now if by life we mean a life of constant seeking and hankering after pleasure, and thus becoming a prey to the mad dance of passions and affections, then of course unattachment has no meaning. But if on the other hand by life we mean a rational life, a life in which the senses are controlled, then the life of unattachment acquires full meaning and significance. It is a perfectly rational life. It is an

unselfish life - a life of unselfish devotion to the good of humanity.

Mr. Widgery had probably Professor McKenzie's criticism in mind when he remarked: "The notion that actions should be performed with 'non-attachment' has sometimes been represented by Western thinkers as a psychological absurdity and a practical impossibility. That has been due to misunderstanding of the position criticized. The implications seem to be somewhat as follows: All actions which are 'attached' are performed for the attainment of their fruits either for the agent himself, or for others or for both. The teaching of 'non-attachment' is that the person should perform right acts without doing so for the sake of any consequences to be enjoyed by self or others. Moral conduct should in other words be 'disinterested'. Here there appears to be nothing much more or less than the Kantian doctrine of duty for duty's sake. .... In short, selfishness has to give place to a sense of disinterested duty, for thus only can bondage to the law of karma and finite rebirth be overcome".<sup>1</sup> And again, "The over-coming of attachment to the consequences or results of action also has the implication of a state of equanimity of mind. One who fears these results of action or hopes for those is not likely to have equanimity; if self-interest in results is abandoned there may be equanimity. Now such equanimity is a main characteristic of Hindu moral

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1. Alban G. Widgery. 'The Principles of Hindu Ethics', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XL, No. 2, January 1930, p. 236.

attitude. It is attained when the rajasik is subordinated to the sattwik, when the individualism is subordinated to universalism."<sup>1</sup>

The whole point is that the aspirant should endeavour to attain to the right composure and develop proper ethical attitude of mind to realise the highest good.

In our consideration of the criticisms we would like to go a little further. These criticisms are perhaps based on the belief that if men are to perform their actions without attachment then the finite world and dharma with it lose all meaning. In view of what has been said it is difficult to agree with this view. A little reflection shows that the case is just the reverse. Even for those who are earnest about realising the self, (not to speak of those who always work with attachment and for whom the world is full of meaning) the finite world is full of significance and meaning in the sense that it is in and through this that they can realise their ideal. The infinite and the eternal is not out of all relation to the finite world. The infinite can be realised through the finite. Man's life in this world is to be looked upon as a bridge over which he has to pass in order to reach his destination. Thus the wheel of births and deaths no doubt binds man but in a sense it also provides him with opportuni-

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1. Alban G. Widgery. 'The Principles of Hindu Ethics', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XL, No. 2, January 1930, pp. 236-237.

ties to transcend it. In this sense it becomes a means to perfection. The world is the training ground, so to say, since it provides opportunities for the soul's progress, and it is here and no where else that man can work out his salvation through the performance of his dharma. It is only by discharging his duties to the world in the right spirit that man can prepare himself for spiritual freedom. Madhusūdan's ethics, which is the ethics of the Vedānta, consists in gradually training the individual in this finite world in order that he may rise above the dualistic position to one of non-dualistic realisation.

Again the meaning and significance of the finite world does not lie in keeping man confined to it and thus making him blind to the Supreme ideal of life. On the contrary the significance of the finite world lies in enabling man to transcend it, but to transcend it through it. The importance of dharma lies in the fact that it is in and through the performance of one's dharma here in this finite world in the proper spirit of non-attachment that one can realise perfection. It is thus not by renouncing the world but by performing one's dharma in it that God can be attained. Thus we can say that the finite world is a means to the realisation of the end, namely God.

Mr. Homo Leone seems to realise the value of this world according to the Vedāntic ethical thought, and in order to emphasise this point to his readers he italicises the words

'in the world' in his observation: "True Vedanta does not make one sink to the level of the beast or the stone, but see one mighty unity in all nature and work more efficiently 'in the world' for the very light it throws on the problems of life - a sort of spiral apex, to use a simile, where activity and inactivity, being and not-being, subject and object, in short all the dualities of this world of appearance culminate and 'lose' themselves in a higher unity". A few lines after the ones quoted he again says: "Verily the world exists by opposition or contradiction and when once we get 'behind' it by transcending it, we 'see' Reality 'as it is'; for 'there' Knowledge, Knower and Known are One (to use intellectual terms)".<sup>1</sup>

Again it is difficult to say how the life of unattachment is cold and lifeless. It is not very clear in what sense this criticism has been made. Let us therefore briefly analyse the position. By a 'lifeless life' is often meant a life of inactivity, a life in which there is the absence of all activity. But a life of unattachment does not really mean renunciation of activity. It does not involve irresponsible renunciation of ordained duties. It does not mean any break from social life. The Bhagavadgītā does not approve of inactivity even on the part of those who have attained perfection. It is a life of inaction in action. It is a kind of

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1. Homo Lione. 'The Vedantic Absolute', Mind, Vol. XXI, New Series, No. 81, January 1912, p. 63.

freedom from action but reached through right action. It is not proper for man to remain without contributing his share in the maintenance of the world when God Himself ceaselessly works for it.<sup>1</sup> Besides, so long as man lives, he cannot remain even for an instant without activity. Unattachment thus does not mean inactivity. It only means activity without desire, activity without self-interest. Madhusūdana always and everywhere advocates that man must perform all his functions in a detached way, as a matter of duty till his life's pilgrimage is terminated by liberation or till he is lifted beyond the ethical and moral plane. Thus it is clear that the criticism does not apply in this sense, namely in the sense of inactivity.

Again does the criticism mean to suggest that the life of unattachment is cold and lifeless in the sense that it provides no incentive to work? The criticism does not seem to apply even in this sense. Because even though a life of unattachment is a selfless life, a life from which all selfishness and egotism have been eliminated, this does not mean that one who acts selflessly has no incentive, no motive before him. He has to realise the Supreme end of life (God) which is the greatest spur to activity and which can be said to be the greatest incentive to work. Moreover, the aspirant is never asked to renounce his normal work. Indeed, it is by perform-

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā', Chapter III, verses 22-24.

ing his worldly duties that he can prepare himself for the fulfilment of his supreme duty namely realisation of God. He is thus as much a man of this world as any other individual. The moral man accepts all the conditions of his life according to his station in society. This involves a living of normal life and fulfilment of all obligations. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind here that duty for duty's sake, though a beautiful ideal, is not recognised by Hindu thinkers, including our author, as an end in itself. The pursuit of this ideal is only a means to the realisation of the ultimate end, mokṣa. We shall explain this point more fully in Chapter IX but it is sufficient to point out here that according to them, to perform any voluntary activity without any motive is a psychological impossibility. They, however, argue that instead of having different motives for different works, man must have and should work only for one motive namely the attainment of union with God. Thus, to work without attachment does not mean performing an altogether motiveless action, but it means performing all actions with one motive, realisation of the Supreme only. A man who works without any attachment fulfils all the obligations of life and has thus as much incentive to work as, if not more than, a man who works with attachment has. Indeed a man who is free from all attachment knows that happiness in the sense of earthly joys is not man's goal. According to him, pleasures of the senses are a

delusion and he is not enticed and allured by the glitter of the world. He sees the fleeting and impermanent nature of the things of the world and is thus not satisfied with temporal happiness which is perishable and always mixed with pain. The man who works without attachment seeks eternal happiness, lasting bliss or as Madhusūdana says 'bliss unmixed with misery' which is immortal and imperishable. Thus this eternal happiness or bliss can be attained only by the realisation of the Supreme.

Professor Ranade<sup>1</sup> probably means to suggest this when he says that this eternal happiness, or great happiness as he calls it, is experienced when the 'Infinite' is seen everywhere; when the Being that calls itself the 'I' is realised everywhere; when the 'Ātman' is seen everywhere. He who thus realises the triune unity of the 'Infinite', the 'I' and the 'Ātman' and experiences the truth of the sentence 'So Aham Ātman' alone enjoys the highest happiness.

In the face of all these it is difficult to maintain the view that the Bhagavadgītā recommends a life which is cold and lifeless, or, as Dr. Schweitzer says, that in the Bhagavadgītā one is asked to do an action from a blind sense of duty.

With regard to the criticism that there is more emphasis on the absence of attachment than on the performance of positive duty it may be pointed out that the attachment to the objects of the world is considered by Hindu ethical thought to

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<sup>1</sup> R.D. Ranade. 'A Constructive Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy', Poona (India), 1926, p. 305.

be the greatest obstacle to the realisation of the goal. He who works with attachment is always haunted by fears and hopes of consequences and loses stability of mind. As we have been repeatedly saying it is only by abandoning concern for results that that equanimity of mind can be attained, which is a necessary pre-requisite to the realisation of the highest good. Attachment is thus the greatest enemy of man. It makes it impossible for him to obtain mokṣa. There is no wonder that there has been so much emphasis on the absence of attachment. But it must be remembered that this is only one side of the picture, the negative side which consists in freedom from hampering attachment. The other side of the picture, the positive side is not lost sight of. The virtues inculcated as the varṇāśrama-dharma and sāmānya-dharma are not all negative. Good deeds are always to be practised. Charity, compassion, hospitality and other philanthropic works have always been extolled and wicked actions universally condemned. A good action is extolled in the Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad thus: "The perfume of a good deed spreads afar like that of a tree laden with flowers".<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, even virtues like 'truth', 'non-violence', 'steadfastness' and 'renunciation' etc. are not merely passive virtues but represent active social morality. Also the injunction not to do wrong implies and is often coupled with the injunction to do right.

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1. 'Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad', 9.

Again, the practical side of Hindu ethics is portrayed in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad<sup>1</sup>, which narrates the story of how gods, men and demons once went to their common father, Prajāpati and requested him to instruct them. In reply Prajāpati uttered the sound 'da' to the gods who correctly interpreted that to mean 'dāmyata, practice of self-control. This means that the gods were asked to practice self-control. To men again Prajāpati uttered the syllable 'da' which they rightly understood to mean 'datta', practice charity. This means that men were asked to practice charity. To demons also Prajāpati uttered the same syllable 'da' which they interpreted to mean 'dayadhvam', practice compassion. This means that the demons are to practice compassion. Prajāpati thus outlined three cardinal virtues - self-control, charity and compassion. The Upaniṣad further tells us that even now the Creator (Prajāpati) gives the same advice about the moral law, the same triple instruction through the voice of thunder, which produces the sound 'da-da-da'.

In the face of which has been said above it is not clear how it can be maintained that there is no emphasis on the performance of positive duty.

Again there does not seem much force in the criticism that in the virtues enjoined in the Bhagavadgītā it is chiefly the inner attitude that is emphasised. It is common psycholo-

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1. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. V. 2. 1-3.

gy that all overt actions have their root in the inner nature of man. They all spring from the inner nature and an inward change is, therefore, very essential for the performance of overt activities. Inner purity is more important than outer conformity because every action is nothing but the outer expression of the inner man. The mind must, therefore, be purified, for it is no use cutting the branches and leaving the roots intact. Again, it must be remembered that the inner nature and the outer conduct are, after all, the two sides of one and the same life, and one cannot very rigidly distinguish one from the other.

We have explained in what spirit every man has to do the work that is allotted to him by his nature, and in this connection we have also considered in detail some very important objections. But before we conclude our discussion and pass on to draw up the comparison, we would like to bring out one more point here which we think is important. A question may still be raised whether, when a man aims at self-realisation, that may not be regarded as a matter of self-interest, - whether one engaged in the search for knowledge or self-realisation is not working for self-interest. The answer to this question will depend on what we mean by interest and also what is the nature of self in this context. It has been repeatedly said that all personal and selfish desires for temporal objects of enjoyment must be abandoned, and one should do one's duty for

the mere sake of the performance of duty, as a contribution to the common good of one's community and even to the life of the universe. Thus petty egoistic interest has no place in this scheme of things. The realisation of the self can be said to be a value but it is a value which does not stand in opposition to the attainment of the values of other people. Also, the self that is to be realised is not a private individual self which stands in opposition to the self of others, because according to Madhusūdana the self is one, undivided, and is the same in all. Liberation does not mean that the self acquires something which it does not have, or becomes something which it is not. It means only the realisation of the true self which is already there and is the same in all. Indeed the very idea of a private self has to be renounced because the seeming separateness of the self is due to ignorance. Ahaṁkāra (the ego-self) separates us from others. Each inclines to his own ahaṁkāra, and deliverance from this limitation is what realisation of the self means. Mr. Leone rightly points out<sup>1</sup> that 'there is no greater hell for the Vedantin than isolation; and what is isolation but a temporary identification with a 'this' or a 'that' ?' It is the knowledge of the one-ness of the whole, working in one's life that enables one to save oneself from these compulsory isolations of life, and 'links' one with the one divine life. The lower

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1. Homo Leone. 'The Vedantic Absolute'. Mind, Vol. XXI, New Series, No. 81, January 1912, pp. 70-71.

self, the separative self which has private interests, is exactly that from which release is sought, and thus the aim of the realisation of the self does away with any seeking for what are normally called selfish interests. Thus it is clear that neither the aim of realisation nor the self of which it is a realisation countenances the aim of seeking interests in the sense of values which conflict with those of others. In short, if interest means the pursuing of aims and objects which stand in opposition to other people's aims and objects, then the realisation of self in Madhusūdana is not an interest. Dr. Radhakrishnan has very aptly remarked: "In one sense the Upaniṣad morality is individualistic, for its aim is self-realisation; but 'individualistic' ceases here to have any exclusive meaning. To realise oneself is to identify oneself with a good that is not his alone. Moral life is a God-centred life, a life of passionate love and enthusiasm for humanity, of seeking the infinite through the finite, and not a mere selfish adventure for small ends."<sup>1</sup>

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'Indian Philosophy', Vol. I, London, 1951, p. 212.

B. A comparison between Butler's and Mādhūsūdana's account of Virtue and Self-interest.

We have explained Mādhūsūdana's conception of virtue and self-interest. We have also seen (Chapter III) Butler's view on this problem. We are now in a position to compare the two thinkers.

It is obvious from what has been said above that there is no essential agreement between the two thinkers on the question of virtue and self-interest. They differ fundamentally on this issue. Mādhūsūdana denounces all selfishness and egotism in his ethical and moral teaching. According to him the aspirant should abandon all personal and selfish desires and perform his works without any attachment. Thus self-interest has no place in his moral scheme. Butler, on the other hand, considers it as a species of virtue. The faculty within us (conscience) which is the judge of actions approves prudent actions and disapproves imprudent ones.

But there seems some agreement however in so far as Butler also denounces narrow and petty selfishness in his ethical and moral scheme. To appreciate this point in Butler it is necessary to explain it at some length. The first point which we have to remember here is that Butler demolishes and rejects the theory that man is all selfish. In fact as we have seen his supreme aim in his Sermons at the Rolls Chapel was to overthrow the Hobbsian theory of universal selfishness, and there is no denying that as a principle

Butler has killed it altogether. Professor Barnes rightly remarks: "Whatever criticism may be made of other parts of Butler's ethics, this at least will remain a monument to his insight into the human mind".<sup>1</sup> Professor Broad also considers it as "the classical refutation of psychological egoism".<sup>2</sup>

It might be pointed out here and perhaps rightly that by his refutation of universal egoism Butler only proves the existence of altruistic elements in the human nature, he only demonstrates the existence of social impulses in man's constitution. But he regards self-love as a permissible motive on which to act, and, indeed he also considers it as part of virtue.

In reply it may be pointed out that Butler no doubt admits self-love, that he considers it as part of virtue but it must be borne in mind that the conception of self-love changes altogether in his hands. It is not mere selfishness. Butler spiritualises self-love, he gives it a new character, new meaning altogether. One of Butler's aims in refuting Hobbes's universal egoism was to re-evaluate self-love. The self-love which Butler admits should thus be distinguished from mere selfishness and egoism which, as we have said elsewhere, consists in the strength of the private affections and the weakness of the public affections and according to which a

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1. W.H.F. Barnes. 'Joseph Butler: Moralism', Durham University Journal, Vol. XII, New Series, No. 2, March 1951, p.42.

2. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951, p. 99.

man's only duty is to try to produce as much good for himself as he can without any consideration for other's good. Mere selfishness is thus opposed to public or social good. The type of self-love which Butler admits is 'reasonable cool self-love'. In this sense it is not only not opposed but involves social good. Reasonable cool self-love thus includes benevolence. Butler is very anxious to see that self-love is not misunderstood as selfishness and he therefore qualifies self-love with double adjectives - (1) reasonable and (2) cool. It seems thus clear that Butler also denounces selfishness, egoism and interestedness in the sense in which these terms are generally and normally used. So far Butler and Madhusūdana agree with each other. But then the fundamental difference between the two thinkers lies in the fact that Madhusūdana does not allow any place even for 'reasonable cool self-love' in his moral scheme. He does not consider 'reasonable cool self-love' as a permissible motive on which to act. Butler no doubt spiritualises self-love. It is a higher kind of self-interest in the sense that it implies the interest of others also. But nevertheless it is self-interest. Madhusūdana dismisses any consideration of even reasonable cool self-love because it is an obstacle to the realisation of the ultimate goal, mokṣa. In order that an aspirant be able to realise his goal there should be absolutely no tinge of self-interest in the performance of his functions. Probably that is why

expressions like 'renunciation' 'absence of attachment' and 'self-control' are so very frequent in Madhusūdana. The teaching goes further. The aspirant, as we have seen, should efface all sense of ego. He must even give up the idea that he is the doer by developing the knowledge that it is prakṛti that does everything.

It may also be stated here that Madhusūdana's rejection of self-love as applied to actions does not mean destruction of life itself. Effacement of the ego does not mean extinction of the person altogether. Self-control does not mean self-torture. It means only moderation. Preservation of the body and the life is an ethical duty for every man. If the body, the mind or any other faculty of a man is suppressed he cannot even realise the Supreme goal of life. The Bhagavad-gītā<sup>1</sup> calls those people fools who torture their bodily organs. At another place<sup>2</sup> it extols the man who is temperate in his food and recreation, temperate in all activities, temperate in sleep and waking. It is not only that every man should preserve his life. We have seen while explaining the different stages of life that after the first stage is over the student should marry and settle down as a householder. In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad<sup>3</sup> we have again seen that no one should neglect his welfare and prosperity. Moreover, Madhusūdana

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā', Chapter III, verse 6.

2. do. Chapter VI, verse 17.

3, 'Taittirīya Upaniṣad', l. 11.

admits kāmā as one of the four purusharthas or ends of human life.

But it must be remembered that all these (one's welfare and prosperity) including the preservation of life should be in accordance with dharma. Even kāmā or desire is not to be understood as the gratification of the senses merely. It has a much wider meaning than that. Its chief purpose is the support of life and the propagation of the race. It should also be remembered that the indulgence of kāmā is allowed only in accordance with dharma as laid down in the śāstras, and only to the extent to which it may be necessary to contribute these ends. It follows from all this that man's purpose in this world is not to satisfy his private and personal interests. His purpose is to realise the Supreme in and through the fulfilment of all the obligations of life in the right and proper spirit. We thus see that the two thinkers do not completely coincide as far as the question of virtue and self-interest is concerned. Madhusūdana accepts self-love as applied to life but even then this should be observed in accordance with dharma.

We shall proceed further to see if there is anything similar between the two thinkers on the question of duty and interest. Butler admits, as we have seen in Chapter III, that duty and interest are coincident though only partially in this world but perfectly in the next world. The fact is that Butler believed that human nature is so made, it is so

naturally adjusted to the world, that if man simply acts according to his nature (in which all virtue lies according to Butler) it will lead to his interest and happiness.

Furthermore, according to Butler, happiness can be attained in a way quite different from what most people think. According to his conception there could be no real happiness where there is no virtue. Real interest can be served only through virtue. Butler could not think of happiness without virtue. Vice at least cannot lead to it in his scheme of moral life. Probably Butler wanted to emphasise that from the point of view of expediency also it is desirable that virtue be practised. He seems, as we have held, to give a double support to virtue. This seems to be one of the reasons why Butler speaks of coincidence between virtue and interest. But, as we have already shown, this does not mean that he held virtue and interest as identical.

We find the same idea of coincidence between the performance of one's duty or dharma and expediency in Madhusūdana also. Kṛṣṇa while explaining to Arjuna that having regard to the fact that fighting is a kṣatriya's duty, he must not swerve from that duty which is natural to a kṣatriya, (and there is no higher good for a kṣatriya than a righteous war) proceeds to tell him that this is good from the point of view of expediency also. He tells him that such a fight, coming unsought as an open door to heaven, falls only to the lot of happy kṣatriyas. If on the other hand, he will not fight this righteous battle

which is enjoined on him as a duty, he will not only be neglecting his duty but will also lose fame and honour. Not only this, people will for ever recount his infamy and for a man who has been esteemed as a hero and as righteous and as one possessed of other such noble qualities, death is preferable to such infamy and disgrace. Furthermore, the great heroes of the other side, Duryodhana and others will think that he has withdrawn from the battle through fear and not through compassion. He will thus fall very low in the estimation of those very people by whom he has been esteemed so highly. There is no pain more unbearable than that of scorn thus incurred.

Kṛṣṇa does not stop here. The idea of expediency and interest reaches its climax when kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he has the advantage in either case. If he is slain, he goes to heaven, if he is victorious he gets the kingdom. Thus he advises him to fight the righteous battle regarding it as a duty and which will be to his interest as well.<sup>1</sup> Madhusūdana also thus upholds the view of coincidence between virtue on the one hand and expediency and interest on the other. It might be said that the coincidence between virtue and expediency is only incidental here. Mr. Desai in interpreting these verses where kṛṣṇa points out the coincidence observes: "Indeed Krishna puts his finger on Arjuna's weak spot when he reminds Arjuna of the duty of a kshatriya, a duty to which he was born, the

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā', Chapter II, verses 32-37.

fulfilling of, and not running away from, which led to heaven and glory".<sup>1</sup> Now whether kṛṣṇa is touching the weak spot of Arjuna by telling him about heaven, kingdom and glory etc. and thus to make him fight the righteous battle or whether Butler is touching the weak spot of his audience by emphasising self-love and thus winning them over to virtue, the idea that the performance of one's duty and dharma leads to the interest and happiness of the individual is there in both. Thus the observation by Mr. Desai quoted above far from contradicting supports the point which we want to establish here, namely the coincidence between virtue and interest. Besides, Hindu ethical thought goes so far as to say that it is through the performance of one's dharma in a proper spirit of non-attachment that one can realise the Supreme goal of life namely perfection. It is through moral and virtuous conduct that one can attain God.

Thus according to both Butler and Madhusūdana man's true happiness and real interest are always best served by virtue, by performance of one's duty. According to both thus duty and interest coincide. This is not to say that duty is to be done for the sake of interest. The idea of prudence and expediency in the moral scheme of both the thinkers is probably to give a double support to virtue, to vindicate that the performance of one's dharma is desirable from the point of view of prudence

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1. Mahadev Desai. 'The Gita according to Gandhi', Ahmedabad (India), 1951, p. 57.

also.

There is yet another point which we may mention here. It may be asked, in fact the question has been raised by Arjuna himself: What happens to those individuals who have followed the extremely difficult path of realising the self but have not succeeded in achieving their end ? Is there any good in following such a difficult course the goal of which one may not achieve ? Kṛṣṇa here assures Arjuna, virtually makes a promise, that no effort is ever lost. No honest man who has chosen the right path can ever come to grief either in this life or in the life hereafter. Every step taken in the right direction is a gain to the individual. No good man can come to an evil end. A man has therefore no cause for despair for honest and sincere efforts never go unrewarded. The idea expressed here is very similar to that which we find in Butler who also implies a similar promise. Butler also sincerely holds that virtuous people should be happy. Nay further, they are in fact actually so even in this world. He says that "the temper of compassion and benevolence is itself delightful and the indulgence of it affords new positive delight and enjoyment". Butler does not stop here. He proceeds to say that whatever exceptions there are between virtue and happiness, "all shall be set right at the final distribution of things. It is a manifest absurdity to suppose evil prevailing finally over good, under the conduct and administration of a perfect

Mind".<sup>1</sup>

It may be interesting to point out here that Manu also expresses a similar idea to the one we find in Butler that vice cannot finally prevail. He says: "Neither a man who lives unrighteously, nor he who acquires wealth by telling falsehoods, nor he who always delights in doing injury, ever attain happiness in this world". He says again: "Unrighteousness, practised in this world, does not at once produce its fruit, like a cow (which at once yields benefits by its milk); but, advancing slowly, it cuts off the roots of him who committed it".<sup>2</sup>

Moreover the principle preached in the Bhagavadgītā which our author upholds that good and honest people never come to grief, that honest and sincere efforts never go unrewarded compares well with Butler's theory of reward and punishment and his belief that virtue is always rewarded and vice punished. Butler says: "Moral government consists, not barely in rewarding and punishing men for their actions, which the most tyrannical person may do: but in rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked; in rendering to men according to their actions, considered as good or evil. And the perfection of moral government consists in doing this, with regard to all intelligent creatures, in an exact proportion to their personal merits

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sects. 10 & 12, pp. 73, 75.

2. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter IV, verses 170 & 172.

and demerits".<sup>1</sup>

We thus conclude that there is difference between the two thinkers on the problem of virtue and self-interest though in one or two minor points there is some agreement also.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part I, Chapter III, sect. 2, p. 64.

## Chapter VIII.

### A. Virtue and General Happiness in Madhusūdana.

We have seen in our last chapter that according to Madhusūdana man should perform his appointed duties without any attachment. He should not work with a view to realising any private and personal end. Now the questions arise: Should public or social good be made the motive-force in the performance of one's actions? Is the promotion of the general happiness of mankind the right and proper motive for man's conduct? In this chapter we are going to consider these questions. While man must always work for the good of mankind, while he must live for others and thus make his whole life a sacrifice (yajña), yet that should not be the impelling motive of the doer. He should not work from any inclination of the mind. He should not be led away by the consequences of his actions. He must always work in an impersonal sense of right as being the demand of the ideal. In short, he must perform his functions simply because he ought to do so.

We have said above that a man should make his whole life a sacrifice. The word 'sacrifice' is very significant in this context. In the history of Hindu philosophy its connotation has undergone a change to which we think necessary to refer here.

We have seen that during the Vedic age the greatest emphasis was on the performances of sacrifices and elaborate

rituals. Dharma consisted in the performance of sacrificial rites enjoined in the Vedas and the primary object of these sacrifices was to please the god or gods to whom these sacrifices were offered either to win some favour or avert some evil. But in the Upaniṣadic period there is a change in the atmosphere. According to the Upaniṣads sacrifices do not mean the mechanical performance of fixed rituals. The Upaniṣads reject the idea of the performance of sacrificial rites with a view to gaining any return either in this or in the life hereafter. To put it in the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan "We should not do our duty with the motive of purchasing shares in the other world or opening a bank account with God".<sup>1</sup>

It may be pointed out here that the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad in one passage<sup>2</sup> mentions the performance of ritualistic works as the means of securing certain values of life. But these values are exhausted through enjoyment and it must not be forgotten that the same Upaniṣad immediately after this warns us<sup>3</sup> against performing sacrifices in the sense in which these have been enjoined in the Vedas. It says that the different sacrificial forms are unsafe or unsteady boats. The fools considering these as the highest good fall again and again into old age and death. The idea is that the ultimate goal

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'Indian Philosophy', Vol. I, London, 1951, p. 225.

2. 'Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, I.2.1.

3. do. I.2.7.

of life namely immortality, or freedom from the bondage to the wheel of births and deaths, cannot be attained by the performance of the rites and sacrifices. It can be attained through the development of spiritual insight into the universe by the realisation that it is the same spirit which animates all life. Thus it is clear that in the Upaniṣads there is more and more emphasis on the inner spirit rather than the outward observances. In other words, in the Upaniṣads there is an insistence on the life of spirit and not on a mechanical performance of rituals.

Though there was a distinct change in the conception of 'sacrifice' from the Vedic to the Upaniṣadic age yet the full implication of sacrifice in the sense of disinterested and unselfish devotion to the good of humanity at the cost of private and individual good is not fully worked out until the time of the Bhagavadgītā. The author of the Bhagavadgītā re-evaluates 'sacrifice' and gives to it its full content. Sacrifice here means sacrifice of the lower self, sacrifice of the private and individual self for the higher self. According to the Bhagavadgītā every act is to be regarded as a sacrifice, yajña, an offering to God. Thus while the Vedas declare that the way to salvation is through the performance of sacrificial rites and elaborate rituals, according to the Bhagavadgītā the greatest sacrifice consists in the service of humanity, unselfish devotion to the general good. In its service to humanity takes the place of sacrifices offered to

the gods during the Vedic age. Sri Aurobindo observes: "The Gita accepted the Vedic theory of sacrifice, but gave it a profound turn, an inner, subjective and universal meaning, a spiritual sense and direction which alters all its values".<sup>1</sup>

In verses 42 to 44 of Chapter II Madhusūdana distinguishes true karma from the Vedic rituals and tells man to work renouncing all selfishness and making the whole life a sacrifice. We can strive towards the realisation of God, the goal of our life, when we work for the well-being of the whole mankind. In short, the path to the realisation of God lies through the performance of all our duties towards others.

Madhusūdana in keeping with the general standpoint of Hindu ethics expounds and advocates everywhere that all works, all appointed duties, should be done in a spirit of sacrifice and selfless devotion to the general social good. Every act should be a means of promoting the general happiness. Before proceeding further in the discussion of the problem of social good, it may be pointed out that this question has not been discussed separately and specifically by Madhusūdana. To explain this aspect of his moral philosophy we shall refer (1) to the four āśramas or the stages of life, and (11) to the institution of caste. We shall first refer to the stages of life. Among these stages also we are here mainly concerned with the second stage in which the social aspect has been

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L. Sri Aurobindo. 'Essays on the Gita', New York, 1950, p.458.

emphasised.

As we have already seen in Chapter VI the first stage of life is devoted entirely to the training and discipline of body and mind. The student has no other responsibilities, no other obligations. Strictly speaking it is a stage of probation and not of action. But when this stage of life is over and a student enters the second stage, the life of gārhasthya, then the active life of man really begins. At this stage he is called upon to fulfil certain obligations of life. It may be useful to refer to the Taittirīya Upaniṣad here in which the responsibilities and obligations which every householder is expected to fulfil have been very exhaustively discussed. Having taught the Veda, the teacher is giving final instructions to a pupil who is about to depart for home to assume the householder's life: "Speak the truth; do your duty, do not neglect your study. After procuring for the teacher such fees as he desires, see that you do not snap the continuity of your family line. You should not swerve from truth; you should not swerve from duty; you should not neglect your welfare; you should not neglect prosperity; you should not neglect learning and teaching; you should not neglect the duties towards the gods and the ancestors. Adore your mother as god; adore your father as god; adore your teacher as god; adore the guest as god. Those actions of ours that were blameless, those you must follow, not the others; what good acts we have done, those you must cherish, not others. And those

Brāhmans (Teachers) who are superior to us, them you should honour. You should give with faith; you should not give without faith; you should give in plenty, give with modesty, give with fear, give with due regard. Then, if you should have a doubt about a duty or conduct - conduct yourself there as is done by such Brāhmans (Teachers) as can deliberate well, are devoted to their duties on their own or others' behalf, are not severe, and are desirous of righteousness. Regarding then things that are prohibited, conduct yourself again as those of Brāhmans (Teachers) of judgment, who are devoted to duty, mild and virtuous, do. This is the command, this is the advice; this is the inner teaching of the Veda; this is the instruction; thus should one cherish; thus should this be observed".<sup>1</sup>

An important point to be borne in mind here is that it is not merely the cultivation of certain social virtues or obligations that has been emphasised here but also the spirit in which these are to be practised.

We would, in the interests of consistency, like to make a brief digression here. We have held (Chapter VII) that the general tone and spirit of the Upaniṣads was one of renunciation. They laid sole stress on a life of spirit. But in the passage we have quoted above considerable emphasis has been laid on the due discharge of all social obligations. The fact is that there are one or two passages in them where emphasis

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1. 'Taittitiya Upaniṣad, 1. 11.

on activity, in the sense of performance of one's worldly duties, has been laid. But it should not be understood to mean that these represent the general spirit of the Upaniṣads. Professor Dasgupta seems to support our view when referring to the passage in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad which we have quoted above remarks: "But few Upaniṣads give such moral precepts, and there is very little in the Upaniṣads in the way of describing a course of moral behaviour or of emphasizing the fact that man can attain his best only by trying to become great through moral efforts. The Upaniṣads occupy themselves almost wholly with mystic meditations and with the philosophic wisdom of self-knowledge".<sup>1</sup>

After a brief departure we come back to our main point, the functions and responsibilities of a householder. Social obligations which have been listed above, in the passage quoted from the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, and which every householder is expected to fulfil, are so exhaustive that it is difficult to add anything new. In a nutshell they cover everything. But we think it necessary to mention a few words by way of elaboration here. When the student enters the second stage of his life, the life of a gārhasthya, he is expected to marry and settle down as a householder. Marriage is, in fact, the starting point of the life of a householder. It is the beginning of a more responsible life. The Hindus regard marriage as

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1. Surendranath Dasgupta. 'A History of Indian Philosophy', Vol. II, Cambridge, 1932, p. 494.

sacred. Its main purpose is the development of the personality, continuance of the family ideal and the propagation of the race. According to the Hindus a man's religious life is regarded as incomplete and deficient without his wife's active participation in it. There are a few ceremonies which cannot be performed unless a man's wife is with him. The fulfilment of social obligations and the promotion of general happiness is mainly associated with this order. At this stage the individual becomes a responsible member of the family towards which he should discharge his duties faithfully. Besides his family duties and obligations he has certain other obligations also which he is expected to fulfil. Among all the duties of the householder, very great emphasis has been laid on the daily observance of the five great sacrifices<sup>1</sup> (Mahāyajnas) which are so many ways of discharging one's debts to the universe in which he lives. The first sacrifice consists of the daily recitation of the Vedas. The idea is to preserve by constant study the knowledge of the Vedas which one acquires during the first stage of life. The second sacrifice consists in the daily offerings of water and food called Tarpana to the forefathers. The idea is to remind one of his being a part of necessary link in the chain of historical continuity. The third sacrifice is made to the gods and consists of burnt oblations. It is a symbolic recognition of the fact that

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter III, verses 70, 81.

whatever man has belongs to God. The fourth sacrifice, called Bali offering, is offered to the bhūtas (beings). The ethical implication of this sacrifice is to inculcate the principle of unselfishness. It requires a householder to allow the needy fellow-beings to share his possessions. The fifth or the last daily sacrifice consists of offerings to men. The implication is to encourage the idea of hospitality. These five great sacrifices which include the duties of a householder's life and which therefore every householder should observe clearly show that his duties are not confined to himself or to his family but to his community, nay, to the entire creation including gods and manes. A householder's life is thus the mainstay of the entire community. Probably it is because of this that Manu is full of praises for this order of life. He regards it as the most excellent order.<sup>1</sup>

We can explain the same point in another way. The four āśramas or orders of life are not ends in themselves. They are only successive and progressive stages leading to the realisation of the mokṣa, the Supreme end of life. To borrow a metaphor, these four stages constitute a four-runged ladder by climbing which an individual can reach his ultimate goal. Manu holds<sup>2</sup> that a twice-born<sup>3</sup> man must discharge his duties

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter III, verses 77-78.

2. do. Chapter VI, verses 35-37.

3, Those men are known as the twice-born who belong to the three higher castes - brahmin, ksatriya and vaiśya and who have passed through the sacrament of initiation which is their second birth. Technically speaking, the scheme of the four stages of life is applicable only to the first three castes but it is an ideal which is accepted by all Hindus. Sannāy-sins from all castes are revered by all Hindus without distinction.

to the world by passing through the different stages of life before directing his mind to the attainment of the final liberation. He says that it is only after having studied the Vedas in accordance with the rule, having begot children according to the sacred law and having offered sacrifices according to his ability that a man can seek final liberation. A twice-born man who seeks final liberation without having studied the Vedas, without having begotten children and without having offered sacrifices sinks downwards.

It may be useful to point out here, though we have already mentioned it earlier, that even according to the Upaniṣads the usual rule is that one has to pass through all the successive stages of life, though exceptions are also permitted. In special cases man can give up the world from any stage of life if he has properly developed dispassion for material things of the world. We are told in the Jābāla Upaniṣad that when once Janaka, King of Videha, approached Yājñavalkya and asked him to teach him about renunciation, Yājñavalkya said: After completing the life of a student, let one become a householder; after completing the life of a householder, let one become a forest-dweller; after completing the life of a forest-dweller, let one renounce. But when a suitable occasion arises let one renounce even from the stage of a student or from the stage of a householder or from that of a forest-dweller. Whether one has or has not completed the injunctions, whether he is a student or not, even if he has not completed the

sacrificial rites, on whatever day he has the spirit of renunciation, that very day let him renounce and become a recluse.<sup>1</sup>

The underlying idea behind the principle that every one must pass through all the successive stages of life seems to be in keeping with the psychological and sociological make-up of human nature. It seems quite in accord with the natural course of human life, as according to it the first part is devoted to education; the second part to the fulfilment of one's duty to the society, to community and to the world; the third part to the cultivation of the attitude of indifference to the world; and the fourth or the last part to the taking up of sannyāsa. Furthermore, it is also in keeping with the practical demands of the society which require that we must all perform the normal functions appropriate to our nature for world maintenance and its progress. If on the other hand every one is allowed to take up sannyāsa without possessing the necessary qualifications then the whole social fabric will collapse and break down.

We have seen how a good deal of emphasis has been laid in the social aspect of the life of a householder. We shall now try to see how the social life of the Hindus has been emphasised more fully through the institution of caste. As we have already indicated in Chapter VI the social implication

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1. 'Jābāla Upaniṣad', 4.

of the caste-system we shall refer to it very briefly here. The caste-system is the basis of the entire social organisation of the Hindus in India. This system on which the entire Hindu ethics lays considerable emphasis is adapted to the maintenance of the whole social organisation. It is adapted to the welfare of each and all. The caste-system assumes the unity and the interdependence of the whole society. It takes into account the various needs of the society and of the individuals who constitute it. In order to run any society various types of activity are required. All kinds of activity-intellectual, military, commercial and manual are necessary for the well-being of the society. Nay, they are all equally valuable for the maintenance and growth of a healthy society. The whole idea seems to be that society is a functional organisation and for its effective maintenance and smooth working the division of labour is very essential. The institution of caste takes all these into consideration. The caste-duties, prescribed for people belonging to various classes, recognise how individuals vary in their nature and capacities and how they can best contribute their share to the society by performing the functions which have been laid down according to their natural capacities. The function of the brahmins is the pursuit of knowledge. They are the law-givers of the society. They interpret dharma in cases of doubt. The military organisation is in the hands of the ksatriyas. They are the defenders of the society. Their

function lies in maintaining order in the society by suppressing the evil and the unrighteous. The vaiśyas are required to look to the economic welfare of the society. The śūdras are required to serve those engaged in other social activities.

There is no consideration whether a function is high or low. As we have already said all kinds of function are equally necessary and therefore all equally good for the solidarity of the society. The progress of society can be maintained when all men make their contributions from respective stations which they occupy in life. It is then only that the requirements and needs of each and all can be met and satisfied. Thus though all men are not equal in their natural endowments and capacities, their contributions or services are equally necessary for society.

Mr. Widgery observes: "The social view of the ethics of the Hindus is found in the principles of the varṇāśramas. These are concerned with the main divisions of human society for the organization necessary for the performance of the diverse functions needed for its welfare. ... This division of labor involves specific duties to be performed by each group for the general welfare of each and all".<sup>1</sup>

Besides the social duties implied by the caste-system, it

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1. Alban G. Widgery. 'The Principles of Hindu Ethics', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XL, No. 2, January 1930, pp. 240-241.

has also a deeper ethical import. These are not only equally necessary and equally good for the well-being of society but they are also ethically important in the sense that if performed in the right spirit, in the spirit of dedication, they all prepare man for the realisation of the ultimate goal of life. This is because what is really important for realisation of mokṣa is not the nature of work but the spirit in which that work is done. It has been rightly remarked by Mr. Desai: "Before God the work of man will be judged by the spirit in which it is done, not by the nature of the work which makes no difference whatsoever. Whoever acts in a spirit of dedication fits himself for salvation".<sup>1</sup>

Madhusūdana probably with this end (realisation of mokṣa) in view repeatedly asserts in his commentary on Chapter XVIII that every body not only must perform the duties respective to his station in life but he must do them in the spirit of service to humanity and to the world. In his commentary on verse 16 of Chapter III<sup>2</sup> he points out that every one must work to keep in motion the wheel of the world which has been set in motion by the Brahman, the Creator Himself (Parameṣvara). The idea is that no one should abstain from his duty to the world. He who in this world works for himself and does not work to keep the wheel of the world in motion is sinful. He is evil

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L. Mahadev Desai. 'The Gita according to Gandhi', Ahmedabad (India), 1951, p. 188.

2. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā, pp. 105-106.

in his nature and he lives in vain. Madhusūdāna goes so far as to say that death is preferable to such a life probably because in a future birth he may have the opportunity of practising dharma.

Again commenting on verse 25 of the same chapter<sup>1</sup> he repeats and emphasises the same idea that a wise man, a man who seeks God, must work without attachment for the welfare of the entire humanity.

According to Madhusūdāna all actions, including the moral and the religious, that ought to be done should be done. They should not be neglected. He in his commentary on verse 5 of Chapter XVIII<sup>2</sup> clearly points out that the acts of sacrifice, charity and penance should not be abandoned. These should all be performed without any desire for fruit. According to him the performance of sacrifice (yajña), charity (dāna) and austerity (tapas) in the proper spirit leads to the purification of mind (antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi) and should therefore be practised.

It may not be out of place to point out here that the emphasis on the performance of all functions for the good of others, as a service to mankind, is due to the metaphysical basis of the whole Hindu ethical ideal. Madhusūdāna holds

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1. 'Gūḍhārtha-dīpikā', p. 113.

2. do do p. 458.

that Brahman is the sole reality and the different individuals or more correctly different beings are only modifications of it. In keeping with this metaphysical monism he argues that man must work for others as all are the same in the sense that the same God is seated in the heart of all. It is this metaphysical view of the universe and of man in it that leads to the ethics of love and brotherhood. Love is thus the essence of all ethics and morality and man's duties to his fellow-creatures follows from it. Strictly speaking to work for others, to keep the wheel of the world in motion, is to work for God. It is co-operating with God. To serve humanity is to serve God's creation.

According to Madhusūdana it is only when we realise this truth and cultivate love for all beings that we can be freed from bondage, we can rise above the chain of births and deaths. Professor Edgerton seems to suggest this when he observes: "Those who are completely pervaded by the awareness of this truth (oneness of all), who feel that all beings are the same as themselves, that all as well as themselves are one with God, are freed from the effects of action and from re-birth".<sup>1</sup> This seems to be the only justification for the cardinal moral principle "Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself" - because thy neighbour is thyself. God is both in thee and thy neighbour, and both are in God. Dr. Schweitzer probably overlooks

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1. 'The Bhagavad-Gītā. Translated by Franklin Edgerton, Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 39, 1944, p. 61.

this point in the Bhagavadgītā when criticising the ethical teaching of Rāmānuja, he remarks: "The thought that love to God must be expressed in active love to mankind is just as far from him as from the Bhagavad-Gītā".<sup>1</sup>

We have discussed Madhusūdana's view about benevolence, the promotion of general happiness. We shall now proceed to consider an important objection raised against the general ethical teaching of the Vedānta which Madhusūdana propounds.

It is often stated that the ethics of the Vedānta is anti-social, that it favours an anti-social and other-worldly ethics. The duties of social life cannot be deduced from the ideal which the Vedānta presents. According to it the ideal is expressed not in the fulfilment of one's social duties but in the negation of them.

Dr. Schweitzer seems to make a more or less similar criticism. He first raises a few questions and then remarks: "Moved by these doubts the pessimism of the Hindus and that of Schopenhauer refuse to allow any importance to the material and social achievements, which form the outward and visible part of civilization. About society, nation, mankind, the individual is not to trouble himself; he is only to strive to experience in himself the sovereignty of spirit over matter".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Albert Schweitzer. 'Indian Thought and its Development', London, 1951, p. 198.

2. Albert Schweitzer. 'Civilisation and Ethics', London, 1929, p. 11.

Professor Washburn Hopkins in his book "Ethics of India" has already refuted such criticisms, and we shall therefore refer to only a few points here.

It seems to us that in the face of what has already been said about the observance of obligations not only to one's own family but to the entire creation including gods and manes, it is difficult to accept the criticism that the ethics of the Vedānta is anti-social. There is no injunction in the entire Hindu ethical code which has the slightest implication of being anti-social. We have referred to varnāśrama-dharma and also sādhanā-dharma in Chapter VI. Far from being anti-social or even unsocial they all advocate the ideal of service to humanity. The Hindu ethics is, as we have explained above, based on metaphysical monism. It inculcates the principle of oneness of all beings. It requires us to look upon the whole creation as one. The Vedāntic ethics thus advocates the principle of non-difference. Sir Siraswamy Aiyer remarks: "The duty (of a Hindu) is based upon a recognition of the sanctity of all life and especially animal life and a belief in the sensitiveness of animals to suffering".<sup>1</sup>

Then again the view that only anti-social ethics can be deduced from the Vedāntic ideal is perhaps due to a misconception of the position criticised. It seems a travesty of the whole truth about the ethics of the Vedānta. The criticism

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1. Sir Siraswamy Aiyer. 'Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals', Madras, 1935, pp. 184-185.

is disproved from the fact, as has repeatedly been said, that the realisation of self or God which is the ideal of the Vedānta is possible only by working for the entire being, by realising that all are members of the same family. In short one can realise the Supreme goal of one's life only by becoming one with the whole stream of life. In the Bhagavadgītā Kṛṣṇa says: "He who sees me everywhere and sees all in me; I am not lost to him nor is he lost to me".<sup>1</sup> Īśā Upaniṣad also says that he who sees all beings in his own self and his own self in all beings, he does not feel any revulsion by reason of such a view.<sup>2</sup>

Again as we have already pointed out elsewhere Madhusūdana in his commentary on verse 19 of Chapter III<sup>3</sup> clearly says that one who works for God (Īśvarārthāya) attains mokṣa through knowledge. It is needless to repeat here that to work for God means to work for humanity, to serve His creation.

It is interesting to point out here that Bhartṛhari<sup>4</sup> also by classifying men into four classes extols those who work unselfishly for others. He says: "Those men are good men who work for the good of others without regarding themselves. Those men are ordinary men who, while they benefit others, do

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1. 'The Bhagavadgītā', Chapter VI, verse 30.

2. 'Īśā Upaniṣad', 6.

3. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', p. 109.

4. It is very difficult to give any satisfactory account of the personal history of Bhartṛhari. It is alleged that he was of royal descent and the brother of King Vikramāditya. He is the reputed author of three śātakas or centuries of couplets (1) Śṛṅgāra śātika, a purely amatory poem, (2) Nīti śātika, dealing with polity and ethics, (3) Vairāgya śātika, dealing with religious austerity.

not neglect their own interests. Those men are demons who destroy another's good for their own profit. What shall we call those who aimlessly destroy that which is another's ?"<sup>1</sup>

As regards the criticism that the Vedāntic ideal favours other-worldliness it may be pointed out that while it is true that man belongs to both the worlds, the lower and the higher, the empirical and the eternal, it is also true that the higher can be attained only through the lower. The empirical is the pathway to the eternal. Dr. Mees rightly points out<sup>2</sup> that 'only by performing one's work does one attain spiritual insight and liberation, not by running away from it.' As we have already discussed this point at some length in Chapter VII, we think it unnecessary to repeat the same here.

It is true that the vedāntic school of philosophy, especially according to Śaṅkara, holds sannyāsa as necessary for the attainment of final liberation. It is also true that taking sannyāsa means renouncing everything and becoming a recluse. Dr. Radhakrishnan probably points this when he says: "Each individual is called upon at a certain stage of his life to give up his wife and children and his caste and work. The last part of life's road has to be walked in single file".<sup>3</sup> But the whole point which we want to bring out and emphasise

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1. Bhartṛhari 'Nītiśataka', verse 74.

2. Gualterus H. Mees. 'Dharma and Society', The Hague, Holland, 1935, p. 26.

3. S. Radhakrishnan. 'The Hindu View of Life', London, 1949, p. 90.

here is that this stage of life comes towards the end of life's journey. It occupies a very small fraction of human life and that also the last portion of it Manu gives<sup>1</sup> very clear indications as to what part of life is to be spent as sannāyasa when he says that one must enter the third stage when one becomes a grandfather, or one's skin begins to show wrinkles or one's hair turns grey. From this it is clear that the larger part or the major portion of life is social life, a life devoted to the good of mankind.

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter VI, verse 2.

B. A comparison between Butler's and Madhusudana's account of virtue and General Happiness.

We have discussed Madhusūdana's view concerning benevolence or the promotion of general good and have also considered a few other points in this connection. We shall now pass on to draw up a comparison between the two thinkers in this respect.

Butler and Madhusūdana are both in fundamental agreement in emphasising the cultivation of benevolence in their ethical teaching. According to both man must work for the good of his fellow creatures. In order to be able to serve others, Butler says, "A man's heart must be formed to humanity and benevolence".<sup>1</sup> To emphasise benevolence Butler devotes two Sermons at the Rolls Chapel 'Upon the Love of our Neighbour'. He goes so far in his emphasis on benevolence as to appear to identify virtue completely with it. There are several such passages in Butler, some of which have already been quoted in Chapter IV, which produce this impression.

For the purpose of comparison we shall refer to one or two passages here wherein Butler emphasises benevolence. In Sermon XII, he says that the principle of benevolence is an advocate within our breast to take care of the interests of our fellow-creatures.<sup>2</sup> A little later in the same Sermon he again says

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 5, p. 213.  
2. do do do do do sect. 4, p. 212.

'it (benevolence) is the chief, nay, the only effectual security of our performing the several offices of kindness we owe to our fellow-creatures'.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is clear that Butler in his ethical teaching emphasises very much the idea of working for the good of others, for one's fellow-creatures.

According to Madhusūdana also the feeling of fellowship is rooted in our nature. He also lays much emphasis on the ideal of service. In fact it is a most important element of his whole moral philosophy. This ideal has been emphasised so much that it is considered one of the qualifications which an aspirant must possess in order to realise his ultimate goal. Among other things he must work for the welfare of others. In his commentary on verse 25 of Chapter V Madhusūdana<sup>2</sup> points out that only those whose sins are wiped out through sacrifices etc., whose doubts are resolved (nivṛtta sarvasaṃsayāḥ) through śravaṇa etc., whose senses are restrained (sanyātmanāḥ) through nididhyāsana and who are concerned with the welfare of all beings (sarvabhūta-ahiteratāḥ) obtain mokṣa (brahmanirvānamlabhante). Thus to be devoted to the welfare of all beings is, we can say, one of the conditions which must be fulfilled in order to be able to obtain mokṣa. The ideal of service is pitched so high that it includes the good of all. The field of love and service is not confined only to men but to all living creatures.

At various other places some of which have already been

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 5, p. 213.
  2. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', p. 184.

referred to Madhusūdana advocates this ideal of service to others. We must according to him live for others. At one place,<sup>1</sup> as we have seen, he goes so far as to say that a man who lives for himself and does not work for others is better dead.

It may also be pointed out here that the ideal of service is continued even after the attainment of mokṣa. Even the liberated souls work for the welfare of others (sarvabhūtahit-eratah) though in a different spirit. While for the aspirant benevolence is to be practised as a matter of duty in order that he may realise his ultimate ideal, in the case of the perfected soul who has no ideal to attain service of others becomes automatic and spontaneous. To serve others becomes his nature and to borrow an analogy he cannot help doing it, just as a sunflower cannot help pointing to the sun. Probably also the well-being of others is the only concern of a realised soul. Because of his spiritual insight which he has attained his love for others is far deeper than it is in others.

Thus it is clear that both Butler and Madhusūdana emphasise and advocate the ideal of love and service to fellow-creatures with the same zeal and fervour.

There is yet another very important point of similarity between the two thinkers. According to both there is a community of interest. Society is an organic whole and the individual's good in inextricably bound up with the good of others. No

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1. 'Gūḍhārtha-dīpikā', commentary on verse 35 of Chapter III, p. 119.

one can stand in complete isolation from the rest, no man can realise any end by confining himself to himself. Butler in Sermon IX 'Upon the Forgiveness of Injuries' clearly says that mankind is a community and that we all stand in a relation to each other. Each particular individual is obliged to promote the interest of society. Again in reply to an imaginary objection to his view of benevolence Butler says that our own happiness in this world consists only in regard to others. All the enjoyments of life, even the pleasures of vice, depend upon regards of one kind or another to our fellow-creatures.<sup>1</sup>

That the individual good and the social good imply and involve each other is illustrated more fully in Butler's theory of the coincidence between self-love and benevolence. Not only is there no clash between the individual good and the social good, but no one can promote his own real happiness without regard to others. In fact one of Butler's important ethical teachings is that the true good of the individual lies in the good of others, which includes his own good also. In the very first Sermon Butler points out that self-love and benevolence are so perfectly coincident that the greatest satisfaction to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in a due degree. We cannot promote the one without the other.<sup>2</sup>

According to Madhusūdana also there is a community of

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon III, sect. 8, pp. 71-72.
  2. do do Sermon I, sect. 5, p. 38.

interest. Though like Butler he does not specifically speak of self-love and benevolence and their mutual coincidence the idea of the community of interest is involved in the institution of caste on which his ethical teaching is based. The caste-system is based on the very principle of the organic nature of society. It is, as we have seen, a functional organisation. It is based on the principle that the individual good and the social good are bound together. It takes into account the needs and requirements of both the individual and the society. The full demands of an individual can be met and satisfied only when all do their appointed tasks. Caste-system thus caters for the needs of each and all members constituting the society.

We have shown the points of similarity between the two thinkers. But there is, however, a point of difference also which it is necessary to point out here. It may seem at first sight that there is little or no difference between Butler and Madhusūdana on the point of the place of benevolence in moral life. For there is such great emphasis in Madhusūdana on service to others and as we have already explained Butler makes benevolence one of the virtues. But if we think about the matter closely we shall see that there is a real difference on this point. While Butler is not utilitarian in the sense of taking consequences as the only motive of action, he still gives some consideration to consequences. His ideas of self-love and benevolence as ideals of virtue confirm this. But

in Madhusūdana consequences do not enter into the ideal of rightness. Service to the universe according to Madhusūdana should be regarded not from any motive other than the categorical imperative. In point of fact however there is very little difference between the two thinkers with regard to benevolent acts. In Madhusūdana almost the whole life of man is to be dedicated to the service of the world. Butler also emphasises benevolence very much. The difference is very subtle and is a matter of emphasis on the attitude and does not involve any practical difference. But still on the point of ethical thought the difference may be noted.

## Chapter IX.

### Duty for Duty's Sake in Madhusūdana.

In this chapter we shall discuss in some detail Madhusūdana's view that all acts are to be done as duty. According to him when all the functions of life are performed in the spirit of duty, without any thought of their fruits or consequences, the ultimate goal of life can eventually be attained. But before we actually begin with the discussion of the theory of duty for duty's sake we would like to point out how it is a later development of the Vedic conception of duty.

We have seen that during the Vedic age the performance of dharma which included rituals and sacrifices was prompted by a desire for rewards in this world and in the next. The performance of sacrifices was meant to please the deities either to win some favour or avert some evil. Thus it is the hope of getting earthly rewards or the attainment of heaven (svarga) that lies mainly at the back of all ethical activity during this period.

It may be useful to refer to the two schools of Pūrvamīmāṃsā here in which the Vedic conception of duty has been further analysed. In the Bhaṭṭa school of Pūrvamīmāṃsā there is an emphasis on external observances. According to this school virtue or dharma consists in the performance of ceremonials and sacrificial acts enjoined in the Vedas. These ceremonial acts are authoritative only as being prescribed by the Vedas. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, the founder of this school, held

that since the ceremonial and sacrificial acts are prescribed by the Vedas, they must also conduce to the agent's good and happiness. It must lead to the attainment of heaven or the enjoyment of unalloyed happiness. In short according to Kumārilla the final justification of the performance of Vedic sacrifices lies in the satisfaction of man's needs and the production of his happiness. Thus according to this school also as professor Dasgupta says: "The sacrifices were, no doubt, performed out of regard for the law of Vedic commands; but that represented only the psychological side of the question. The external ground for the performance of Vedic sacrifices was that it produced happiness for the performer and satisfied his desires by securing for him the objects of desire".<sup>1</sup>

But there was a change in this conception in the other school, the Prabhākara school of Pūrvamīmāṃsā. According to the Prabhākaras the authority of the Vedas is derived not from their conduciveness to any ulterior end or consequence to be inferred from their being scripturally enjoined, as we find in the Bhaṭṭas, but from their intrinsic validity. It is not imperative that the right should produce a desirable result. It is right in itself.

Thus in the post-Vedic ethical thought there is more and more emphasis on the inner spirit, inner will, than on the outer or external consequences. During this period there is

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1. Surandranath Dasgupta. 'A History of Indian Philosophy', Vol. II, Cambridge, 1932, p. 485.

a gradual tendency towards the performance of duty for duty's sake.

The clearest and most emphatic expression of this theory (duty for duty's sake) is found in the Bhagavadgītā. Its author has very eloquently preached this doctrine. Dr. Schweitzer rightly remarks: "Kant is not the first to lay down the doctrine of the Categorical Imperative. It had already been preached by krishna in the words 'Thy interest shall only be directed to the deed, never to the fruits thereof'."<sup>1</sup>

The view that the Bhagavadgītā advocates the principle of duty for duty's sake may be seen from the general trend of the book itself.

When Arjuna comes to the centre of the two armies and when he looks at the kinsmen against whom he is expected to fight, he is overpowered by the thought of the dire consequences that would follow from the fratricidal war. He therefore refuses to fight. Kṛṣṇa then in order to disabuse Arjuna's mind of the wrong notions which caused despondency in him begins his philosophical dissertation which is embodied in the Bhagavadgītā. The dissertation takes the form of a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and takes place in the very battle-field where both armies were drawn out in battle-array. The attempt continues from verse 11 of Chapter II to verse 72 of Chapter XVIII. In verse 73 of Chapter XVIII Arjuna is persuaded to

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1. Albert Schweitzer. 'Indian Thought and its Development', London, 1951, p. 188.

fight. The main point of Kṛṣṇa's advice is that Arjuna was a kṣātriya and as a kṣātriya it was his duty to fight for righteousness. This shows that the main aim of the author of the Bhagavadgītā is to inculcate the doctrine that one must do the acts which one is required to do according to one's position in society from a sense of duty without thinking of the consequences.

In keeping with the general spirit of the Upanisads and the Bhagavadgītā, Madhusūdana lays emphasis on the inner spirit, inner will. There is no virtue in the performance of actions for the sake of enjoying their fruits. He advocates the view that all works must be done without attachment to the fruits of action. We must perform the various duties of our life disinterestedly, without any desire for their external fruits. Man must dedicate all acts and their results to God. He must make every act an offer of devotion and love. In short, man must perform all his functions solely from a pure sense of duty leaving their consequences to God.

Madhusūdana develops this theory at various places in his commentary. We shall refer to a few of them here. In his commentary on verse 47 of Chapter II Madhusūdana<sup>1</sup> emphatically declares that man's concern is with actions only and never with their fruits. In the performance of his duties he should not be prompted by any thought of the enjoyment of the fruits of

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1. . . . 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā, pp. 77-78.

actions. They are miserable creatures who work for results. A man should not work even for the sake of enjoying heavenly bliss etc. This does not however mean that he should take to inaction and thus desist from all work. It does not mean renunciation of actions but renunciation of the fruits of actions. In other words it means that the fruits of actions should never be made the guiding principle in life and all work should be done without attachment to the result. The difference between the ignorant and the wise lies in this that while the former acts from attachment, the latter without any attachment. The wise or enlightened thus having given up all attachment performs all his functions as duty.

Then again in his commentary on verse 19 of Chapter III Madhusūdana<sup>1</sup> repeats the same idea namely the disinterested performance of all duties. He argues that man must always work without any regard for the fruit of his action. To use his own terminology one must be 'asakta' (detached) and 'phala-kāmnārahita' (free from the desire for fruits) and thus perform sacrifices and offer gifts in accordance with the rules as laid down in the śāstras. He holds that such acts not only do not bind the soul in the sense in which selfish acts do but it is the performance of such nisvārtha-karmas or selfless actions which lead to mokṣa through pure knowledge.

Madhusūdana refers to this again in Chapter XVII, verse II<sup>2</sup>

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1. 'Gūdhārtha-dīpikā', p. 109.

2. do do p. 443.

where he says that that sacrifice is sāttvika which is offered with pure heart (pure motive) without any hope of reward and solely from a sense of duty.

The passages referred to above are only a few examples. But there are various other such passages where Madhusūdana advocates the performance of all actions as duties.

It may be useful to point out here that Yudhiṣṭhira<sup>1</sup>, the embodiment of dharma or righteousness also seems to preach the same doctrine of duty for duty's sake. When addressing his queen he says: "I follow dharma not with an eye for any immediate reward or profit but because it is dharma, it is my duty to do so. Whether there is any reward or not I do as a matter of duty whatever must be performed by a householder. I follow dharma because I am convinced that virtue is to be followed for its own sake. He who practices dharma for its reward is contemptible among those who talk of dharma".<sup>2</sup>

It may be stated here that Madhusūdana emphasises the renunciation of all desires for the fruits of action, and performance of all duty for its own sake, because it is then alone that man can prepare himself for divine grace and salvation. When he performs all his functions with the pure motive of duty, without any thought of consequences, without any hope of reward, he can attain stability of the mind and purity of the heart.

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1. 'Mahābhārata', Vāna-Parva, 31, 2-5.

1. The eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers who is regarded as an embodiment of dharma or righteousness for his devotion to truth.

A man of pure heart alone is capable of understanding the Scriptures and practising the higher spiritual disciplines namely the love of God and surrender to His will. On the other hand if man works for the sake of enjoying the fruits of his actions there can be no stability of mind and purity of heart as there is no end to such a process. Before one desire or fruit has been completely achieved and enjoyed there will appear another desire and so on ad infinitum. There is no end to the process of hankerings and desires. Thus so long as one is haunted by the thought of the consequences, by hankerings and desires for results, one cannot hope to gain peace and stability. Therefore the aspirant must discard all thought of the consequences and thus be tormented by them no longer. Probably this is why Madhusūdana argues that all work should be done in accordance with the injunctions of the śāstrās in a pure spirit of duty, leaving all results and consequences to God to whom the initiation of all the worldly happenings really belongs. Works done in this spirit are really no works, and prepare man for divine grace and salvation. Spiritualised activities do not mean merely the performance of one's normal duties of life but performing them with a different attitude. In other words the significance of these activities does not consist merely in doing them for the continuance of the pilgrimage of life but in doing them from a sense of duty, without expecting the enjoyment of the results thereof. Dr. Schweitzer rightly observes: "The ultimate question man has to ask himself is whether the work he

resolves on comes to him as a task which must be fulfilled, and whether he accomplishes it in purest self-devotion to God. If he possesses this certainty, then he is free from any kind of guilt, even when he kills".<sup>1</sup>

It may be useful for further clarification to quote Professor Carritt's remarks with reference to Bradley's criticism of Kant's account of morality. "He (Bradley) criticizes the Kantian account of morality", writes Professor Carritt, "as fulfilling our obligations simply because they are our obligations, on two main grounds, both found also in Hegel:

1. That it is purely 'formal', since it gives no hint what our obligations are, and would fit the most fantastic opinion as well as any other.
2. That to fulfil all our obligations simply because they are our obligations is an unrealizable ideal, or at least one whose realization does not depend wholly upon us, and that therefore it always leaves us unsatisfied and self-reproachful".

Professor Carritt then proceeds to say that these criticisms which Bradley brings against Kant are applicable to his own theory which he advocates in his essay on 'My station and its duties'. He says:

- (1) "It either does not tell me what the duties of my station are or it tells me falsely that they are exactly what all or most respectable persons think them to be, and so makes all

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1. Albert Schweitzer. 'Indian Thought and its Development'. London, 1951, p. 189.

that is unpopular wicked.

(2) No man would claim that he had perfectly fulfilled all the duties of his station any more than that he had fulfilled all his duties. In fact the two statements are identical. But a man may sometimes be satisfied that he has fulfilled an obligation, and even that he did so because it was an obligation".

Having made these above mentioned criticisms Professor Carritt further observes: "The difficulties which Bradley finds with the formula 'Duty for Duty's Sake', and which, as we have seen, he ought to find with his own formula, really point to a view different from both. 'Duty for Duty's Sake' is a culpably formal formula if it means that our duty is to act from a good motive, for then whatever we did in a certain frame of mind would fulfil our obligation, and the answer to the question, 'What, in this situation, ought I to do ?' would be 'Anything, provided our motive is good'. And, on the same interpretation, it would be a formula impossible to comply with, since our motives are not wholly or directly in our power".<sup>1</sup>

These criticisms, which Bradley brings against Kan's<sup>x</sup> account of morality and which Professor Carritt restates in his own way, do not apply to Madhusūdana's theory of duty for duty's sake. His theory of duty for duty's sake is not a mere formal formula, it cannot be said to be a mere form without any content. According to his scheme of moral life, as we have

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1. E.F. Carritt. 'Morals and Politics', Oxford, 1935, pp. 142-143. (Note)

discussed in some detail in Chapter VI, the duties of all the four classes of men and also the duties of all the four stages of life have been specifically laid down in the Scriptures and other authoritative works based on them, in accordance with the natural capacities and individual development of men. The question of passing from the form to particular concrete duties does not arise so much in the case of Madhusūdana's theory. According to him everybody is required to do the duties of the station which he occupies in life; the duties, as we have just said, which have already been laid<sup>down</sup> according to the natural endowment of men. Thus one is not left in doubt as to what one should do. Therefore in moral life one has to cultivate the right temperament and spirit in which what has to be done - the specified duty - is to be done. There is thus no occasion for 'doing anything provided the motive is good'. The only point is, as we have already said, that everybody must perform his normal function in a proper spirit, by which is meant that he must not be led away by the thought of the consequences of actions, by the idea of the enjoyment of the fruits thereof. In short, he must work under the notion that it is his duty and he must therefore do it. Dr. Schweitzer makes an observation which supports our view. He says: "whilst with Kant the content of absolute duty remains obscure, Krishna states it with exactitude. He defines it as the totality of obligations which naturally belong to a man's station in life".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Albert Schweitzer. 'Indian Thought and its Development', London, 1951. p. 188.

We have discussed Madhusūdana's theory of duty for duty's sake and in this connection we have also referred to some allied problems. We shall now consider some objections that have been raised against this theory of the Bhagavadgītā which as we have seen Madhusūdana accepts and elaborates.

Professor McKenzie remarks: "An act and its consequences cannot be isolated from each other, nor can it be judged apart from them.. The value of the ethical teaching of the Bhagavadgītā is impaired by failure to recognize this, at any rate explicitly; and the injunction to perform works without attachment to their fruits amounts to a denial of the value of all acts performed with purpose - a position which it is of course impossible to maintain consistently".<sup>1</sup>

There are two main points in this criticism. (1) An act and its consequences cannot be isolated from each other nor can an act be judged apart from them. This point is not recognized in the Bhagwadgītā. (2) The injunction to perform works without attachment to their fruits amounts to a denial of the value of all acts performed with purpose. We shall discuss these points separately.

It does not seem to us very clear what is meant by the statement 'an act and its consequences cannot be isolated from each other'. It seems that the statement is intended to mean simply that every act is followed by its natural and inevitable consequences. If it means this, as it must, then it is diffi-

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1. John McKenzie. 'Hindu Ethics', Oxford, 1922, pp. 135-136.

cult to say that the author of the Bhagavadgītā does not recognise this point. That the Bhagavadgītā recognises the necessary and inseparable relation between an act and its consequences is conclusively proved from the fact that its whole ethical and moral teaching is based on the doctrine of karma<sup>1</sup> and 'as you sow, so you reap' is its main dictum.

What the Bhagavadgītā teaches is not that an action will not produce its results but that the enjoyment of these results should not be the motive of the actions. Far from ignoring the natural connection between actions and consequences, the Bhagavadgītā's whole moral teaching is based on the perception of this fact. Because there is no possibility of escaping fruits of action it is time and again said that one should gradually withdraw one's mind from them and concentrate more on the action itself. The consequences when thus naturally follow do not affect the inner detachment of the man who has already given up desire for them. This detachment cannot be achieved if desire for its fruits is not renounced. Thus the teaching of the Bhagavadgītā and that of Madhusūdana are not based on the non-recognition of the inseparable connection between action and its result. On the contrary the teaching is what it is because this is never lost sight of.

There is another point which may be submitted in this connection. Not to have the desire for fruits does not mean

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1. For detailed discussion please refer to Chapter VI.

not to seek any value. On the contrary mokṣa or spiritual liberation is the ultimate value towards which all activities of life are to be directed. But mokṣa is not the fruit of action because by the latter phrase are always meant particular results which come to an end through enjoyment and are exhausted through experience. Mokṣa being in essence the same as the freedom of the self is not something exhaustible and perishable. Thus in the context<sup>of</sup> the ethical thought of Madhusūdana it is supremely necessary to make the all important distinction between mokṣa as an end and all other desirable consequences of actions, that is to say, earthly and heavenly enjoyments.

It may not be out of place to mention here<sup>that</sup> Hindu thinkers speak of three kinds of activity. They are (1) mental (mānasa-ika), (2) verbal (vāchika) and (3) physical (kāyika). It is not only that we act physically but we also act mentally - we act not only with our body but also with our thought. Sometimes a mental act is considered more vicious than a rash physical act. Consequently in any ethical evaluation of a man's conduct it is difficult to ignore and leave out of account the inner nature of man which is the spring of all activities. Indian ethical thought considers the inner nature of man more important than the outward consequences and consequently lays considerable emphasis on the former. This also seems to be one of the reasons for the criticism that the Bhagavadgītā does not recognise the fact that an act and its consequences cannot be isolated from each other.

In regard to the second point in the criticism that the Bhagavadgītā denies any value to acts performed with purpose, it may be pointed out that this is the main teaching of the author of the book. He repeatedly argues that man must not perform any act with a view to fulfilling any purpose if by that is meant the satisfaction of personal desires and motives. This is the fundamental teaching of the Bhagavadgītā .

But perhaps what Professor McKenzie means to say here is that if all acts are to be performed without purpose then the normal activities of life becomes valueless and as such it becomes difficult to maintain consistently the doctrine of performing all works without purpose. In reply it may be submitted that the normal functions of life do not become valueless if done without purpose. On the contrary they become more meaningful and significant than when done with purpose. The point to be borne in mind here is that the principle of performing works without purpose does not mean renouncing works, not does it mean their disparagement. Far from it. It means performing all the functions of ordinary normal life but performing them in a different spirit and not with a view to realising any purpose or end.

The whole idea seems to be that a duty should be done regardless of its result. It should be done because it ought to be done. This principle is applied and extended to social work as well. Neither the private nor the public end should be made the sole motive for doing an action. A man must

perform his action because it ought to be done.

We shall explain this point with an example. Let us take the example of the education of a child. There can be as far as we can see three possible motives on the part, let us say, of the father behind his child's education. First, his natural inclination. It is the natural wish of every father to give as good an education as he can to his child. Secondly the father may desire to educate his child in the hope that it will support him in his old age. Here the predominant idea behind the child's education is the satisfaction of a purpose or end. It is done with a view to getting support in the old age. It may be pointed out here that these two motives are usually combined. A father provides education to his child both as a result of natural inclination and with a view to getting support. Over and above these two there may be a third motive. A father may educate his child as a matter of principle, as a matter of duty. As father it is his duty to educate his child. It is one of his obligations which he ought to discharge. The desire that he will get support in his old age from him or her is simply irrelevant in this case.

Now the author of the Bhag<sup>o</sup>wadgītā and also our author emphasise the third motive. To perform works without purpose means performing them as a matter of duty and in the spirit of duty.

There are probably two implications behind this emphasis

on the performance of actions in a spirit of duty. The first is that it prepares men for realising the supreme goal of life, it creates the proper mood for God-realisation. Because it is only through the performance of actions in this spirit that a man can get rid of egotism and selfishness. It is only through such actions, as we have already pointed out above, that the purification of the heart and the soul, which is the prerequisite for practising the higher spiritual disciplines namely the love of God and surrender to His will, can be brought about. Work done in this spirit is a mode of worship to God. The aspirant offers all his actions and their results to God. The second implication seems to be that if an action is done from the principle of duty for duty's sake there is no occasion, no chance for shirking on the part of an individual from the performance of his duties. Whereas if inclinations and desires or satisfaction of personal ends be made the motive for the performance of an action then there is ample scope on the part of the doer to evade his duties especially when his inclinations grow weak or when he finds that there is no chance of satisfying the personal end. Thus the whole teaching of our author is that all works should be performed as a matter of duty. There should be no impelling force other than the regard for the inner law of duty.

It may also be stated here that while there is a conflict between doing duty for the sake of duty and being moved to act for the sake of fulfilling of personal desires, there is no

conflict between carrying out one's duty as duty and doing it for the sake of love. Obviously 'love' in this context changes its meaning. In the example we have given if the father wishes to educate the child because he loves it and not because he feels it to be his duty, he may not do anything for the education of the child if his love dries up. Here his sentiment and morality are not reconciled. On the other hand the father may have a clear sense of duty as father to educate the child and also have over-powering love for it. His sense of duty would prevail even if his love did not. Thus if the father felt the duty to educate his child as father, it need not necessarily cancel his love.

It may also be pointed out here that when the Karma-yogi (one who follows the path of action) is advised by Madhusūdana to give up desires but not actions, the underlying principle is love of God. When desires as motives of actions are absent it is the love of God which moves <sup>one</sup> to activity. The devotee wishes to fulfil God's will in the world which, in the context of the Bhagavadgītā, is the maintenance of the cosmic order. This task involves fulfilling what are considered man's duties towards man. Thus the love of God finds expression in doing one's duty towards one's fellow-beings, though in the context of the Bhagavadgītā it is to be done eventually not ~~merely~~ as duty but also worship of God and as a means to doing His will. Therefore in the ethics of the Bhagavadgītā there is no conflict between love and duty. Love of God

becomes love of men. Actually what happens in such a case is that service is done as duty but love also is felt for those who are served.

But another objection might still be raised here if Madhusūdana holds that we are concerned with actions only and not with their results, if we are asked to perform all our actions without regard to their consequences, how can we then according to him meet those cases regarding which there is no specific injunction, or those situations in which there is a conflict of duties ? Madhusūdana cannot deny that situations arise in the life of almost every individual at one stage or another when it becomes difficult to decide what to do and what not to do. Let us take Mr. Toulmin's example<sup>1</sup> for illustration. That I promised to let Jones have his book back will seem to me reason for taking it to him in time - if that is all that there is to it. But, if I have a critically ill relative in the house (my grandmother), who cannot be left, the issue becomes complicated. Now the question which confronts us is, what should I do under such circumstances ? Should I keep my promise and go out leaving the ailing relative unattended and thus risking her life or should I remain with her ?

In a situation like this, sometimes, if not always, the dharmas which Madhusūdana preaches are not of much avail in the sense that they do not give any specific injunction, any

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1. S.E. Toulmin. 'The Place of Reason in Ethics', Cambridge, 1953, p. 147.

direct indication what to do and what not to do. There is no doubt that there are varṇāśrama-dharmas and also sādharma-dharmas. But despite all these it is not difficult to imagine cases, like the one we have just mentioned, in which it becomes difficult to take any particular course of action. Thus though Madhusūdana's theory of duty for duty's sake is better equipped in the sense that it provides for many situations of life, it nonetheless suffers to some extent from the same defect as Kant's theory of duty for duty's sake.

What has been said above should not be understood to mean that the ancient Hindu sages did not anticipate such situations, such specific instances, in which there might be no moral guide at all. Manu<sup>1</sup> clearly anticipates such situations. According to him besides the Vedas, the Smṛtis, and the practice of the virtuous, if one still has no moral guide in a specific instance, one's last resort, when in doubt, is the approval of one's enlightened conscience. In the absence of any other guide conscience has supreme authority in matters of conduct. No one should stifle its voice in order to conform to external codes. It may well be taken as the voice of God within us. This compares very well with Butler's conscience which is the final arbiter in matters of conduct and which is the voice of God.

But it seems to us that it is not enough to say as Manu does that in doubtful cases our conscience is the last resort.

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1. 'Manusmṛti', Chapter II, verses 6, 12.

In such doubtful cases and conflicting situations where different sets of facts drive us in opposite directions, it must take into account the situation, the circumstances, the probable consequences and such other factors before deciding upon a particular course of conduct. Thus though it is a disputed point among the writers on ethics whether or not the rightness of an act is determined solely by consequences, it seems true that it is determined at least partly by these.

Madhusūdana and other Indian thinkers probably feared, perhaps they also believed, that if private individual judgment be made the criterion of rightness and if private interest be allowed free scope, then these would lead to lawlessness and ultimately to the disruption of the whole society. They therefore tried to base morality on a more stable foundation namely the principle of duty for duty's sake. But in this they seem to have gone so far as to lay the whole emphasis on the inner nature of man.

Two points may be submitted in this connection. First in Madhusūdana the entire emphasis is on the realisation of the Supreme end of life, namely God. Secondly the notion of duty has not been very critically analysed and systematically worked as it has been in the West. There are important reasons for this lack of speculative ethical thought. The first reason seems to be that duties as given in the Scriptures are accepted. The reasons for this acceptance are (1) belief in super-human knowledge revealing the fundamental truths of the existence of

life, (a) the correspondence between duties as given in the Scriptures and what are seen to be the proper functions of man in accordance with his nature.

The second reason for lack of critical speculative ethical thought seems to be the interest of the ancient Hindu thinkers in metaphysics. They were probably too much occupied with metaphysical problems. The problems like 'the nature of the ultimate Reality', 'bondage and liberation' etc. had taken possession of their minds. Since a particular attitude of mind is conducive to the attainment of mokṣa, they have everywhere laid down considerable emphasis on the development of such a mental attitude. The fact that the Hindu thinkers were mainly occupied with metaphysical problems sometimes gives rise to the impression that there is no ethics in Indian literature. Even a great thinker and eminent Sanskrit scholar like Professor Max Müller remarks: "as a popular philosophy the Vedānta would have its dangers, that it would fail to call out and strengthen the manly qualities required for the practical side of life, and that it might raise the human mind to a height from which the most essential values of social and political life might dwindle away into mere phantoms".<sup>1</sup>

But there is yet another very important reason why there is lack of critical speculative thought which Professor Max Müller and other such thinkers probably overlook. The fact is that the value of moral action is recognised by the ancient

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1. F. Max Müller. 'Six Systems of Indian Philosophy', New York, 1899, p. 253.

Hindu thinkers. Ethical and moral discipline is necessarily implied in the metaphysical speculations. They consider moral discipline as a necessary step in the progress towards spiritual freedom. Kaṭha Upaniṣad says that self-knowledge is denied to him 'who has not ceased from bad conduct, who is not tranquil and composed and whose mind is not at peace'.<sup>1</sup> Thus certain ethical disciplines are presupposed by all students of metaphysics. Morality is a necessary condition for mokṣa because the moral life is assumed as a prerequisite for enquiry into the nature of Brahman, the ancient Hindu sages do not elaborate on ethical problems. But because they consider moral discipline as a necessary step to spiritual freedom, and probably in consequence did not think it necessary to critically analyse ethical notions it may be wrong to conclude that there is not any ethics in Hindu philosophical literature.

We have discussed the theory of duty for duty's sake. It presents a lofty ideal. Duty for duty's sake is a categorical imperative. It is unconditional in the sense that there is no higher authority on which it is dependent and by which it can be set aside. Those who adhere to this view regard morality as an end in itself. If it is asked, 'Why should I do my duty?' their only answer is, 'because it is your duty'.

But in spite of the high ideal of the theory of duty for duty's sake, Madhusūdana, as we have already pointed out in Chapter VII, does not regard it as self-sufficient and self-

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1. 'Kaṭha Upaniṣad', 1. 2. 24.

explanatory. Hindu ethical philosophy in general is not satisfied by the thought,

'Their's not to reason why,

Their's but to do ~~and~~ die!':

It holds that there can be no voluntary activity without some sort of motive. There must be some desire behind every will. Consistently with this general spirit our author advocates the performance of both motiveless and motivated action. It is motiveless in the sense that one should not have different motives for different activities. It is motivated in the sense that one should have one and the same motive for all activities, namely the realisation of God. According to Madhusūdana morality is only a means to the realisation of mokṣa. It leads to the purification of mind (cittasuddhi) which is a necessary requisite to the attainment of knowledge which leads to mokṣa. Morality thus prepares man for his spiritual journey in and through purification of mind and is valuable as leading to it. When the mind is purified, freed from all impurities, man can move on the spiritual plane and ultimately realise mokṣa through knowledge. Morality according to Madhusūdana is thus not an end in itself but a means to the realisation of the Supreme end of life.

We have shown that according to Madhusūdana morality leads to the purification of mind or cittasuddhi. It may be said here, what happens after purification of mind? How about morality after that? Madhusūdana's view in regard to these

questions is contained in his commentary on verses 56 and 63 of Chapter XVIII.<sup>1</sup> He says that a brahmin whose mind is purified and who is devoted to God may take sannyāsa or renounce the world after that, because he is entitled to do so by virtue of his being a brahmin, or he may not take sannyāsa, yet he will be liberated through the grace of God. But a kṣatriya or vaiśya whose mind is purified and who is devoted to God must go on performing his functions according to the śāstras even after the purification of his mind. He will get emancipation ultimately through God's grace.

One thing seems clear from what has just been said. Madhusūdana always invokes God's grace for the realisation of mokṣa. This is in keeping with his emphasis on bhakti. He believed that Brahman can be attained through loving devotion to Him. Not only did he believe in this, he himself followed the path of bhakti in spite of his being a non-dualist in philosophy. Professor Dasgupta referring to this point in Madhusūdana remarks: "It is however, interesting to note that, though he was such a confirmed monist in his philosophy, he was a theist in his religion and followed the path of bhakti, or devotion, as is evidenced by his numerous works promulgating <sup>the</sup> bhakti creed".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Mahadevan<sup>3</sup> also seems to maintain a similar view about

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1. 'Gūḍhārtha-dīpikā', 504-505 & 508.

2. Surendranath Dasgupta. 'A History of Indian Philosophy', Vol. II, Cambridge, 1932, p. 226.

3. T.M.P. Mahadevan. 'The Philosophy of Advaita', London, 1938, p. 252

Madhusūdana. He points out that 'though Madhusūdana was liberal in the matter of the method, he was uncompromising with regard to the metaphysical basis of Advaita' and it is to him that the credit of reconciling the philosophy of Advaita with the experience of a bhakta must be given.

Though we have already briefly referred to the state of mokṣa while giving an introduction to the ethical teaching of Madhusūdana in Chapter VI, it may be useful even at the cost of some repetition to speak a few words about it more or less by way of conclusion to this chapter. According to Madhusūdana, mokṣa is the state in which the individual rises above the level of the ethical sphere. He becomes jīvanamukta. Good and just actions flow spontaneously from the nature of the jīvanamuktas and such actions are always for the welfare of mankind. Their very existence in the world is for the guidance and enlightenment of humanity. Thus though liberated men remain on earth so long as the physical body continues, they are yet above it in the sense that they are not bound by any earthly tie. Their actions do not affect them just as the mud does not affect the leaves of the lotus. Since the liberated being becomes one with the whole, his will becomes God's will and his life becomes a godly life. His love and service become universal and spontaneous. Thus according to Madhusūdana actions, which may be said to begin in selfishness for the realisation of one's private and personal ends, must first be made moral and become unselfish and ultimately they reach their

culmination when they become natural and flow spontaneously from the liberated for the guidance of the mankind. This is the ideal of life. This is Madhusūdana's philosophy of action. This is the stage where love of man is the result of freedom from the exclusive ego. Consequently that love does not have to be cultivated but is a derivative of the love of God. This is the stage where one sees God in everything and everything in God.

We thus see that Madhusūdana's ethical teaching reaches its zenith in religion. Morality is a gate-way to religion. It is fulfilled in religion.

We have practically concluded the main discussion of this chapter but before we finally close it and pass on to draw up the comparison it may be useful to consider here whether the ethics as propounded by Madhusūdana can be regarded as subjective or objective. Though the problem did not arise in his time and the words 'subjective' and 'objective' were foreign to him his views on this seems clear. According to him the ethics of the Bhagavadgītā can be characterised as both subjective and objective. No actions are good or bad in themselves. It is only the spirit in which they are done that makes them good or bad. If an action is done out of desire and with a view to satisfying any personal end the action is bad. But if the same action is done in a spirit of duty because it ought to be done it is good and righteous. For instance, the act of killing on the battle-field even by a ksatriya (whose duty

is to fight) is bad and sinful if it is done through attachment but it is good and righteous if it is done from a sense of duty. Considered from this point of view the ethics which Madhusūdana advocates is subjective. But from another point of view it is objective. For instance, there are caste-duties which have been objectively determined and which every one is required to follow according to his position in society. These are all definitely fixed and no one should transgress them. Thus it is clear that the ethics which Madhusūdana propounds is not wholly subjective in the sense that the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined merely by subjective notions, it is not dependent solely on the approval or disapproval either of the individual or of most people. Nor is it entirely objective in the sense that a particular action is always right irrespective of any consideration of the psychological attitude in which it is done. In short, it is both subjective and objective. It is subjective because virtue and vice consist in the fact that these depend on the attitude and spirit in which acts are performed. It is objective because duties are all fixed and one should not violate them.

B. A comparison between Butler's account of Virtue as an End in itself and Madhusudana's theory of Duty for Duty's Sake.

We have explained Madhusūdana's theory of duty for duty's sake and we have seen how his ethics finally culminates in the realisation of God. We shall now proceed to draw up a comparison between the two thinkers - Butler and Madhusūdana.

The first point of agreement in the ethical teaching of both the thinkers lies in the fact that virtue is to be pursued for its own sake. In Madhusūdana we have seen that all acts are to be done in the spirit of duty, regardless of their result. According to him an act is to be done because it is right and not because of any exterior end which may be achieved thereby. In other words actions are to be performed not for the sake of the enjoyment of their fruits either by the agent himself or by others or by both. The agent should perform his action because it ought to be done. Though in Butler the matter does not go as far as that because in him reasonable cool self-love and benevolence are permissible motives on which to act, yet it must be remembered that in the last analysis according to him also rightness of an act is the only criterion on the basis of which conscience accords its approval. We have seen that while self-love approves an action because it is prudent, benevolence approves it because it leads to the good of others but conscience approves it only because it is right. It (conscience) pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right

and good and some actions to be in themselves evil, wrong and unjust.<sup>1</sup> It may also be stated here that conscience sometimes approves even those ~~whom~~ actions that are done in consequence of particular passions and affections but then it must not be forgotten that even in these cases the basis of approval is the same namely rightness.

Thus though the two thinkers differ on the question of motives on which acts are to be done they agree in the sense that in the last analysis the ultimate criterion of morality is the same according to both.

The second point on which there is agreement between the two thinkers is on the relation between morality and religion. In Madhusūdana we have seen that morality is not an end in itself. It is a means to the realisation of God. But it must be remembered here that though morality is a means to the realisation of mokṣa, it does not, according to Madhusūdana, directly lead to the realisation of this end. It only creates necessary conditions - the purification of mind and the deepening of inner life etc. - by which the ultimate end (God) can eventually be realised. Thus in Madhusūdana morality is ultimately fulfilled in religion. In Butler, on the other hand, we have seen that morality is its own end. He does not, at any rate, specifically mention self or God realisation as the ultimate end towards which all ethical and moral life moves.

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon II, sect. 10, p. 59.

Though it is true that in Butler virtue is its own end yet it seems to us that in his view it can be fully vindicated from the standpoint of Christian revelation alone.

We have already explained this point in Chapter V, we shall therefore, to avoid repetition, only briefly mention it here. While it is true that there are certain moral duties which can be known by reason independently of revelation there are certain positive duties, for example baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which can be known from Christian revelation alone. Then again there are certain obligations, religious regards, which arise from the fact that Lord Jesus is the Saviour, the redeemer of the world, the God and Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. These religious regards are of reverence, honour, love, trust, gratitude, fear, hope. These obligations which we all owe to these divine persons arise out of the very nature of the office, and the relations in which they stand to us. Butler says: "And the obligation we are under, of paying these religious regards to each of these divine persons respectively, arises from the respective relations which they each stand in to us".<sup>1</sup> Christian revelation has thus an important moral element in it. "For the office of our Lord being made known, and the relation he stands in to us, the obligation of religious regards to him is plainly moral, as much as charity to mankind is; since this obligation arises, before external

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part II, Chapter I, sect. 19, p. 198.

commend, immediately out of that his office and ~~the~~ relation itself".<sup>1</sup>

Butler goes further. It is not only that regard to Lord Jesus is due morally, that it is a moral duty but also that its neglect entails punishment in a natural way. "if he (Christ) be indeed our Lord, our Saviour, and our God; no one can say, what may follow, not only the obstinate, but the careless disregard to him, in those high relations . . . . For, as the natural consequences of vice in this life are doubtless to be considered as judicial punishments inflicted by God: so likewise, for ought we know, the judicial punishments of the future life may be, in a like way or a like sense, the natural consequence of vice: of men's violating or disregarding the relations which God has placed them in here, and made known to them".<sup>2</sup>

From all these it seems to us that according to Butler also morality can be fully vindicated from the standpoint of Christian revelation alone. This is not to say, as we have already said in Chapter V, that according to him one cannot be moral unless one is religious. But perhaps according to him to be fully moral it is necessary that a man should be a true Christian. Because as we have pointed out, there are certain positive duties which can be known only from Scripture. The view that morality can be fully vindicated from the standpoint

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. I, Part II, Chapter I, sect. 22, p. 200.  
2. do do Vol. I, Part II, Chapter I, sect. 23, pp. 200-01.

of religion alone may also be seen from the fact that perfect correspondence between virtue and happiness can only be brought about in the next life.

There is also another point in which the two thinkers seem to agree. There is a synthesis of the ethical and theistic positions in both Butler and Madhusūdana. What is virtuous is also religious and also vice versa. The theistic view of conscience in Butler suggests this position. We have seen that Butler, by holding that conscience is the viceroy of God and that its voice is the voice of God which we must all obey, wants to emphasise the fact that to act according to conscience means not only to act according to one's nature but also to act according to the plan and purpose of God. Conscience is the tie which holds morality and religion. To follow conscience is natural, virtuous and religious.

The synthesis in Butler between virtue and religion may further be seen in his very conception of the different elements of human nature. According to Butler the different elements of nature are not only adapted to virtue but also to the divine moral scheme. They have been implanted by God for particular ends or purposes. These ends can be realised only when we act in such ways and degrees as were originally planned and intended by the Author. To act suitably to our nature is, of course, virtuous in the sense that virtue lies in following one's nature, but it is also in accordance with the divine moral scheme in the sense that it is acting according to God's design and intention,

His plan and purpose. On the other hand if man violates the law of his nature his action not only becomes vicious but it also goes against the divine moral scheme.

Madhusūdana's ethical thought is saturated all through with the idea of synthesis between virtue and religion. We have seen that according to him all acts are to be performed as worship to God. All acts in this sense are religious acts. He repeatedly argues that all the appointed duties should be done in a spirit of loving surrender to God and therefore of selfless service to humanity which impart spiritual and religious significance to the merely ethical acts. Again Madhusūdana accepts the view, as we have set forth in Chapter VI, that the division of men into four castes was made by the Creator himself in accordance with their innate qualifications and functions. By recognising the caste-system as the divinely appointed institution Madhusūdana seems to emphasise that by doing the duties of the caste to which one belongs one not only does one's moral duty but also one's religious duty. Nay further, just as in Butler to follow conscience is natural, virtuous and religious, so also in Madhusūdana to do one's caste-duties is natural, virtuous and also religious. We should remember here that caste-duties are determined by the characteristic nature of man. Thus in doing one's moral duty properly one does what is natural to him and thereby also carries out the plan and purpose of God. Dr. Radhakrishnan quotes with approval from

Sukranīti (I, 58-42): "The four classes correspond to the intellectual, the militant, the industrial and the unskilled workers. All of them serve God's creation, by their own capacities, the Brahmans by their spirituality, the kshatriyas by their heroism, the Vaiśyas by their skill and the Śūdras by their service".<sup>1</sup>

We can explain the same point in a slightly different way. According to the Hindu thinkers, including our author, there is a divine government in the world, and in the moral scheme of this divine government there is the need for all types of action. In this moral government the virtuous and the good are rewarded and the vicious and the bad are punished. This divine purpose can be worked out only if all finite beings consider themselves as instruments for the carrying out of the divine plan and in this spirit fulfil the functions of their respective classes. No one should therefore avoid doing his duty, no matter how unpleasant that might be, because if one does so he will be violating the moral scheme of God who realises His plans and purpose in and through finite beings. This seems to be the only reason why Krishna exhorts Arjuna to fight the righteous battle against the unrighteous Kaurvas. It was the duty of Arjuna as a kṣatriya to suppress evil and thus to maintain the moral scheme of the divine government of the world. There is thus the synthesis of the moral and religious duty.

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1. S. Radhakrishnan. 'Hindu Dharma', International Journal of Ethics, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, October 1922, p. 10.

We can pursue our discussion a little further. Butler anticipates God through human nature. The love of God is required by our very nature. It not only supplies a blank in nature but, as we have said, is due morally to Him. Butler says: "By the love of God, I would understand all those regards, all those affections of mind which are due immediately to him from such a creature as man, and which rest in him as their end".<sup>1</sup> Thus the full demands of man's nature can be met only by his love to God. He is not complete without reference to God. It is not only that conscience is the viceroy of God seated in the heart of us all but that there are also certain other elements in human nature which necessarily point to him. We may say, for instance, that benevolence leads up to the love of God. Butler says: "That which we more strictly call piety, or the love of God, and which is an essential part of a right temper, some may perhaps imagine no way connected with benevolence; yet surely they must be connected, if there be indeed in being an object infinitely good. Human nature is so constituted, that every/<sup>good</sup>affection implies the love of itself. Thus, to be righteous, implies in it the love of righteousness; to be benevolent, the love of benevolence; to be good, the love of goodness; and the love of God as a being perfectly good, is the love of perfect goodness contemplated in a being or person. Thus morality and religion, virtue and piety, will at last necessarily coincide, run up into one and the same point, and love will be

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XIII, sect. 2, p. 230.

in all senses the end of the commandment".<sup>1</sup> Butler goes further in this respect. Though he does not, at any rate, specifically mention God-realisation as the ultimate ideal as Madhusūdana does, virtually his teaching amounts to this. There is something in the very nature of man which is not completely satisfied with the merely earthly, with anything less than God himself. We are too much occupied with the things of the world and we must withdraw ourselves from them in order to concentrate on God who is present in us all. Butler goes so far as to say that we must resign ourselves completely to God in order to know Him. Butler probably referring to the Holy Spirit says: "He is always equally present with us: but we are so much taken up with sensible things, that 'Lo, he goeth by us, and we see him not: he passeth on also, but we perceive him not' (Job IX.11). Devotion is retirement, from the world he has made, to him alone: it is to withdraw from the advocations of sense, to employ our attention wholly upon him as upon an object actually present, ... is the natural and only adequate object".<sup>2</sup> Butler makes some more categorical statements in this connection which proves that God is the only end for man. We shall quote here only two to prove our point.

(1) "It is plain that there is a capacity in the nature of man,

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XII, sect. 23, p. 228.

2. do do do Sermon XIV, sect. 3, pp. 247-248.

which neither riches, nor honours, nor sensual gratifications, nor any thing in this world can perfectly fill up, or satisfy: there is a deeper and more essential want, than any of these things can be the supply of".<sup>1</sup>

(2) Our resignation to the will of God may be said to be perfect, when our will is lost and resolved up into his; when we rest in his will as our end, as being itself most just, and right, and good".<sup>2</sup>

This teaching of Butler is in complete agreement with Madhusūdana because this is nothing less than devotion to God. It is true that in the last analysis Madhusūdana believes in complete identity between the individual and the Absolute in which even devotion to the personal God is transcended. While it is true that that is the nature of mokṣa in his metaphysics, he lays great emphasis on bhakti or devotion to the Absolute seen as a personal God. Indeed according to him God is the only object of our search. Thus for our purpose here it may with justification be said that Butler's idea of man's only natural and adequate object and the object of the seeker of mokṣa according to Madhusūdana are the same.

We thus conclude that while it is true that in Madhusūdana ethics and religion are inseparately bound up with one another and it is difficult to separate them from each other, so also

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XIV, sect. 11, p. 250.

2. do do do do do sect. 6, p. 246.

this is true in a sense in Butler. Butler's whole metaphysical background was religious, Biblical. Morality, in him, derives its impulses and may also be said to reach its climax in religion because, as we have shown, it cannot be fully vindicated without reference to Christian revelation. Again according to both the ultimate object of man's search cannot be what is merely relative, it cannot be what is confined within the boundaries of the finite and empirical reality. It must be transcendent to the immediate flow of events. In other words it must be God Himself.

Conclusion.

We have explained the ethics of both Butler and Madhusūdana. We have also tried to draw up a comparison between the two thinkers and in our comparison it is not only the points of agreement but also the points of difference that we have tried to bring out. We would now say a few words in conclusion about their ethical teaching.

Butler no doubt sometimes makes statements which appear incongruous and do not seem to fit in with his general moral scheme with the result that he has not only been interpreted differently by different writers on moral philosophy but has also been sometimes subjected to most severe criticism. It is often pointed out that despite all that Butler says he has not succeeded as a moral philosopher. He does not provide his readers with any criterion of rightness or wrongness as applied to actions. He does not point to any common quality peculiar to right actions alone on the basis of which they can be distinguished from the wrong ones. How does conscience decide that a particular course of action is in harmony with human nature and is as such natural and therefore also virtuous? What common quality does conscience discern in order to approve or disapprove an action? Butler gives no definite and clear answer to these questions. The job of a moral philosopher is not so much to say that an action is right or that an action is wrong. His more important function is to indicate how and why it is right. Judged from this viewpoint and standard Butler's system of moral philosophy falls short of adequacy

and completion.

It seems to us that much of what has been said by way of criticism of Butler's moral philosophy loses its force if we bear in mind the fact that Butler does not profess to give us any system in morals. He does not claim to give any adequate and perfect system of moral philosophy. Butler was not an academic philosopher. He was a practical preacher of righteousness and the function of a preacher is more to persuade man to do what he knows man ought to than to give any elaborate system. Butler's problems, his purposes in life were entirely different. It seems to us that most of the contradictions, inconsistencies and such other irregularities as are pointed out in his ethical and moral teaching by various writers can be, as we have tried to show, very well reconciled if we keep in view his practical problems, his own purposes, the atmosphere in which or against which he was working and also if we remember the particular technique and the typical method which he adopted in his discussion of moral problems. Butler himself says in his last Sermon at the Rolls Chapel 'Upon the Ignorance of Man' that "Our province is virtue and religion, life and manners; the science of improving the temper and making the heart better."<sup>1</sup> In order to achieve this end Butler had to go against the main current of the day. It was a time when people as a result of the scientific spirit had lost all faith in

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1. 'The Works of Joseph Butler', Vol. II, Sermon XV, sect. 15, pp. 272-273.

religion and morality. In other words it was a period when irreligion and immorality were growing. Butler's mind, very naturally by virtue of the position he was then occupying, was more preoccupied with making people virtuous and religious than giving any elaborate and adequate system of morality. It seems to us that perhaps it is in order to realise these ends more effectively that Butler maintains that the voice of conscience is the voice of God Himself and to act according to it is to act according to the plan and purpose of God. To ensure the realisation of these ends Butler is adopting a double measure. As we have already pointed out that by attributing theological origin to conscience he is giving a double support to virtue. To act according to conscience is to act according to one's nature. Again to act according to conscience is also to act according to the plan and purpose of God. Thus by the use of this double-edged weapon Butler wanted to make everybody virtuous and religious. This seems to be an important implication of Butler's theory of conscience as the voice of God.

Keeping all these in view we can say without any shadow of doubt that despite all his defects and inadequacies Butler has, as Professor Broad<sup>1</sup> rightly says, given us the great principles according to which decent people do feel, act and judge. He is in consequence still accepted as the master of ethical speculation and his influence is recognised even today.

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1. C.D. Broad. 'Five Types of Ethical Theory', London, 1951.  
p. 55.

When we come to Madhusūdana we find that his ethics is realistic in that it bases man's functions on his nature, on his dispositions and abilities. This has the advantage of not expecting of man what he is not capable of. At the same time it has also the advantage of making one's natural functions the means of one's moral progress. In the sphere of practical affairs this should lead to the want of feverish competition which, to a great extent, mars modern social life. Madhusūdana's ethics is also realistic in the sense that it provides for the satisfaction of natural hungers and desires and yet it is not psychological hedonism because the satisfaction is not made the motive but the need to outgrow the desires. This means that the sense of duty is brought to bear upon those activities which are almost instinctive. This has the effect of lessening their instinctive character and rationalising them.

While the above is true, it should also be observed that Madhusūdana's ethics is too idealistic in the sense that perhaps it expects too much from man. It expects that man will be more interested in moral progress and spiritual life than in worldly values. While the ethics is based on human nature, it also at the same time does not take sufficient notice of the actual tendencies of man and his motivations. It may be possible to put this idealistic ethics into practice in a small community but in a large community like the Indian where with the passage of time life, as everywhere, is becoming more and more complicated, other factors need to be taken into

account which were probably not present before Madhusūdana's mind. Of course, we should remember that they were not present in his time either. Modern ideas of democracy for example and desire for a higher standard of life have much to commend them and yet a system of ethics based on a rigid caste-system cannot meet the requirements of the spirit that animates these ideals.

One can see the fundamental wisdom in Madhusūdana's ethics. Certainly the ideals of duty for duty's sake, doing more for the good of the community than for one's own self-interest and the idea of the close relationship between all in the universe, these certainly are noble principles and in any system of ethics should play their part. The problem before Indian thinkers and social leaders is to find out ways and means how to reconcile the spirit of this ethics with the modern values of equality and social progress. The task certainly is not easy and yet it is urgent. Progressive minds in India are trying to do away with the injustices to which the rigidity of the present caste-system has led. But even the most bold among them do not deny that all functions cannot properly be carried out by all people. How far and in which aspects of life equality is admissible and where it is not is the problem before the Indian ethical thinkers and social leaders. It is true that in spite of the caste-system, foreign elements were absorbed into the Indian community, the Greek warriors for example, were allowed to settle down in India and

they were accepted as kṣātriyas. But there again the pattern was kept whereas today the ideas of equality and social progress may be taken as a challenge to the basic principle of Indian ethics. It is not to be expected that Madhusūdana's ethics will contain any guiding principles in these matters, still it can, and perhaps, with justification be said that his type of ethics is not adaptable and progressive. It seems to us that it still holds good for those few who are spiritually inclined but for the vast majority who are not so inclined and yet do not necessarily want to lead an immoral life Indian thought will have to devise an appropriate system of ethics.

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