

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 374

SO 028 004

AUTHOR Wolfson, Ron
TITLE Curriculum on Women in Contemporary India: A Multidisciplinary and Historical Approach. Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad 1966 (India).
SPONS AGENCY United States Educational Foundation in India.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 126p.; Some photocopied pages will not reproduce clearly. For related items, see SO 027 999- SO 028 007.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Asian Studies; *Females; Foreign Countries; Global Education; High Schools; *Indians; Instructional Materials; *Interdisciplinary Approach; Literature; *Multicultural Education; Non Western Civilization; Social Studies; *Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS *India

ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide was developed to assist high school students in understanding the role of women in modern India. The one semester elective course uses historical texts, biographies, scholarly works, novels, short stories, poems, and film as a means of exploring the subject matter. The course looks at the traditional role of women in modern India over the millennium as well as the place of women in the major religions of India. Sections of the guide include: (1) "Historical India: Empire and Religion"; (2) "Contemporary India: The Raj to the Present"; (3) "Women in Contemporary Indian Literature"; and (4) "Women in Contemporary India." Reading materials include, "Careless Daughters" from "Dharma's Daughters: Contemporary Indian Women and Hindu Culture" (Sara S. Mitter); "Wedding First, Love Later: Arranged Marriage among the Educated Classes," from "May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the Women of India" (Elisabeth Bumiller); readings from "India" (Richard Waterstone); "Great Mughal Glory (1605-1707)" from "A New History of India, 4th ed. (Stanley Wolpert); and "Great Women in Buddhism" from "Great Women of India" (Swami Madhavananda, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, eds.). (EH)

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**Women in Contemporary India:
A Multidisciplinary
and Historical Approach**

by

Ron Wolfson

A Curriculum Project Developed During the 1996
Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Program: India Seminar

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CURRICULUM on Women in Contemporary India:
A multidisciplinary and historical approach

in fulfillment of the project requirement of the Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program

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Women in Contemporary India

The purpose of this one semester course is to take a multidisciplinary approach to the study of women in contemporary India. The course will use historical texts, biographies, scholarly works, novels, short stories, poems, and film as a means of exploring the subject matter. In order to properly understand the role of women in modern India the course will look at the traditional role of women over the millennium as well as the place of women in the major religions of India.

There will be two tests and two papers for this course. The first test will cover the historical and religious background which is discussed during the first month of the course. The second test will cover the time period between the British Raj and the rule of Rajiv Gandhi. The first paper will be the analysis of a piece of literature written by an Indian woman or about Indian women. There will also be an oral presentation. The other paper will be a research paper dealing with an issue concerning women in contemporary India.

The reading assignments which are listed on the syllabus are a guide to how a teacher might wish to cover the course. The assigned reading listed on this syllabus, including the assigned novels, comes to nearly 1,000 pages. Obviously a teacher would need to select which reading assignments he or she feels would best suit his or her class. Copies of chapters from the main texts and literature are provided to give teachers an idea of the level and depth of some of the suggested readings.

This course is designed as an elective at an academically demanding private school. The schedule which follows is designed to follow the calendar of most schools of this type with the first semester ending prior to winter break. The schedule, as well as topics, tests, papers, and reading assignments will need to be adapted to the needs of many different types of schools, though the level of reading will necessarily be demanding.

Main Texts

- Bumiller, Elisabeth May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the Women of India, New York, Penquin Books, 1990.
- Madhavananda, Swami and Majumdar, Ramesh Chandra, editors, Great Women of India, Calcutta, Ashrama Advaita Publishers, 1993.
- Mitter, Sara S., Dharma's Daughters, India, Penquin Books, 1992.
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Main Works of Literature

- Deshpande, Shashi, The Intrusion and Other Stories, India, Penquin Books, 1993.
- Jhabvala, Ruth Pravar, The Householder, New York, W.W. Norton, 1960.
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Supplemental Texts

- Ajgaonkar, Sri. Meghshyam T., editor, Mahatama: A Golden Treasury of Wisdom-- Thoughts and Glimpses of a Life, Hripra Publication, Mumbai, 1995.
- Altekar, A.S., The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1983
- Bader, Clarisse, Women in Ancient India, Dehli, Anmol Pub., 1987.
- Batliwala, Srilantha, "Empowerment and Women's Autonomy" from the Co-ordination Unit, Bangalore, World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
- Burton, Sir Richard F., The Kama Sutra of Vatasayana, London, Penguin Books, 1962.
- Chattopadhyay, Kamaladevi, Indian Women's Battle for Freedom, Dehli, Abhinav Pub., 1983.
- Fishlock, Trevor, India File, New Delhi, Rupa & Co., 1983.
- Jain, Devaki, editor, Indian Women, Delhi, Publications Division, New Delhi, 1975.
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- Johnson, Donald J., Johnson, Jean E., and Clark, Leon E., Through Indian Eyes, 3rd Edition, New York, CITE Books, Apex Press, 1992.
- Nagaraja, Bhargavi, "Reproductive Rights: Women Against the Politics of Coercion" from the Co-ordination Unit, Bangalore, World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
- Phadnis, Urmila and Malani, Indira, editors, Women of the World, New Delhi, Vikas Pub., 1978.
- Rastogi, Veera, "Strengths and Limitations of the Laws as Pertaining to Women: Amiocentesis and other Laws" from the Co-ordination Unit, Bangalore, World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
- Sen, Gita, "Population Policies and Women's Health--The Shifting Boundaries" from the Co-ordination Unit, Bangalore, World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
- Smith, Huston, The Religions of Man, New York, Harper and Row, 1958.
- Waterstone, Richard, India, Little, Brown and Company, London, 1995.

Supplemental Works of Literature

- Desai, Anita, Clear Light of Day, New York, Penquin Books, 1980.
- Jhabvala, Ruth Praver, Esmond in India, London, Penquin Books, 1958.
- Jhabvala, Ruth Praver, Heat and Dust, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1975.

Unit I: Historical India: Empire and Religion

September

Week 1: The Harrapan and Aryans

Reading: Wolpert, "Indus Culture" (pps. 14-23)
"The Aryan Age" (pps. 24-36)

Week 2: Hinduism and Buddhism

Reading: Wolpert, "North Indian Conquest and Unification" (pps. 37-54)
Waterstone, "Renunciation" (pps. 26-39)
"The Forms of Vishnu" (pps. 46-62)
Nihshreyasananda, "Great Women in the Ramayana" from Great Women in India (pps. 140-168)

Week 3: Buddhism and the Mauryan Empire

Reading: Dutt, "Great Women in Buddhism" from Great Women in India (pps. 253-274)
Wolpert, "India's First Imperial Unification" (pps. 55-69)

Week 4: Islam and the Muslim Invasion

Reading: Wolpert, "The Impact of Islam" (pps. 104-125)
"Great Moghul Glory" (pps. 149-167)
Mirza, "Great Muslim Women of India" from Great Women in India (pps. 378-394)

Test: Indian Empires and Religions

Unit II: Contemporary India: The Raj to the Present

October

Week 1: The British in India

Reading: Wolpert, "The New Moghals" (pps. 201-225)
"Indian Nationalism--The First Movement" (pps. 250-264)
Mukerjee, Satswarupananda, Pillai, and Rao "Great Indian Woman of the 19th Century" from Great Women in India (pps. 395-413)

Week 2: The Age of Gandhi

Reading: Wolpert, "Toward Independence" (pps. 310-328)
"The Impact of World War Two" (pps. 329-350)
Ajgaonkar, Mahatama: A Golden Treasury of Wisdom--Thoughts and Glimpses of a Life (selected readings)

Week 3: The Age of Indira Gandhi

Reading: Wolpert, "From Collective Leadership to Indira Gandhi" (pps. 371-406)
"From Janata Raj to Rajiv Gandhi" (pps. 407-433)
Bumiller, "Indira is India, and India is Indira: Mrs. Gandhi and Her Legacy for Indian Women in Politics" (pps. 147-178)

Test: The British Empire and the Gandhi Raj

Unit III: Women in Contemporary Indian Literature

Week 4: Indian short stories

Reading: Deshpande, "The Intrusion" (pps. 34-42)
 "An Antidote To Boredom" (pps. 61-69)
 "The Stone Woman" (pps. 141-146)
 "The Cruelty Game" (pps. 122-132)
 "The First Lady" (pps. 1-8)

Paper assignment given on Monday

Week 5: Indian novels

Reading: Jhabvala, The Householder

November

Week 1: Indian novels

Reading: Markandaya, Nectar in the Sieve

Week 2: Oral Presentation of paper assignments

Reading: None

Paper due: Monday

Unit IV: Women in Contemporary India

Week 3: Dharma's Daughters

Reading: Mitter, "Female Prowess: Shakti" (pps. 71-80)
 "The Epic Wife" (pps. 91-98)
 "Only a Female" (pps. 109-122)
 "To Change Your Own Life" (pps. 123-136)
 "A Four-Thousand-Year-Old History" (pps. 165-176)

Week 4: Village Life

Reading: Bumiller, "Beyond the Veil: The Woman of the Village of Khajuron" (pps. 75-100)

Fishlock, "Girl for ardent boy" (pps. 20-43)

Film: To be announced

December

Week 1: Modern Women in India

Reading: Mitter, "The Woman's Compartment" (pps. 13-24)

"The Hazards of Homemaking" (pps. 25-36)

"Ingredients of Everyday Life" (pps. 55-70)

Bumiller, "Her Own Place in the Sun: A Professional Woman and a Housewife" (pps. 230-256)

"Poets and Revolutionaries: Three Women in Calcutta" (pps. 201-229)

Week 2: Major Issues for Women in India

Reading: Bumiller, "Wedding First, Love Later: Arranged Marriage Among the Educated Class" (pps. 24-43)

"Flames: A Bride Burning and Sati" (pps. 44-74)

"No More Little Girls: Female Infanticide" (pps. 101-124)

"Towards Equality: The Indian's Women Movement" (pps. 125-146)

Week 3: Major Issues for Women in India

Paper due on Friday

Reading: Mitter, "Careless Daughter" (pps. 153-165)

"The Collective Venture" (pps. 137-152)

Sen, "Population Policies and Women's Health--The Shifting Boundaries"

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Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd., 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand

First published in the US by Rutgers University Press 1991
First published in Penguin Books 1992

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Dharma's Daughters

Contemporary Indian Women and

Hindu Culture

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SARA S.
MITTER



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CARELESS DAUGHTERS

*Rise up, ye women that are at ease!
Hear my voice, ye careless daughters!*

—Isaiah 32:9

Tara's driver came for us at four-thirty p.m. I was going to tea with my friend Sheela and her great-aunt to meet Tara, Sheela's new cousin by marriage. Because it would be high tea in someone's home, in the company of an august elderly lady, I wore a sari. The three of us, all starched cotton billows, squeezed into the back seat of the Ambassador, the stout Indian automobile designed for durability, not comfort. "Why she didn't send the Mercedes," the great-aunt muttered to herself.

We were handed smoothly from driver to doorman to elevator attendant to the uniformed maid who opened the massive carved mahogany door of the tenth-floor apartment. We stepped along a plant-lined, marble-paved entry hall hung with framed and illuminated Moghul miniatures. Reggae rock music was coming out of the walls.

"Lovely to see you!" A statuesque woman came forward, her dark hair piled in a high topknot like a Bodhisattva sculpture. She was wearing a rumpled, impeccably white cowl-neck shirt and cotton trousers, export manufacturers'

seconds that hawkers sell on the sidewalk outside the museum. She'd got it, she told me later, for thirty rupees (less than two dollars); she'd hard-bargained him down. For accessories, she wore half a pound of solid gold jewelry: heavy choker, broad bangles and ear clips of fretted two-tone gold, and two similarly patterned rings on her right hand. Her wedding ring was four bands of small matched diamonds. With a pearl-polished fingernail she switched off the stereo. Her other arm held her four-month-old daughter.

For the whole length of the visit, hovered over by cook, maid, and nanny and punctuated by arrivals of various delivery boys, Tara did not put the baby down. She installed herself next to her husband's Aunty and attended assiduously to the eldest guest, while Sheela and I took a stroll around the vast living room. The triple picture window commanded a wide-screen view of other luxury apartment buildings, construction workers' shanties, a washermen's colony, the bay, and the open sea. The room was furnished with antiques and bronzes, the walls a gallery of ancient and contemporary Indian art.

After a few minutes, we were called into the dining room and seated at one end of the formally laid table. Tara settled the baby on her lap and supervised the serving of tea and platefuls of mini-kebabs, vegetable fritters, chickpeas in sauce, chutneys, fruit pudding, milk sweets, cakes. We fell to, using the heavy sterling silver service. Tara fed herself with the fingers of her right hand, in the traditional manner. In her cultured British accent, she expressed her regret that her stepchildren were not at home—gone to the club for swimming and tennis. She spoke feelingly of the unhealthy materialism of the other children in their exclusive school, the loss of traditions, the decline of values. She alluded to her travels to Paris and New York and assured us that "Americans are not aware of anything outside their own suburb." We got up from the table to resettle in the living room and digest for a while. Tara remarked that in this unbearably hot weather she fortunately did not ever have to step out of the apartment.

Not even in the air-conditioned Mercedes, I thought. I knew that Viraj, the business magnate whom she married

just a year ago, was not quite as fabulously rich as her former husband, but certainly a safer investment than the romantic polo player with whom she had enjoyed the escapade that finished off her first marriage. I thought of one or two of my own friends who walk a fine line and thrive on provocation. Tara won hands down.

The glossy Bombay magazines call them the *glitterati*—moneysed, arrogant women and men for whom there are no limits. Evidently, one has a sense of outrage. The coarse-featured, heavily made-up, obese woman in a chiffon sari waddling down the steps of the Taj Mahal Hotel is repulsive to look at. Her abdomen and flabby sides hang in dewlaps: the sari was not meant to wrap so much meat. Moral revulsion follows closely on the physical. The abject wretchedness all around makes the contemptuous indifference of the super-rich more reprehensible. The view from their protected eyrie is too squalid; the bitter toil of the many, omnipresent.

A magazine reports an exhibition-sale of arty original T-shirts painted in one-of-a-kind designs, sold out in one hour at 2,500 rupees *each*. Rock-and-roll fashion shows are jammed; lines form at glamorous restaurants that coyly hint at Western naughtiness—"Ménage à Trois" features "small-is-beautiful designer meals, composed of an intriguing selection of before and afters."

Most Bombay-based magazines, even those aimed at the swinging hedonist, carry a somber article or two on conditions affecting the vast majority. But the inaugural issue of a publication launched in 1987 and purporting to "tell all" about what goes on in the megacity, frankly dispensed with any token piece on dreary topics like slums, pollution, or civic irresponsibility. That is all simply part of the folklore, the tough charm that adds spice to living here. Terrible, yes, but what to do? One is not a social worker.

Snide articles and letters lampooned the celebrated actress who joined a hunger strike of slum dwellers whose huts had been razed and no alternative site proposed by the local government. "Let her settle them in her compound at Juhu [the suburb of the stars]," the upper middle class sniffed and dismissed the topic. The problem would have gone away, they felt, if the actress had not turned it into a publicity stunt.

For the outsider, the inevitable sense of outrage is like a shot of adrenalin at first. It can go stale and eventually resolve into a self-protective irony. The problems are enormous, and the native aptitude for denial and dissociation makes it possible to keep from being overwhelmed. If you lived here, what would you do?

For some, the work of mother, wife, and home manager is not only full-time, but it has also taken on new and surprising dimensions. A Bombay reader wrote to a women's column in *The Times of India*:

My mother had to be just "mother." She was there to tend to my creature comforts and worry about my well-being. I have to be a friend, guide and critic to my children—meet their teachers, take them for swimming lessons; mediate between them and their papa-about long hair and faded jeans. I must be game to go on picnics, struggling into my too tight jeans; cook for an army of my son's friends who decide to stay and watch a movie on video; stand in at rehearsals of jam sessions, and succumb to entreaties to be a darling mom and make French fries after a hard day's work.

Add a salaried job or profession to the program—more balls to juggle and the added guilt about giving short shrift to one's roles as mother and homemaker. Women with professions may mask their enthusiasm and take care not to manifest a strong commitment to their "outside" work. They are, after all, the product of an education that has put a premium on docility and performance and systematically discouraged original thinking and personal initiative. The school uniforms that are still worn, regulated down to the very color of the elastic binding one's braids, are emblematic of the uniformity sought. Great chunks of biology are learned by rote, with all the Latin nomenclature and perfectly copied diagrams, and regurgitated in frequent exams. Victorian attitudes prevail. The "home science" teacher cautions young ladies not to touch any part of their person while preparing food. The poetry teacher marks the beat as the class belts out in unison "The boy stood on the *bur-ning deck*." Bright girls work faithfully and earn high marks; then are admitted to science faculties where they keep at it, living in single cells in

women's hostels. Meanwhile, their families begin putting out feelers for commensurate mates.

A survey of postgraduate science degree holders made in the late 1970s examined these women's motivation for self-growth and professional development and their views of their role as scientific workers in relation to other roles.¹ Forty percent of the women were unmarried. Most of those who were voluntarily not employed were married with young children. They placed a high value on staying at home, even when there were domestic helpers or grandparents in the household. One top graduate felt that "a woman should work only if her husband does not earn enough or if her family needs money for her marriage expenses."

All those who were not working agreed that scientific training encouraged critical awareness and claimed they kept up with their field. Yet without exception, they believed in destiny (karma). Many observed fasts, vows, or ritual taboos. Science, they felt, may explain natural events, but there is a power of destiny beyond human comprehension and control.

The women surveyed had received master's or doctoral degrees in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Younger women, born at least a decade later, place higher priority on both professional and personal development. Most of them come from educated and supportive families. Many have been affected by the women's movement.

Yet, to survive in a profession where men make the rules, a woman may lean over backwards to emulate male colleagues and dissociate herself from anything that smacks of "women's problems." No less a model than Indira Gandhi did the same. Indira, as the story goes, took it as a compliment to be dubbed "the only man in her cabinet."

Once established in a position of relative authority, a woman can be brutal in her way of exercising it. Physicians who run sterilization "camps"—all-day cut-and-tie marathons with quotas to meet—work with a chilling disregard for their patients as individuals. In a court case brought by newly recruited young hospital nurses who had been compelled illegally to undergo virginity tests, it emerged that the procedure used, the most painful and invasive method, had been imposed by a woman doctor.²

Such individuals are not apt to ally themselves with women colleagues or women's causes. Their interests lie in maintaining the status quo and their own privileges in it. This is the case for many of the women who hold political office. Those who have been tapped to run for parliament by the male-dominated political parties are very often wives, widows, or daughters-in-law of powerful male politicians. A few women politicians on the left identify themselves with women's protest and actively campaign, rather than simply propagating the party line. But the rest are largely from upper-caste land-owning or industrialist families; some are descendants of the old princely houses. Few have a political program or perspective, and their allegiances are clear. Politics is just an extension of family business.

And then, there are the mavericks—lucid, principled, independent, the very antithesis of a bourgeoisie maharani like Tara, though generally issuing from the same privileged class. They are true originals, whose only resemblance to one another is in the passionate conviction each brings to her work and the relative simplicity in which each one lives.

One who has a redoubtable reputation is Madhu Kishwar. "I'm a mule, born to be a mule in a human body," says the founder and editor of the path-breaking journal *Manushi*. Strongly opposed to state intervention even in the name of social reform, Madhu feels that the purpose of any social action is to create space for more humane norms for dealing with people in general, and women in particular. Highly articulate and quick to speak her mind, Madhu, who has been a human rights activist since her student days, refuses all labels, including that of feminist. She is wary of theorizing and romanticizing about a struggle that proceeds through sheer drudgery and repeated setbacks. "It's an epochal struggle, but it has to be done. Our existence, *Manushi's* existence are a challenge—we are living that challenge every day."

Another is Niloufer Bhagwat, a firebrand attorney whose practice thrives in Bombay. Her husband is posted in New Delhi. This makes for a commuting marriage; one teenage child stays with each parent. Niloufer feels that only since the mid-1980s have women's issues come to the fore. "The failure

of ranking women in the political parties was total. Their attitude was superficial, patronizing—as if these were charity issues. No one was paying attention to the magnitude of women's contribution to the basic economic unit of society, the household."

Access to legal aid in Bombay has greatly improved, Niloufer feels, but a woman who seeks divorce is in a very shaky state. She has no economic security. She is terrified about going to a court of law against her own husband. "Many of the women who come to me are suffering from depression, and no wonder. The whole ethos is that your life begins and ends with marriage. It doesn't matter if you don't know what it is to step out of your home and attend a meeting, if you have not known even twenty-four hours of happiness. Your existence is meant for your husband and children—you have no right to exist as an individual."

Niloufer views the court proceedings as an opportunity for a woman to see how a branch of the state functions vis-à-vis her own life. "I tell my client, 'You and I are confronting not only your husband who is a product of this society, but also the state, which thinks that we should not be coming here to air our woes.' The woman must be led to question: What does this institution represent? Who appoints the judge? What are his biases? This must be an educational experience for the client. An attorney should never take the attitude that this is a charitable exercise."

A senior woman colleague had recently appeared on behalf of a Parsi woman who asked, as part of her divorce settlement, that the apartment where she had lived with her husband be divided in two, with separate entries. Otherwise she would be on the street. The older lawyer hesitated. "Where is the precedent for this?" she asked.

"We are to evolve the precedents," Niloufer replied. "That is what we are here for. Our part of the struggle, in the legal profession, is to create the concepts, establish the precedents."

Niloufer's doctoral degree is in administrative jurisprudence. Her additional caseload as a women's rights advocate is exhausting. After a period of ill health in 1987, she considered curtailing this activity for a while. But a letter from her

sixteen-year-old son rallied her. "Ma," he wrote, "don't be a dormant volcano."

♦ ♦ ♦

"My husband is an executive who works in five-star hotels. I work on five-star construction sites."

So speaks Indu Balagopal, with her eloquent smile. We have just stepped out of a teeming creche, a slapped-together brick cabin roofed with metal sheeting. "The five- and six-year-olds here are old hands at Bombay life," Indu remarks. "Video culture, alcohol, everything. A foreign visitor doesn't cause many heads to turn. But if I took you to one of our sites in the suburbs, where the workers are raw recruits from the village—the children would start to cry at the sight of you."

Indu, a physician, is the prime mover of Mobile Creches in Bombay (described in Chapter 5). But she herself attributes the originality and strength of the operation to its staff of teachers and creche workers, who are drawn from the lower middle class. These women may have only a primary school education and no work experience. They come from modest, traditionally oriented families, and they need an income. A one-year training course, in the classroom and onsite, develops their competencies. They produce the teaching materials and invent the stories, songs, and games. Ingeniously they arrange the spaces of the creche as they have learned to do in the cramped all-purpose rooms in which their own families live.

To transform women who had been taught by the rule into innovative and permissive teachers has meant undoing lifelong habits of timidity and deference. Indu recalls, "At staff meetings, they used to open their notebooks and get ready to write. I said, 'I am not going to say anything you can write down and follow. You think about the question and make some suggestions.' They insisted, 'Didi [Big Sister], please tell us what to do.' It took a lot out of us, but eventually they got there. Now it is so decentralized that I don't initiate discussions or take decisions at meetings. It may be that so-and-so has come to work late ten times. She has domestic problems. Some of the staff are punitive toward her, some are more tolerant. They have to develop a consistent policy and follow it through."

"Sometimes I think this is making them schizophrenic," Indu says ruefully. "A group of creche workers told me, 'Now we understand. You forced us to learn to think for ourselves. Here we talk, argue, take decisions. But at home if we speak up like that, we are told, 'Who do you think you are?'"

Many staff workers share their homes with dominating mothers-in-law. One woman found that in her absence her own baby was being fed rice water. She asked her mother-in-law to give the child milk. "Don't act smart," retorted the older woman. "I've raised many children on rice water. If you don't like the way I look after your baby, take it with you to the creche."

And she did. It was a courageous step for the young woman, not only to defy hierarchical authority, but also to disregard social taboos and let her child mix with the motley crew in the creche.

Another worker, mother of two girls, was pregnant. The family was praying for a boy—if not this time, then the next. But the woman informed her husband that she was going to have herself sterilized after the delivery, whatever the outcome.

"How they have blossomed out, and how difficult it was for them at every step," Indu recalls. "At the start, I asked: 'If the children are dirty and unkempt, will you be able to teach?' Most of them said, 'No.' But now you see them, they work for low wages, in abominable conditions—no toilets, makeshift sheds with the sun in their faces, thatched roofs in the rain. Some travel an hour by bus and the rest of the way by foot to reach the sites. They persevere, they adapt and create. These women are the strength of Mobile Creches."

As for Indu herself, she is engaged in a perpetual guerrilla action. Construction magnates, site engineers, municipal authorities can look out the window of their palatial offices or their polished Mercedes without seeing that a large number of laborers slogging through the mud are women—and that therefore the law requires provision of a creche. "Madame," they say, "please send me all the correspondence, I will be writing to you." One element that keeps Indu going is surely her wicked sense of humor.

"I live in one of those residential towers," she says. "You know the kind. The residents can take their dogs in the eleva-

tor, but not their servants. When we moved into the first building, some of the others were still under construction. A creche was operating there, that we had established after eight months' negotiations. Whenever I appeared, I was followed by swarms of children. The new residents kept me at arms' length. "What are you, an *ayah*?" they asked." Indu laughs with glee. "My neighbors don't understand me *at all*."

♦ ♦ ♦

Can a sensitive, civic-minded woman make a social commitment without becoming either a maverick or a saint? Many unheroic young women graduating from universities do not wish simply to stay at home and raise bright children. And they object to the assumptions of traditional voluntary organizations for "social uplift." A few find places in institutes or associations engaged in some aspect of women's development. SEWA, for example, requires educated English-speaking women for fund raising, proposal writing, publishing, legal aid, accountancy, and the like. One such staff member told me, "We feel strongly about the way women are placed, how they are treated. We need to do something constructive about it, even if we have no economic need to work. In a way, we are rebelling too against the expectations placed on us."

Working in an organization for women's development may eventually mean interacting with rural women, who are, after all, the vast majority. This is a venture into a foreign territory, so great are the differences in experience and expectations between educated urban and illiterate rural women. Field workers from one action-oriented research institute, who had gone out freshly versed in methodology and full of ideals, had a rude time of it. They met dogged resistance, overt manipulation, utter indifference. Their respondents, hoping for reward, duly spouted whatever they thought the researchers wanted to hear. But a stint of living in the isolation and penury of the village made them more understanding, especially when they caught themselves behaving in similar ways. "You have to live that life to understand how a villager will want to grab anything that's offered that comes

from outside. You yourself become so needy—let someone bring me a newspaper, any little thing from the outside world."

To be in the company of vigorous and committed women is a heady experience. One begins to be persuaded that a grand awakening is at hand, green shoots emerging in unlikely places; women at every level are standing taller, recovering their powers, reaching out to each other across crumbling barriers of caste and class.

This depends on what lens you are looking through. A feminist columnist cites a "tremendous mental change" among the many readers who write to her and reports, on returning from a lecture tour, that the Muslim women are seething under their burkhas. "Strikingly vibrant working-class feminism [is] spreading through the western and southern parts of the country," writes a Marxist intellectual. "One feels a current of exhilaration running through the accounts of researchers and activists involved with the multitude of struggles and innovative mobilization processes."³

There is a palpable exhilaration, and it is energizing. But many women embroiled in the struggle are too weary to fire off dispatches. They know how scattered the gains are, how profound the passivity, and how many-armed the resistance. No cost-effectiveness criteria—cost of effort for result obtained—can be applied to gauge the utility and necessity of working for the women's cause in India.

In every generation, certain daughters of socially prominent or orthodox Brahman families repudiate the life decreed for them and go to live in parched villages and organize cooperatives or develop artisanal industry in remote tribal districts. Once, these were isolated cases, like the legendary ascetics, performing austerities to re-equilibrate the order of things. Today, they too can be seen as part of a vast informal network, a movement, whose discords and differences of approach are symptomatic of its vitality.

All this will no doubt look scraggly and sound shrill from the vantage point of Tara's gorgeous living room. Thick drapes of pale silk brocade can be drawn to block the view. But movement there is: its victories are modest but definitive; its motto, in the words of one activist, "to keep on keeping

on." And it is sufficiently visible and numerous for at least two ambitious "reformist" politicians to have begun paying it court. ⁴ Perhaps these men have perceived the link between traditional notions of woman power—the ready reference to shakti, to goddess—and contemporary activism: women's effective power.

♦ 15 ♦

A FOUR-THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD HISTORY

*Strengthened by my thoughts of you,
travel an unthreatened path: for if a thing
must be, good women are not timorous.*

—Kunti to Draupadi, Mahabharata

We are sitting in the pitch dark, on the lawn of a modest bungalow near Delhi University. There is a power blackout, as there has been every day, sector by sector, throughout the city. Some say that New Delhi is voluntarily cutting its consumption to divert electric power to the irrigation pumps in the vast parched farmbelt to the north. Others maintain that political bosses in the drought-afflicted states have blocked the flow from the hydroelectric plants further north to embarrass the government and put pressure on a capital whose nights are already tense with terrorist shooting sprees.

The three of us are tranquil in the darkness, refreshed by the cooling night air after a hectic day. Though we meet rarely, our friendship goes back to the 1960s in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Deben is a Bengali intellectual of the old school, indifferent to worldly goods (other than books), a demanding thinker but amiable in company, never doctrinaire. His wife Rupa is rooted in the same tradition and possessed of similar integrity and restraint. For thirty years, she has

Elisabeth Bumiller

May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons

A Journey Among the
Women of India



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Penguin Books(NZ) Ltd, 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand

Published in the United States by Random House, Inc., New York, and
simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Ltd, Toronto, 1990

First published in India by Penguin Books India (P)Ltd, 1991

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Made and printed in India by Ananda Offset Private Ltd., Calcutta

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how to travel; his films, from *By Jeep Around the World to Eternal India*, have guided and influenced much of my work. I am also indebted to my inspirational grandmother, Elizabeth Bumiller, who at the age of eighty-eight came to visit her granddaughter one insufferably hot summer in India. I also owe much to my equally intrepid and remarkable in-laws, Joseph and Etta Weisman, and my sisters and step-brothers—Trine, Karen and Jennifer Elken Bumiller, and Stephen, Michael and David Rose.

The last person I would like to thank is the most important. I think it is fair to say that this book could not have been written without my husband, Steve, who read the entire manuscript many times, believed in it when I did not, and whose support, patience and love were the source of my strength. This book is as much his as mine.

ELISABETH BUMILLER
Tokyo
September 1989

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close friends, monosyllabic and nearly immobile under a gaudy red silk sari so extravagantly trimmed with gold that it can weigh fifty pounds. This is just as well, because she is meant to be a passive presence at her own wedding, with her eyes demurely cast down, like a silent maiden from an Indian miniature painting. Her preparations have taken all day and are a ritual in themselves. Flowers have been woven into her hair, small jewels applied over her eyebrows and an intricate lacelike design painted in henna all over her hands and feet. Afterward, she usually says she can remember very little of what happened that day.

One of my pastimes in India was going to weddings. People were always inviting me, thinking that an American woman would enjoy the spectacle. In three and a half years, I think I went to nine as an official guest. Other times I would stumble into a wedding at one of the big hotels, and if I peered in long enough, the parents would usher me in to congratulate the bride and groom. In India, a wedding is a chaotic pageant that can last until six in the morning, and more and more has become a public validation of a family's status and wealth. If a family is rich, it is not unusual to have a thousand guests. Even a working-class family will put on a feast for two hundred, ensuring crippling debt for the next decade. (At a wedding in the alley behind our house, the father of the bride, who made \$800 a year driving for the Vietnamese embassy, paid \$3,200 for the lunch party and dowry.) I went to Hindu weddings, Sikh weddings, and a Muslim wedding. Two of the weddings were given by noble families of the former princely states; at one the groom arrived in a silver horse-drawn chariot and at the other by elephant. At some of them, particularly one in a lush, plant-filled courtyard at midnight during a break in the summer monsoon, I was transfixed by the sweating faces of the bride and groom, who sat cross-legged in front of a sacred fire while the priest chanted Sanskrit prayers and poured sandalwood powder into the flames. There is a sensuousness to Indian weddings absent from the cool churches of the West. Others were gaudy celebrations at Delhi's first-class hotels, part of what Indira Gandhi once derided as "five-star culture," and were distinguished by melting ice sculptures and the video camera recording an event that would keep Delhi's old families fussing for weeks about all the new money in town. There was one thing, though, that marked almost every wedding I attended: the look of dazed terror on the bride's face as she began the rest of her life with a man who was little more than a stranger to her.

In India, an estimated 95 percent of marriages are still arranged,

C H A P T E R 2

WEDDING FIRST, LOVE LATER

Arranged Marriage Among the Educated Classes

DURING WEDDING SEASON IN NEW DELHI, IT IS POSSIBLE TO SEE THREE, four, sometimes even five nervous bridegrooms riding through the streets on white horses toward women they barely know but will marry that evening. The little wedding parties are hard to miss: the groom, wearing an elaborate brocade suit and a headpiece with streamers covering the embarrassment on his face, is escorted on his ride by a phalanx of relatives and a ragtag, improbably named "disco band" playing tinny, off-key marching music. The Hindu priests have deemed it an auspicious night, and it is easy, after stopping in traffic to let a few of these processions pass, to become carried away and imagine the thick Delhi air redolent with hope and fertility. Each procession can take half the evening to reach the site of the wedding, usually a home or, if the family has recently come into money, a big lawn at one of the new luxury hotels. The groom is often several hours late, which greatly annoys the bride's family but is not a catastrophe. The bride, meanwhile, has been closeted with her mother, aunts and

including the majority of those among the educated middle class. As with so many other statistics in India, no one is certain of the accuracy of this estimate, and in fact many sociologists and much of the general public believe the percentage of arranged marriages to be even higher. When I first came to India, this astonished me. I knew arranged marriage was standard among villagers and the rural poor—in other words, most of the country—but I did not expect that an Indian man who had lived in the United States would come home after years of dating American women to marry someone he had met only three times. I did not expect college women in the big cities to gladly give their parents the task of finding them good husbands. I was more amazed when some would say yes to a prospective groom after a half-hour meeting. "I could decide maybe in a day," a twenty-year-old New Delhi commercial-arts student told me. Then she thought a minute. "Well, maybe that's a bit rushed. Maybe in a week."

Marriage for love exists, only among a very small slice of India's urban elite. Rajiv Gandhi has a love marriage, as do most of those in the younger generation of Delhi's fashionable circles. Almost all of our friends had love marriages, although I used to suspect that a few had been more arranged than the couple let on. (Often if two people started dating seriously, which could have hurt the reputation of the girl and prevented her from finding a good husband later, the parents quickly moved in and mobilized for a wedding to save themselves from neighborhood gossip.) Outside the big urban centers, attitudes are changing as well. In a 1973 survey of college men and women in the south Indian city of Hyderabad, two sociologists, Prakasa and Nandini Rao, found that "an overwhelming majority of the students wanted more freedom in selecting a future spouse" and concluded that "the forces of modernization are resulting in liberal attitudes toward mate selection among the college students." But in that same study, more than a third of the students said they did not think it was necessary to know a spouse before marriage.

Arranged marriage is not unique to India and has in fact existed in some form in most societies throughout the world. In the West, only in the last three hundred years has love come to be seen as a part of marriage at all—a development that academics theorize evolved from the concept of courtly love in the Middle Ages and also from the impact of Christianity, which is thought to have deepened the bond between husband and wife by likening it to the relationship between man and God. Much later came industrialization, which increased

social mobility and broke down the extended family, a change that is just beginning in India.

Arranged marriage survives among the Indian middle class partly because a new kind of system has emerged. (The term *middle class*, as it is used in India, refers not to those in the middle economic group but to the people in the top 10 percent, who can afford to buy consumer products and live what the West would consider a semblance of a middle-class life.) A generation ago, a bride and groom rarely spoke to each other before the wedding. In many cases they had never even laid eyes on each other. They had no veto power over their parents' choice, and if the marriage was miserable, so be it. Even now, for the majority of Indians, marriage still works this way.

But these days middle-class couples are allowed to meet several times before making a decision, and a few can go out once or twice alone. Although most marriages are still arranged among members of the same caste, engagements may last six months and more, and women may reject the choice of their parents. This is considered a substantial breakthrough, and some families insist the result is not an arranged marriage at all. Leila Seth, a socially progressive mother who is one of only ten women among the four hundred High Court judges in India, told me, "Frankly, I don't think it's such a bad system." The prevailing opinion among the middle class is that not only do these marriages work, but they are more successful than those in the West.

In the summer of 1985 I set out to write a story on arranged marriages in the middle class. There had been a number of articles on the subject by Western correspondents, but most had focused on the entertaining pages of matrimonial ads in the Sunday newspapers. They do make for good reading. From *The Hindustan Times*: "Alliance solicited from industrialist/businessman of Delhi for graduate, 21, slim, fair, beautiful daughter of Delhi-based Brahmin industrialists. Write Post Box No. 5729." From *The Times of India*: "Intelligent, well-read, beautiful, home-loving, English-speaking girl preferably from liberal-minded Christian family for extremely well-placed senior government executive, good-looking, late forties, must be willing to settle in North America, religion and caste no bar." But I was more interested in discovering if there was something in arranged marriage that really did "work." These were my early days in India, when I was filled with a newcomer's enthusiasm and a determination to break away from my Western judgments. In retrospect, I realize there was something else going on. My own parents had been divorced, as had some of my

friends. I think I was searching for some kind of a "secret" to marriage that the Indians had and Americans did not.

Arun and Manju Bharat Ram were recommended to me as the ideal couple, an example, their friends said, of how arranged marriage functions at its best. It turned out they were neither typical nor middle-class: Arun Bharat Ram, a prep-school classmate of Rajiv Gandhi, was heir to one of the largest industrial fortunes in India. Indira Gandhi and fifteen hundred others had come to his wedding. Maybe the "secret" to the success of the marriage was simply money and connections. On the other hand, their families were prime examples of the highly Westernized industrial society in which parents still see marriage, at least for some of their children, as a business alliance. There were also love marriages in Arun's family, and he himself had dated American women while studying in the United States. In the end, I found no one who better illustrated how Indians could turn what I thought was the relationship between marriage and love upside down.

The Bharat Ram house was an expanse of marble, with modern Indian art and security guards, set behind gates in one of Delhi's leafier neighborhoods. It was August and insufferably hot, but in the Bharat Ram's VCR-dominated study, I sank into the leather sofa and froze happily in the blasts of the best air conditioner I ever encountered in India. I sat there once to talk to Manju, then returned, feeling per-versely like a marriage counselor, to put the same questions to Arun. He was forty-five, slight, and had a handsome, delicate face; dressed in a sport shirt and slacks, he looked as if he had just spent a pleasant morning on the golf course. He had the social ease and upper-class distance that marked a lot of Rajiv Gandhi's school chums. Manju was traditional and more accessible. She had a pretty, warm face and wore an expensive silk sari. Her hair was in a long braid down her back.

They first met in 1967, the year Arun had come home to New Delhi after graduate school at the University of Michigan. He was twenty-six and about to start work in the family's textile business—high time, his mother said, that he found himself a wife. Seeing no movement on the part of her son, she took matters into her own hands and began an all-points search. But Ann Arbor had changed Arun. Although he still felt "truly very Indian," he also felt "a contradiction, coming back from the West, that I shouldn't be getting into an arranged marriage." Finally, he agreed to see a prospective bride, "with no strings attached," just so his mother would stop pestering him.

That was Manju, a twenty-two-year-old graduate of a home economics college and the product of a conservative middle-class business family that never dreamed their daughter might marry a Bharat Ram—even though traditionally the bride's family marries above itself on the economic scale. (Sociologists say that marriage with a bride of lower status assures the groom's family that their new daughter-in-law will be sufficiently dependent on them.) Both Manju and Arun belonged to the prosperous Bania subcaste, which falls within the larger Vaisya, or merchant, caste. In India, arranged marriages both reflect and reinforce the caste system, which remains especially rigid among the rural poor. But unions like that of Arun and Manju prove that caste is still important among at least some sections of the upper class.

A marriage broker hired by Manju's parents had introduced the two families, but Manju was no less reluctant than Arun was to take the next step. Even though she had always known that her marriage would be arranged, she shuddered when she remembered how a relative had been made to parade before her future in-laws and then quote from Shakespeare. "They discussed her coloring as if she weren't there," Manju remembered. "It really was like a girl being sold."

Arun and Manju's first meeting was over tea with their parents at a luxury hotel. Manju was so scared that she dropped her cup, but everyone quickly assured her this was a sign of good luck. Arun, meanwhile, still had stiff legs from sitting cross-legged during his sitar lesson that day, but all Manju knew about his limp was that she was about to be married off to a man who might not be "normal." The only impression she made on Arun was that she was "a pretty girl" and "very quiet." After the meeting, Arun told his mother, "I've done you your favor; now leave me alone." But his mother persisted, and Arun agreed to see Manju again.

This time they went to dinner together and left the parents behind. "That was when I talked to her for the first time," Arun remembered, "and I felt she was quite interesting." Manju decided the same thing. "We had a lot of things in common," she said. "He was always soft-spoken. He never tried to show off his family and his background. He always made me feel like an individual."

They saw each other two more times, but with chaperones. At this point, the courtship had gone on long enough and a decision had to be made. Manju had already told her parents she would marry Arun if that was what his family wished—she had no major objections, she

liked him, and that was enough. A few days later, Arun's mother came to the house. "We want her," she said. Immediately the massive wedding preparations got under way.

"Obviously, I wasn't in love with her," Arun told me matter-of-factly about the days after the engagement was announced. "But whenever we met, we were comfortable. According to our tradition, that would lead to love. I was willing to accept that." Manju felt the same. "At the time, I didn't love him," she said, "but it was very exciting for me. Suddenly, I was very important. All of my parents' friends were a little envious about the family I was marrying into." The wedding took place six months later, followed by a honeymoon in southern India, where the two spent their first extended time alone. "We had always had people around us," Manju said. "This was awkward and difficult. One didn't know how much to give." She missed her parents and called them every day.

Afterward, she began a slow adjustment to life within a family that was much more sophisticated than her own. "These people were more aware of things happening around the world," she said. "At times, I felt as if I were stupid. But I learned how to cope with it. My husband helped." When they moved to their own house five years later, there was another adjustment. "It was a frightening experience, living by ourselves," Manju remembered. "There were times when we didn't know what to do with each other." She kept reminding herself that her mother always said a woman has to compromise a lot. "She also used to say, 'if you're unhappy, unless it's really bad, don't tell me.'"

By the time I met them, nearly two decades and three children later, the Bharat Rams had long since adjusted to married life. It is always impossible to know what is really going on in someone else's marriage, of course, but the Bharat Rams said they were happy, and I believed them. "I've never thought of another man since I met him," Manju told me. "And I also know I would not be able to live without him. I don't think I've regretted my marriage, ever." Arun echoed his wife. "It wasn't something that happened overnight," he said. "It grew and became a tremendous bond. It's amazing, but in arranged marriages, people actually make the effort to fall in love with each other."

It was a curious love story. As far as I could tell, they had it all backward. I had been raised on one of the favorite themes of Western literature, that of star-crossed lovers like Romeo and Juliet whose love is a force that exists on its own, a magic that defies the constraints of society. But here the Bharat Rams were telling me that love can be

concocted simply by arranging a marriage between people of common background and interests. In middle-class India, where the family is still more important than any of its individual members, love is believed to flow out of social arrangements and is actually subservient to them. "True love" is possible only after marriage, not before.

Middle-class India defines love as long-term commitment and devotion to family, which can be developed only with much patience and time. In their view, Americans instead define love as passion—which inevitably leads to disappointment in marriage after the glow of those first romantic years wears off. This reasoning always seemed to me a striking example of the Indian belief in their moral superiority over what many of them see as the decadent West, with its dismal record of divorce. Americans just give up, Indians believe, when the marriage hits the rough spots and falls short of an unattainable ideal. Sudhir Kakar, one of India's foremost psychoanalysts, put it this way: "Americans have too great an investment in marriage. The peculiar part is that you think any human institution should satisfy so many different needs. Americans say there should be romance, a mother for the children, intellectual stimulation also. For two people to be all that to each other is a bit much."

Many of the young women I met dismissed "falling in love" as something for teenagers and bad Indian films. A few said they had experienced "puppy love" with a boy at school but assured me they were too grown-up for that now. One of these women was Meeta Sawhney, the twenty-year-old Delhi University economics student who had convinced me that women would be my window into the Indian interior world. As she had explained to me: "When my friends who are in love talk to me, I think they sound silly." She had become engaged that summer to a childhood friend her parents had chosen for her. We had been talking for an hour in her bedroom when I finally asked if she loved him. "That's a very difficult question," she said. "I don't know. This whole concept of love is very alien to us. We're more practical. I don't see stars, I don't hear little bells. But he's a very nice guy, and I think I'm going to enjoy spending my life with him. Is that love?" She shrugged, indicating no worries about her future. "I know this is going to work. I know everything about him. I know his family. On the other hand, if I were in love with this guy, I would be worried because then I'd be going into it blindly."

I thought this was madness, or a good job of brainwashing, but later decided Meeta Sawhney was simply rationalizing what she had been

dealt in her life. What choice did she have? Only women from the most Westernized families have the luxury of falling in love before marriage, and even they had best do it only once. In America, a young woman can move on after her first, intense love affair fizzles, but an Indian woman risks gossip that might ruin her chances of a good husband later. One very Westernized couple I knew had dated quietly for a year and a half. At that point, the man's mother took him aside and told him that since the woman was from a good family, he could no longer risk her reputation by stringing her along. He had one of two choices: either cut off the relationship or make her his wife. He did the honorable thing and married her.

Most teenagers are still not allowed to date, so parents think their children will have no experience on which to make an intelligent decision about a lifelong mate. One of a mother's biggest fears is that her carefully penned-in daughter will make a getaway one day and fall for the first rogue who comes along. I remember the ruckus in one Indian family I knew when their beautiful niece fell for a handsome Mexican exchange student. I was rooting for her, but alas, one of the interloper's old girlfriends turned up and whisked him off to south India, breaking the niece's heart but averting a family crisis. Most girls are more docile and have come to believe what they have been told from childhood: that they will love the husband their parents select. "From the beginning, my mind was set that my parents were going to choose the right person for me," explained Rama Rajakumar, a thirty-four-year-old Brahmin from the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Brahmins are the highest caste in India. I spoke to her in Delhi, where she was visiting on a break from her job as a supervisor at the World Bank in Washington. She had been living in the United States for sixteen years. One evening in 1971, when she was just starting out in Washington as a World Bank typist, she had gone to a friend's house and met a man—a Tamil Brahmin, as it turned out—who was studying at the University of Texas. He seemed like "just another guy" to her. She heard nothing from him until two years later, when he sent a letter to the friend saying he wanted to marry Rama. She was not as thunderstruck as might be imagined. It was important to Rama that she marry a man of her own caste, and it was probably no less important to the groom. Tamil Brahmins are hard to come by in the United States, so it was not extraordinary that an eligible one would be interested in Rama. The friend quickly took on the role of marriage broker and wrote to both sets of parents in India.

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First, the horoscopes of the prospective couple were exchanged. "They matched perfectly," Rama told me. The parents exchanged further details on family background and education. Then photos were mailed. A few months later, Rama's parents declared themselves pleased. Rama, who was twenty-two and had not had a date with anyone in the four years she'd lived in America, told them she'd marry the man. "I didn't know him at all," she said. She had not seen him since the meeting two years before, but she was certain that her parents knew best.

The wedding took place in 1973 in India. When I asked Rama if she had worried beforehand that she might not fall in love with the man, she gave me a puzzled look. "No," she said. "I just thought, He is my husband, and I love him. He is going to be everything to me from now on." Apparently he had been. After twelve years of "very happy" marriage, she said, "I still think he's a better husband than anybody I could have asked for."

I remember coming home stunned from interviews like this, mystified by what was going on in the minds of these women. They had seemed so much like me at first. What I did not understand at the time was the powerful sense of fatalism that Indian women have. Strict Hindus believe that their present lives have been predetermined by their karma, the accumulated sum of all good and bad actions from their previous lives. These beliefs are so central to the religion that they influence even the casual Hindu today. Women routinely told me that they had decided to marry a man half an hour after the first meeting because they felt it was "meant" to be. "It's the biggest gamble of one's life," said Ritu Nanda, the thirty-seven-year-old director of one of India's most successful home appliance companies. "So why not just leave it to destiny?" A traditional woman believes that she was married to her husband in her previous life and will remain married to him in the next. The women I interviewed were too sophisticated to endorse that view, but nobody dismissed it as nonsense, either.

This brings me to Meena, whose name I have changed for reasons that will be obvious. She, too, felt that her marriage was predetermined—but I'm getting ahead of the story. I first met her one summer, at the home of a friend. She was twenty-five, pretty and stylish, proud of being a "modern" girl who worked in her father's laboratory supply business. She was from a middle-class family, was ambitious and assertive, and spoke rapid, idiomatic English. She and her parents had been engaged in an active search to find her a husband. "My parents are

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going about it in a very scientific way," she said. That meant they were checking the matrimonial ads and alerting relatives and mutual friends to be on the lookout for prospects. "I have already been shown several boys," she told me. (In arranged marriage parlance, men and women are "boys" and "girls." During the introductory family get-togethers, boys and girls are not said to meet but rather are "shown" to each other. This is in fact the most accurate term for the excruciating event.)

None of the boys had been up to Meena's standards, and she had rejected them all. "One of them didn't even have the guts to finish his own pastry," she said. "He had to ask his mother first. So I said, 'Good-bye.'" She had asked the boys who were businessmen detailed questions about their accounts, because "being in business myself, I want to know." She seemed to be in the market for a chief executive officer rather than a husband. I didn't have much hope that she'd find either one.

I was wrong. Seven months later, I got an invitation to her wedding. She had found herself a young doctor, her sister-in-law's brother-in-law, a plump twenty-eight-year-old with a soft, sweet face. She had first met him at her house, where both sets of parents made awkward conversation over tea. Then she and the boy went to her room alone for twenty-five minutes. She found him "very nice to talk to" and was "indifferent" to his looks; he was a big improvement over her previous prospects. "There were one or two cases where the guys physically repulsed me," she said. That evening his parents called and said the boy wanted to see her again, so the two met alone for coffee the next day. After that there was a month of silence. Then one day the boy's mother called Meena's mother, and the two women got down to business. The boy's mother wanted to know if Meena had become engaged to anyone else, and when Meena's mother said no, the boy's mother said the family would like to ask for Meena's hand. Meena's mother said she would check to see if her daughter was still interested and call back.

Meena thought about it for a moment, then said yes. "I was very indifferent, frankly," she explained to me later. "I used to always judge any proposal that came my way on the specific merits." Since the boy had good credentials and she had no major objections to him, she instinctively felt that the marriage would be right. She knew his family was more conservative than hers, but she did not expect that to be a problem. "I was very fatalistic," she said.

The two went on three dates before the wedding—once, shopping, followed by lunch at Pizza King; another time to a movie; and then

to an expensive dinner at the Taj Mahal Hotel. Afterward they sat in the lobby and watched the foreign tourists go by. It was all very glamorous. Meena had been spending her days shopping for saris and linens, helping with the guest list, and discussing the new Maruti car her parents were going to give her as a wedding present as the major part of the dowry her parents had promised her in-laws during the prewedding negotiations. Fortunately, Meena was discovering that she liked the boy "tremendously." The idea of a husband thrilled her. "I was excited about having a man around, living with him, and having all the frills and fancies," she said.

Her wedding started "on time," a mere two hours behind schedule. I arrived only a half hour late, thinking this would be socially correct, and found myself alone with the caterer. This gave me a chance to look around. The wedding was to be held in a large grassy area, open to the sky but enclosed on four sides by circus-style canvas fencing. Inside, rows of metal chairs sat facing a center platform with two red plush-covered thrones for the bride and groom. Waiters were still setting up a buffet of heavy chicken and lamb curries in a tent lit by fluorescent lights. Skinny men were hanging strands of marigolds from the canopy under which the religious ceremony would take place. It all had the feel of a small-town fair. As I watched the preparations, the hot afternoon gave way to a pretty orange sky and then a cool March evening. The grass smelled fresh, and Delhi's traffic rumbled in the background.

Meena finally arrived, looking predictably dazed, and was immediately ushered to a room in a little building near the wedding enclosure. The women of the family surrounded her, offering bits of advice. Her wedding dress was a heavy silk in hot pink, and her nose ring, similar in style to an enormous jeweled hoop earring, hung from one nostril all the way down to her lips. This made talking difficult, although she giggled a lot. I gave her a bouquet of sweet peas and wished her good luck.

At last the groom pulled up on his white horse and things got under way, in a manner of speaking. There is a certain aimlessness to Indian weddings that is confusing at first. Most of the guests ignored the religious ceremony, talking among themselves and wandering around while children chased each other through the grass. A rigid row of aunts had already positioned themselves near the food. None of this was considered impolite. Wedding ceremonies usually drag on for hours and only immediate relatives are expected to endure watching



them without interruption. But I loved much of what I saw. As a priest chanted Sanskrit prayers, Meena and the groom sat under the canopy in front of the sacred fire for several hours, the glow from the flames reflected in their faces. Toward the end, after Meena's father had slipped the priest some rupees to hurry things up, as fathers of Indian brides often do, Meena and the groom rose to circle the fire, the groom leading Meena slowly in a clockwise direction. The couple took seven steps, each one representing a blessing: food, strength, wealth, happiness, progeny, cattle and devotion. After the seventh step, the marriage was irrevocable. The priest sprinkled holy water on the couple, and soon they took their seats on the two thrones as the flashes from the guests' cameras exploded in their faces. Meena said afterward that her mind was a blank.

When it was all over around midnight, she said good-bye to her family and, like most Indian brides, broke down in tears. I had long since left, but I had seen these melodramas before. They are the crucial hysterical conclusion to any Indian wedding. From that night on, the bride is no longer considered a daughter in her parents' home. Instead she will move in with her husband and in-laws and begin a new life among a household of strangers. Indian brides handle these partings with great theatrics, often wailing uncontrollably, which I eventually decided was the only rational response, given what was in store for many of them. The bride's mother and sisters wail along with her, and so does her father, as she is slowly pushed through the crowd and into the car that will take her away. The first time I saw this I didn't even know the family, but I found it so wrenching that I cried too.

Meena spent her wedding night tossing nervously in a bedroom with her mother-in-law and several other women she did not know. In conservative Indian families, this is traditional; the new husband and the men sleep elsewhere. It was not until the next night that Meena was allowed to sleep with her husband, and then was relieved when he didn't want to make love. "That was rather nice of him," she said. "Normally, a boy just pounces on the girl." Both she and her husband were virgins. The marriage was finally consummated the following night, an experience Meena described to me as quick and physically "very painful." Neither husband nor wife talked much about what was occurring between them, although the next morning Meena noticed that her husband seemed glad that "he had got through it—no disaster had happened."

At first I heard from friends that Meena was ecstatic about her new

life. Then I began hearing that she was fighting with her mother-in-law. That seemed routine, so I didn't give it much thought. But then, not quite a year later, I was told she had moved back with her parents and that the marriage was over. I was surprised—not by a marriage that had turned out badly, but by Meena's return home. Ten years ago that would have been impossible for her; her parents could not have endured the scandal and she would have had to stick with a miserable marriage for the rest of her life. So I guess this was change. I went to see Meena a few days after her first wedding anniversary, on a depressing, already hot March afternoon. I sat with her for two hours, in a darkened upstairs flat with a view through the chick blinds of children playing in the dust of a dried-out park. She was thinner and looked badly shaken, and she cried as she told me she would probably get a divorce. It was awful for her. No matter what all the Indian magazines said about the increasing divorce rate among the middle class, the truth was that for women it was still considered shameful. Meena would have trouble marrying again. Her husband would not.

At first the marriage had been "okay," Meena said. At her in-laws' request, she had given up her job and was helping around the house, cleaning and cooking, primarily. She claimed she had no trouble filling her days, even though she could no longer go out and see friends as freely as before. "When you have time on your hands," she said, "you make things in the kitchen that don't need to be made, or eat things you don't need to eat." But she was eager to be a good Indian wife and so was willing to compromise. That especially applied to sex, which had not improved since the first night. Her husband was often impotent, and on the nights when he wasn't she found she still didn't enjoy "the act itself." Her mother-in-law, meanwhile, had been keeping a close watch on the time the newlyweds spent in their room alone.

After the first month, Meena felt her husband was withdrawing from her. Then he stopped talking to her altogether. Two silent months later he finally admitted that he had made a mistake and that his mother had pressured him to marry her. He no longer came to their room, sleeping on the terrace instead. "It was horrible," Meena said. "I was shattered." She decided that he must have "homosexual tendencies" or other "physical problems." Her mother-in-law, she believed, was "filling his ears with lies" about her. Another problem was the Maruti; the car delivery had been held up by the company, yet Meena's mother-in-law was demanding to know where it was. By midsummer Meena had moved back with her parents—"I would have committed

suicide if I hadn't come home"—and was taking daily tranquilizers and sleeping pills prescribed by a psychiatrist. She had seen the doctor only once because he would not treat her unless she and her husband came in as a couple. Then, that fall, her mother-in-law suddenly called to ask her back. By this time, Meena had found a good job in advertising, and her parents, more concerned about their daughter's happiness than what the neighbors might say, told her not to go. But off she went, determined to give it one last try. The reconciliation lasted a week, and after a fight with her in-laws, Meena was back home.

Who knows what the other side of the story was. I didn't have it in me to track down Meena's husband and present him with her charges just as the family was beginning divorce proceedings. Maybe Meena was impossible to live with. Maybe she had been too "modern" and aggressive and had made her husband feel inadequate in bed. I guessed he had been telling the truth when he said he had been pressured into marrying her. He probably was not so awful, although I suspected her mother-in-law was. The point is that Meena's experience, from the bride's point of view, was not at all unusual. Certainly her sexual problems were not.

In theory, during the first phase of an arranged marriage, a bride has tremendous seductive power over her husband. The first few years are meant to be spent in sexual passion, but when things cool off, as expected, then parents believe it is fortunate that they had the foresight to match up two compatible people who can settle down to the everyday business of life. "Love is fine," Usha Seth, a forty-one-year-old New Delhi housewife, told me. "But after the first few years, that's when you realize how important it is that a person is considerate and kind." Parents are also aware of the all-consuming lust that can rage between a young man and woman who have never had sex before. This is sometimes cited as one reason that the bride spends time away from her husband during the first year of marriage, usually in long visits to her family. Mahatma Gandhi says in his autobiography that it was this custom that helped keep him from drowning in sexual obsession during the first year of his arranged marriage, when he and his wife were thirteen. Every few months, his bride's parents would summon her home. "Such calls were very unwelcome in those days," Gandhi wrote, "but they saved us both." (The Gandhi biographer and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, however, sees something more significant in Gandhi's admission of adolescent lust. "How 'passionate' such a boy or man really is becomes a moot question, for we can only know of

the quantitative threat which he feels the need of confessing," Erikson writes. "But one thing is devastatingly certain: nowhere is there any suggestion of joyful intimacy." Erikson argues that Gandhi in fact harbored "some vindictiveness, especially toward woman as the temptress," which in his later years made him attempt, at first with mixed success, a life of celibacy.)

Whatever may be true of Gandhi, the common reality appears to be closer to what Meena experienced. The psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar, in a 1987 lecture delivered at the University of California at Berkeley, spoke of the "widespread sexual misery" among all classes in India. "Even discounting the sexual woes of a vast number of middle- and upper-middle-class women who come for psychotherapy as an unrepresentative example," he said, "there are other, direct indications that sexual misery is equally widespread in the lowest castes." The standard notion in India has always been that very poor and very rich women enjoy sex because they live free of repressive middle-class morality. But Kakar cited interviews with Harijan, or "Untouchable," women in Delhi—members of the lowest of castes—who described sexual intercourse as "painful or distasteful or both," portraying it "as a furtive act in a cramped and crowded room, lasting barely a few minutes and with a marked absence of physical or emotional caressing."

This does not surprise the country's growing band of "sexologists," as sex therapists in India are called. A foreign traveler cannot help but notice the advertisements for aphrodisiacs, sex "cures" and special medicines on billboards across India. "Most Indian men, whether rich, poor or middle-class, use their wives as sleeping pills," Prakash Kothari told me. "They do not know that foreplay and afterplay are important ingredients in the sex act." Kothari, the country's best-known and most publicity-conscious sexologist, a professional who should not be confused with the "doctors" who advertise on billboards, runs a thriving high-priced practice among the middle class of Bombay. He has done some serious research, yet has an unfortunate style that gets in his way. He autographed a copy of an American pornography magazine and gave it to an Indian woman journalist I knew; for me he brought out his collection of seventeenth-century miniature ivory penises and breasts from Rajasthan. Less flamboyant is R. H. Dastur, another Bombay sexologist and author of the best-selling *Sex Power*, a how-to book now in its sixth printing. In interviews that Dastur's researchers conducted with 695 middle-class women from 1983 to 1986 in Bombay, Dastur found that only 10 to 15 percent said they reached orgasm

during intercourse. The rest, Dastur said, "merely submitted to sex and went through it mechanically with the idea that it was their duty in order to have a male child." Significantly, there is said to be no word in any Indian language specifically for "orgasm." Non-English-speaking women use words loosely translated as "happiness" or "perfect satisfaction."

Dastur is an internist who fell into sex therapy as a sideline after his patients began bringing their problems to him. Most were young men consumed by guilt over masturbation or convinced that it would lead to insanity. Other men were unsure about how to perform intercourse. Before marriage, said Dastur, "the large majority of the middle class has had no sexual experience whatsoever." The most common problem among the married couples Dastur treats is premature ejaculation or impotence, which Dastur says the husband often blames on his wife. In one case, the impotence had lasted for seven years from the day of the wedding. Kothari claimed he knew of cases of impotence that lasted twenty years. Sudhir Kakar goes a big step further in *The Inner World*, his psychoanalytic study of Indian childhood, when he writes of the "ubiquity" of male impotence in India, blaming it on a "vicious circle that spirals inward in the Indian unconscious." Kakar's theory is that women are sexually threatening to Indian men, which causes "avoidance behavior" in sexual relations, which then causes frustrated, lonely women to "extend a provocative sexual presence toward their sons." Certainly, Indian mothers make a huge emotional investment in their sons. Kakar believes this is a human reaction to the distance from her husband that a woman feels in a typical arranged marriage. Her son may well be the first male with whom she has had any sort of deep and satisfying relationship. This ultimately produces adult males, Kakar believes, who are afraid of being overwhelmed or "devoured" by their mothers. Thus, to complete the cycle, they fear the sexuality of mature women. Mama's boys and the Oedipus complex are of course not unique to India, but the intensity and pervasiveness of the cycle may be.

In India, it is common for boys to sleep with their mothers until they are five years old. In Calcutta, I knew of a woman who still slept with her seventeen-year-old son. A psychoanalyst there told me that was not unusual. In 1961, a study of a community of business families near Delhi found that more than half the men described themselves as being closer to their mothers than to their wives. Another woman I interviewed, a government researcher whose arranged marriage had

split up, told me the relationship might have worked if she had demanded that she and her husband not live with his family. "But it's too much to ask of a boy," she said. "If he leaves his family and joins his wife, it's sort of a crime. He's known them all his life and he's only known me for three years."

Social historians say that procreation and duty were traditionally more important in Indian marriage than sexual satisfaction. Husband and wife have never been regarded as equals. Two thousand years ago, the upper-caste law codifier Manu wrote that a husband, "though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure elsewhere, or devoid of good qualities," must be "constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife." Only the lower castes married for sexual pleasure, according to Manu. Khushwant Singh, a historian, journalist and social observer, is only half-joking when he says that "all of the violence in this country comes from repressed sexuality."

These views are hard to reconcile with the extraordinarily rich tradition of love and passion that is India's heritage. The *Kama-sutra* is probably the most famous poem ever written on the finer points of lovemaking, and the erotic temple sculptures at Khajuraho still startle Westerners. The Indian gods copulate blissfully across the pages of the great epics, and every schoolchild knows the love story of the god Krishna and the beautiful milkmaid Radha. She was no worshipping doormat but rather a proud, passionate woman who cried out to Krishna that "my beautiful loins are a deep cavern to take the thrusts of love." Those words were written in the twelfth century, in an erotic, lyrical love poem called the *Gitagovinda* that is still performed and sung throughout India.

Today, the legend of Krishna and Radha remains one key to understanding the relationship between marriage and love in India. The *Gitagovinda* made them the most popular couple in the Indian pantheon, coinciding with the Bhakti movement in Hinduism, which emphasized an intense personal devotion to a god, almost like that of a lover and beloved. Today, rural women in particular worship Krishna almost like a movie idol. Anyone who doubts that need only see the frenzy that occurs on his birthday in Brindaban, a village in the north Indian plains where thirty-five hundred years ago he is said to have seduced Radha and a bevy of equally inflamed milkmaids. Every year, tens of thousands of villagers and pilgrims mob the temples for the ritual darshan, or viewing, of the Krishna idol, typically a life-sized plastic doll hidden at the back of the temple behind wooden

and in its own way romantic. It was part of the "secret" I was looking for, I suppose—that compromise and perseverance can be as important to a successful marriage as love. Certainly no marriage in the West remains the same as it was on the wedding day. In the end, I came to see that Indians do have important insights into marriage and love. And yet, I saw too many husbands and wives in India who seemed unconnected to each other, as if the invisible thread that you can sense between a happy couple had never existed for them. They had nothing in common but the social class into which they were born. Most of the marriages I knew were not disasters, but many of the couples didn't seem to be friends. There seemed to be an intimacy missing in Indian middle-class married life, partly because few people expect it.

And then there was Meena. "You know," she assured me, after tearfully finishing the story of her wedding and impending divorce, "arranged marriages do work."

doors. One September I watched the steadily rising fervor of the crowd in the sweltering, hour-long buildup before the doors were opened. Drums were beating, and devotional music was slowly building in intensity. Finally, when Krishna was revealed, the women moaned and cried out, throwing money, Indian sweets and strings of jasmine flowers at the idol. The writer Ruth Praver Jhabvala develops this desire beautifully in her short story about a widow, Durga, who was married off at a young age to an impotent old man. He has left her with money but also with the vague sense that "somehow, somewhere, she had been shortchanged." One day an old aunt, Bhuaji, begins to tell Durga the stories from the Krishna legend, and soon Durga's life changes: "Sometimes—when she was alone at night or lay on her bed in the hot, silent afternoons, her thoughts dwelling on Krishna—she felt strange new stirrings within her that were almost like illness, with a tugging in the bowels and a melting in the thighs. And she trembled and wondered whether this was Krishna descending on her, as Bhuaji promised he would."

The point is that the Krishna love story is about an adulterous affair, not marriage. Radha had a husband, whom she returned to. Krishna himself is said to have had 16,108 wives, one of the more amusing statistics I came across in India. But not one of those wives ever measured up to Radha. As for the *Kama-sutra*, it was an encyclopedia of erotic education meant largely for the aristocracy. The Khajuraho temples are more puzzling; no one has ever been sure why they were built, but they appear to have been enjoyed chiefly by the king and his court. For the large majority of Indians, love and passion have never been synonymous with marriage.

In that sense, the "new" Indian arranged marriage is something of a breakthrough after all. The middle class has essentially created an odd hybrid by grafting the Western ideal of romantic love onto the traditions of Hindu society—yet another example, perhaps, of the Indian talent for assimilating the culture of a foreign invader, much as the country absorbed Persian and Moghul art, architecture and language. In the end, the result is something completely and peculiarly Indian, including the notion that it "works." It is of course possible to match up two people of common backgrounds and interests and then watch as they fall in love. What are the American personal ads and dating services, after all?

The Indian idea that you can make two people fall in love, mostly because they think they are going to, at first seemed to me interesting

LIVING WISDOM

INDIA

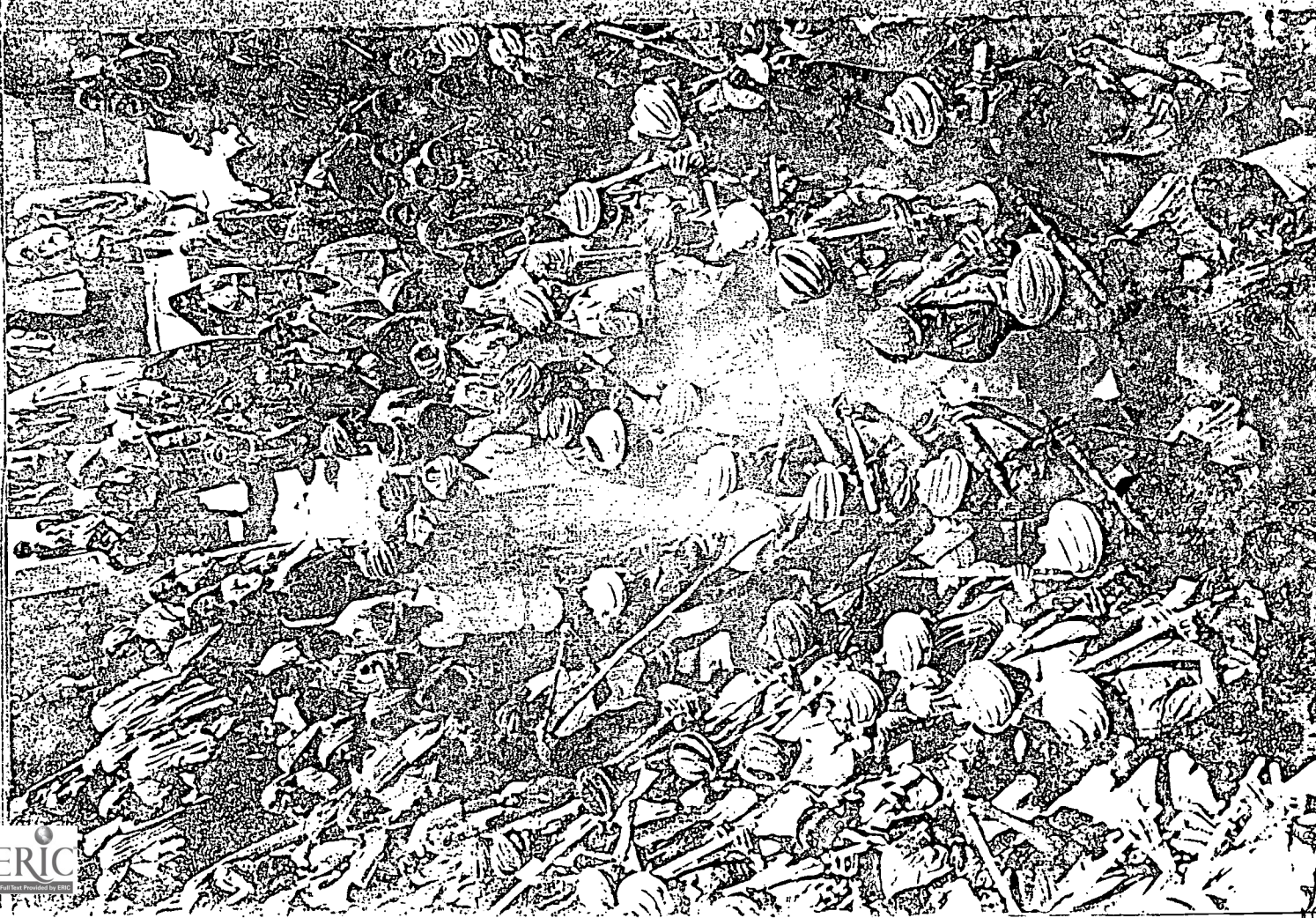
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Little, Brown and Company
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The trimurti

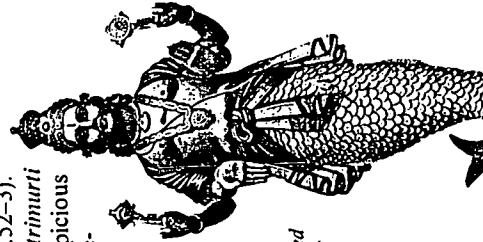
The bewildering array of deities and demons – traditionally 330 million – in the modern Hindu pantheon has its roots both in the Vedic gods and in the intellectual speculation of the *Upanishads* and “forest philosophies”. But from the 4th to the 12th centuries AD, the growth of a more popular religion, based around the *Puranas*, placed at its heart the *trimurti* of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Brahma is the personified creator of the universe. He is the most abstract of the three deities, and is often considered a fusion of Prajapati, the creator god of the *Vedas*, and the utterly impersonal concept of *brahman* (godhead). Brahma is also he who “brings diversity into unity”, a mediator between Vishnu and Shiva, who represent opposites.

Vishnu (the Preserver) is the protector of *dharma* (righteousness) and the guardian of humanity. He is a solar deity who fights on the side of good and comes down to earth to help humankind. His most famous incarnations, or *avatars*, are Krishna and Rama, the heroes of the epics the *Mahabharata* (see pp.56–7) and the *Ramayana* (see pp.52–3).

The last of the *trimurti* is Shiva (the Auspicious One), simultaneously destroyer

Vishnu appears in many forms, the most popular being the ten avatars. The first avatar is the fish, or Matsya, represented in this modern plaster statue from Tamil Nadu.



and creator. Shiva is the Lord of Yoga, worshipped as the *linga* (see pp.66–7), whose dance, to the beat of his own drum, is said to be the rhythm of the universe. He is the most ambivalent of the three gods of the *trimurti* because of his destructive aspect.

Just as the *atman* (soul) was thought to mirror *brahman*, so the fast-evolving Hindu pantheon was seen to embody the many forms that *brahman* must assume to make itself knowable in the material world. The Hindu gods thus represent the visible and manifest aspects of godhead. Unlike *brahman*, they act within this world, answering prayers, fighting evil or destroying illusion (*maya*). Each Hindu god is simply an aspect of *brahman*, and a devotee may choose any one of them as the main object of his or her veneration.

A devotee's *ishtra* (personal deity) is worshipped as a representative of the total godhead, and although every god and goddess bears particular attributes and powers, they are not completely distinct but share many of the same characteristics. To a Hindu, there is nothing heretical or paradoxical in proclaiming any one of a number of deities as the Lord of the Universe.

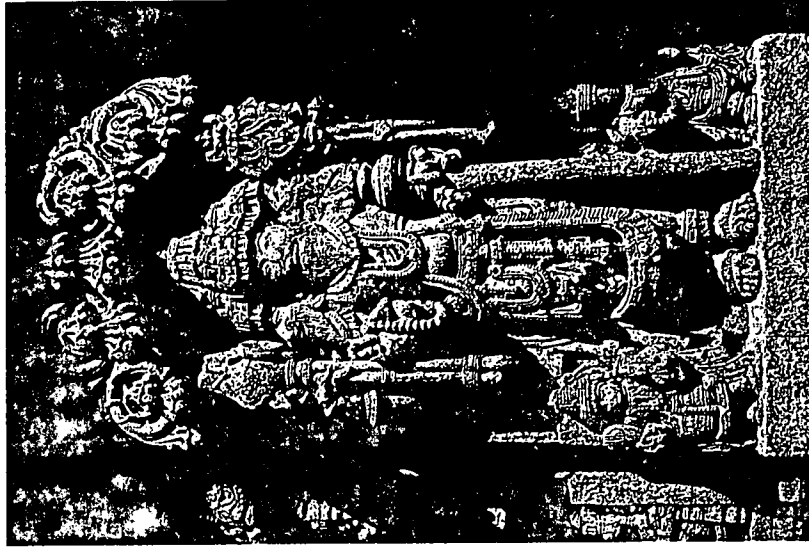
The three gods of the trimurti are always accompanied by goddesses. Sarasvati, shown in this 12th-century sculpture from Rajasthan, is the consort of Brahma.



BRAHMA

Brahma, the creator, is a significant Hindu god, despite the fact that he has few devotees or temples dedicated to his worship. Even in medieval India it seems likely that his popularity was limited. He is said to have created the universe and then withdrawn, leaving its maintenance to Vishnu, the Preserver. This perhaps explains his lack of appeal. Brahma is often depicted with four faces turned towards the four points of the compass, his four hands holding the four books of the *Vedas*. His heads are usually crowned and his faces bearded, giving him the appearance of a wise, compassionate old man. He is sometimes depicted on a lotus that emerges from Vishnu's navel, a reference to his being “born of a lotus”.

Brahma is depicted in this 12th-century temple at Halebid in Karnataka, with three of his four heads visible.



THE PURANAS

The *Puranas*, or Antiquities, rank with the *Vedas* as sacred Hindu texts. They were compiled between the 4th and 12th centuries AD, but their origins are far older.

Attributed to the sage Vyasa, the supposed author of the *Mahabharata* (see pp.56–7), the *Puranas* contain a massive bulk of mythological material from which much of the dazzling pantheons and epics of later Hinduism were drawn. They list entire dynasties, descended both from

Manu, mythical ancestor of the human race, and from the deities and heroes of the *Mahabharata*, while their prophecies predict future royal dynasties.

The *Puranas* are written in simple language and are seldom highly mystical or hard to understand or interpret. They list sacred sites and pilgrimages, specify caste relations and give instructions for the portrayal of divine images.

Much of their importance lies in the fact that the language in which they are

written is accessible to women and to those of low caste who were prevented from reading the more esoteric *Veda* texts, which were reserved for men of the *brahmin* caste.

The eighteen principal *Puranas* are dedicated to the *trimurti*. They provide not only the mythological background from which many of the tales of the gods were fashioned, but also the origins of more abstract theological concepts such as *dharma*, *karma* and the nature of *atman*.

A VISHNU AVATAR

In the books of the Vedas, Vishnu appears only rarely, as the protector of the great god Indra. His most famous exploit is related in the Rigveda hymns, was the "measuring of the universe with three giant strides to chain it for a rainy season from the demons' clutches. The myth books of the Mahabharata and Ramayana which were developed by later authors into a power greater than Indra's, such as the Vedas.

gods was eventually forced to ask Vishnu for help.

In the Puranas, Vishnu is depicted as Lord of the Universe and Protector of Humanity. His avatars are the fish (chakra), the tortoise (kappa), the elephant (gajab), the boar (varaha), the bird (chakra), the conch shell (shankha), the lotus (padma), Lakshmi, the beloved goddess of wealth, honour, and fertility, who sits on a lotus flower.

Vishnu is best known, however, through his avatars, the incarnations that he assumed to assist humanity in its struggle against darkness. Early on, he was credited with as many as twenty-eight avatars, as the deities of the Vedas had been incorporated into the new pantheon by the 8th century AD. He was widely recognized as having ten. The first three avatars (Matsya, a fish; Kurma, a tortoise, and Varaha, a boar) are mythological creatures drawn from cosmogonic accounts of the universe.

GARUDA

Vishnu's mount is the Garuda, a bird-like creature who worked to free his people from the bondage of demons. Garuda's purpose is to help Vishnu in his quest for nectar of immortality that he stole from the gods.

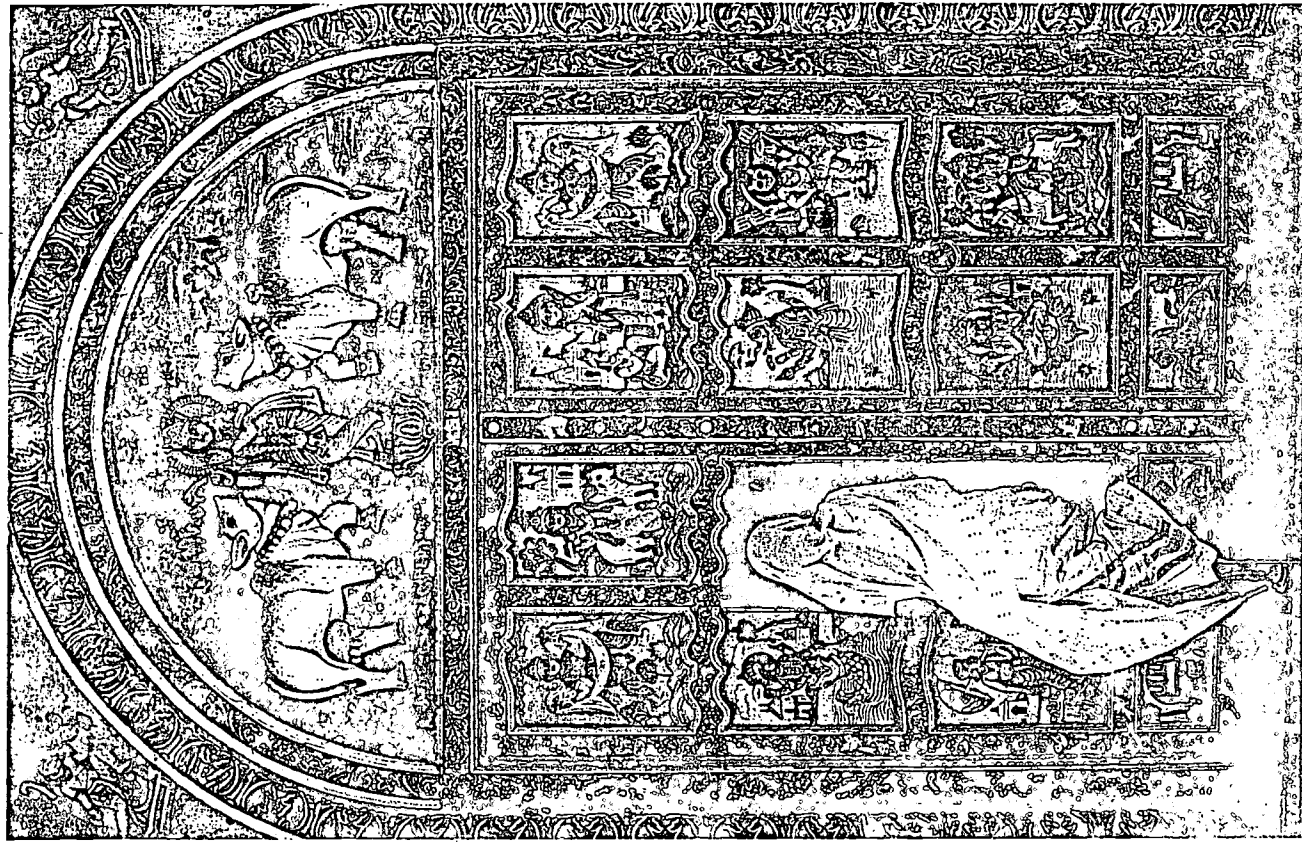
This is the Garuda, the mount of Vishnu, with arms raised in the air.



tion of whom he is the avatar, Vishnu in the original texts. The fourth avatar, Nava-nabha, is a man-lion who rescues the world from a terrible darkness while the fifth, Vasana, is a dwarf who claims the universe for a deity by covering it with his feet. The tale has been told with Vishnu as a deity that was created by Vishnu.

The sixth avatar is Parashurama, who with the axe, who is a hero of the Mahabharata. His actions may reflect the rivalry between the Kurus and the Kshatriyas, as each class used its power and influence. Rama and Krishna are the seventh and eighth avatars of Vishnu, respectively (see pp. 52-53) and the Mahabharata (see pp. 56-57), a war that is above all from the fact that Vishnu derives

his reputation as lord and benign protector of humanity. The ninth avatar is the tenth, Krishna, who is the hero of the Mahabharata. His mission is a remarkable testament to Vishnu's ability to save by absorbing and transforming the nature of evil. The tenth avatar is the eleventh, who will appear at the end of this age to destroy the wicked, leaving a pious world for the universe to inhabit.



The panelled doors to the Swaminarayan temple at Rajkot in Gujarat are painted with Vishnu's ten avatars. Above them is Vishnu, with a lion below his feet, flanked by cows, a monkey and an angel.

The Ramayana

The *Ramayana*, one of the great Sanskrit epic poems, helped to develop a more popular, devotional religion. A product of the less exclusive world of the *kshatriya* ethic, it is not so heavily dominated by the *brahmin*-controlled sacrificial and ritual elements of Hinduism. It remains a popular source of religious teaching, through public readings and dramatizations.

The core of the epic poem was first composed in the 4th century BC as a secular tale recited by bards who were attendant on the royal courts. However, as the centuries passed, the religious elements of the story were expanded upon, and Rama, its hero, became transformed

from a warrior king into a warrior deity. By the 4th century AD, Rama was widely identified as the seventh incarnation of the Hindu god, Vishnu.

The *Ramayana's* links with Vedic religion are, however, still strong. *Brahmin* priests are widely honoured in its verses, and the horse sacrifice (see p.17) plays a crucial part in the narrative. Like the *Vedas* (see pp.16-17) and the *Mahabharata* (see pp.56-7), the *Ramayana* is believed to have been divinely revealed: the story is supposed to have come to its composer, Valmiki, while he was meditating upon

the *mantra* "Ram". Valmiki's own life assumes mythic proportions in the introduction to the main text, in which he plays an active role. Legend has it that he retired to the forest where, during 1,000 years of meditation, he kept so motionless that his body became covered by a *valmika* (anthill) – hence his name, meaning "son of the anthill".

Despite the secular nature of the poem in its original form, the narrative scheme of the *Ramayana* clearly shows the influence of essentially Vedic elements. In its early pages, for example, Rama is frequently linked with the glorious Vedic sun god Indra and with the battle against evil. Like Indra, Rama is an ideal warrior, and – unlike the confused Arjuna of the *Mahabharata* – he never hesitates to raise his bow, and clearly draws the battle lines between good and evil.



Crowds gather in Ramnagar near Varanasi, during the ten-day performance of the Ramayana.

THE RAMALILA

The festival of Dasahra celebrates Rama's victory over Ravana and his demon army. During nine days of fasting, the epic tale of Rama and

Sita is narrated throughout India, and in the *Ramalila* it is acted out with music, dance and elaborate costumes. Celebrations climax with Sita's rescue, and huge effigies of

Ravana, his brother Kumbhakarna and son Maghanada, are paraded through the streets – stuffed with fireworks, they explode in colour when set alight by an effigy of Rama.

A painted paper effigy, from Delhi, of the demon king Ravana, Rama's great enemy.



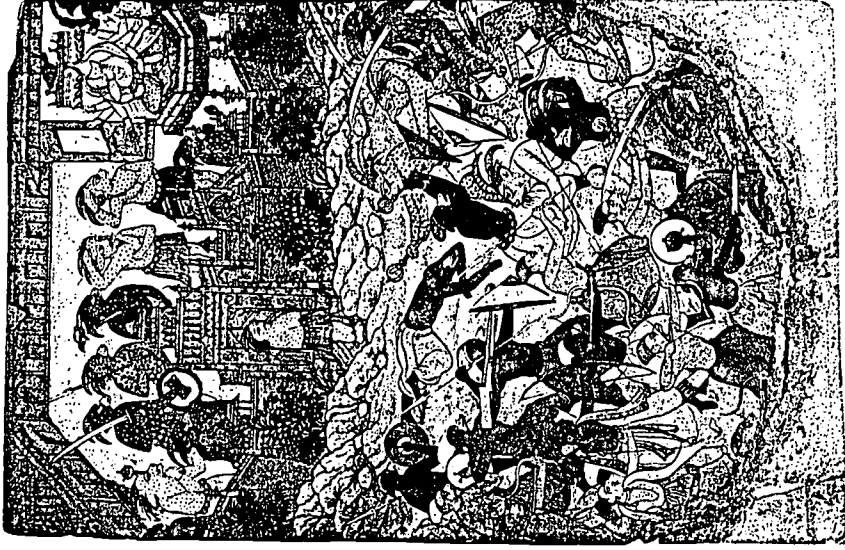
RAMA AND SITA

Rama's actions in the *Ramayana* epic are governed by *dharma*, the irrefutable law that is the foundation of both the cosmic and the social orders. Although the

Ramayana is a tale of martial glory, it is also a corpus of moral and ethical precepts, providing a guide to statesmanship, human conduct and relationships. Rama is an idealized figure, a perfect king, warrior and husband. The epic traces his life, beginning with his birth as the eldest son of the good king Dasharatha. He wins

Sita – the epitome of purity – for his wife. But on the eve of their accession, they are denied the throne, and sent into exile for fourteen years by Rama's father. Typically, Rama acts with honour: in accordance with the rule of *dharma*, he obeys his father, who then dies of sorrow. Rama does not return until he has served the full term of his exile. He roams the wilderness with Sita, fulfilling his caste duty by protecting *brahmin* hermits from local demons. The greatest demon, Ravana, kidnaps Sita and takes her to Lanka (Sri Lanka). Rama's devotion leads him to spend many years in search of her.

The narrative climaxes with Sita's eventual rescue, as Rama and his monkey ally Hanuman (see pp.54-5) obliterate the capital of the demon kingdom. The lovers are finally reunited but still Rama puts *dharma* above his own interests, and in a tragic denouement he banishes Sita. Although he knows her to be pure, the *dharma* of a king decrees that her time spent in the company of another man brings him dishonour. Still loyal to her husband, Sita prays to the earth to swallow her up, and Rama is left to mourn her loss until he too offers himself to the god of death.



Scenes from the Ramayana are a favourite topic in Indian miniature painting: Rama and Sita seated in exile, with Hanuman kneeling at their feet (above); an energetic depiction of the siege of Lanka (left), from an early 17th-century Mughal painting on paper, now in the National Museum of New Delhi.

Hanuman

Hanuman, the *Ramayana's* monkey hero, is Rama's most loyal devotee. He is the embodiment of *bhakti* (devotion), who gladly offers his own life in the service of his god. He is the son of Vayu, Vedic god of the wind, from whom he inherited the strength of hurricanes and the power to fly. The swiftest of the epic warrior-heroes, Hanuman also possesses the ability to metamorphose into whatever form he chooses.

The *Ramayana* relates that after his divine birth, Hanuman grew stronger and wiser with every passing year, destroying local demons, slaying rogue elephants, and even flying up to grasp the rising sun, which he mistook for an apple. One day while Hanuman and his master, the exiled monkey king, Sugriva, were hiding in a forest, they met Rama and his brother Lakshmana. Rama related the story of the kidnapping of his wife, Sita, by the demon Ravana, and his search for the place where the demon king had taken her. Deeply moved, Hanuman realized that his destiny was to serve at Rama's side, and he rallied an army for that purpose.

When the monkey army failed to find Ravana and his hostages, it was Hanuman who discovered the demon's hideout in Lanka. He assumed the form of an ordinary monkey to escape legions of powerful demons, so that he could enter Ravana's magnificent palace.

Hanuman found Sita sitting dejectedly in a garden, surrounded by demonesses. He emerged from his hiding place to

A masked player enacts the exploits of Hanuman in a performance of stories from the Ramayana.



AD. Hanuman became one of its principal deities. Ramananda's followers worship Rama as the supreme deity, and honour Hanuman as Rama's greatest devotee. Due to his shape-shifting skills, Hanuman is also revered by the *bhakti* movement as a powerful magician and *siddha* (possessor of occult powers).



comfort her. Seeing a talking monkey, she swooned, but was reassured by the ring that Hanuman had brought from Rama. He told his story and swore that Rama was destitute without her. The monkey offered Sita the chance to escape by flying on his back, but Sita refused out of respect for her husband, whose honour would be tainted if she were rescued by anyone but him.

To prepare the way for the battle that lay ahead, Hanuman taunted the demon king, smashing the city walls and annihilating thousands of demon guards. In revenge, the king set fire to Hanuman's tail. Growing to an enormous size, the monkey ran through the city with his burning tail, setting buildings ablaze, before returning to Rama with the message from his wife, Sita. Hanuman and the monkey armies destroyed Lanka and its demon king, and Sita was reunited with her lord.

When the guru Ramananda brought devotionalism (*bhakti*) from southern India to the north in the 14th century

This 18th-century engraving depicts the battle between Rama and the multi-headed demon Ravana, and shows Hanuman poised for action.

HANUMAN'S HEART

In the concluding chapter of the *Ramayana*, Hanuman's devotion to Rama is further elaborated. The monkey armies finally finished their celebrations after the triumphal victory over Lanka and prepared to return home from Rama's palace. Only Hanuman was left, but he declared that he must stay to serve Rama and his queen, Sita. Sugriva, the monkey king, asked for proof of



Hanuman's devotion, at which the most loyal of all devotees tore open his own chest to reveal images of Rama and Sita within.

A modern plaster statue of Hanuman shows him tearing open his chest to reveal Rama and Sita inside it.



The Mahabharata



This modern painting depicts the Contest of the Princes, an episode in the Mahabharata.

Krishna (see pp.62-3) appears in the epic, as the leader of his people and an ally of the Pandavas. He still appears more a superhuman warrior than a god in his battles alongside the Pandavas, but he grows in stature to emerge finally as the divine teacher of humanity.

According to legend, the entire *Mahabharata* was dictated by Vyasa to the elephant-headed god Ganesha (see pp.72-3), who made one condition: he would only agree to write it down if it were told without a pause. However fast it was dictated, Ganesha kept pace. At one time he broke off a tusk to use in place of a damaged stylus so as not to interrupt the flow of sacred words. The denser, more speculative passages were apparently attempts to stop the deity down, forcing him to stop and think whenever the meaning became unclear.

The central plot of the *Mahabharata* concerns two dynasties, the Pandavas and Kauravas. The rival families are cousins, the sons of Vyasa's two sons: the blind Dhritrashtra and the pious Pandu. Dhritrashtra is the eldest, but, because he is blind, Pandu is made king. Pandu has five sons: the eldest and righteous Yudhishthira; Bhima of ferocious strength; Arjuna the skilled warrior; and the twins Nakula and Sahadeva. Dhritrashtra, on the other hand, has 100 sons, the eldest of whom is the scheming Duryodhana.

When Pandu dies, his blind but well-intentioned brother, Dhritrashtra, takes Pandava's sons into his own palace. In time Dhritrashtra divides the kingdom, giving half of it to

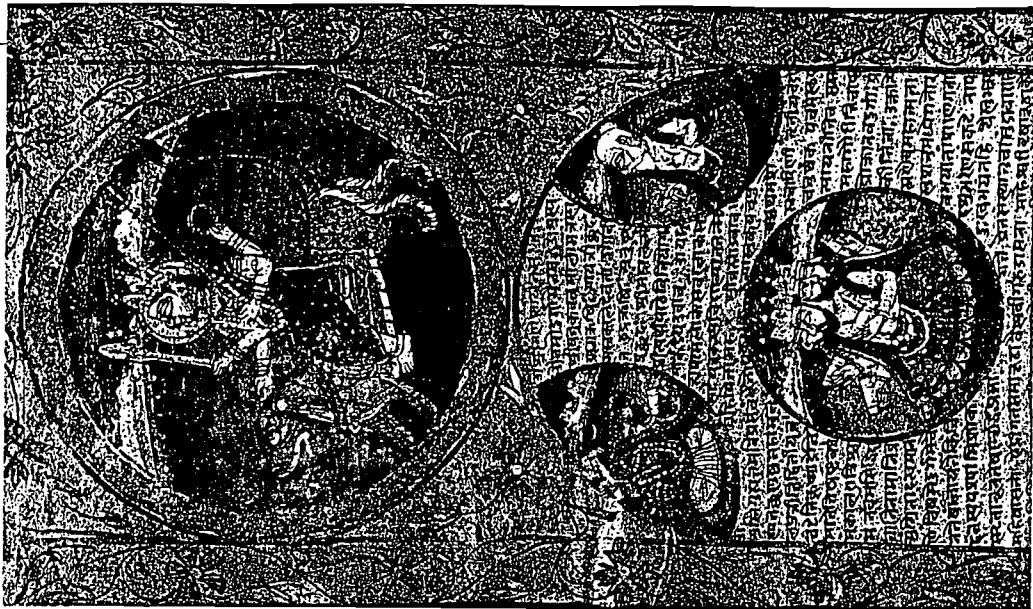
Yudhishthira and half to Duryodhana. However, Duryodhana becomes jealous of the affection his father feels for his cousin, and even more so of the lands that the Pandavas have inherited. Through trickery and cunning, the Pandavas are forced into exile, and have to wait thirteen years before they have a chance to reclaim their kingdom. This is the cause of the terrible war that follows, resulting in the destruction of the entire race except for one survivor, who continues the dynasty. This war forms the backdrop to the *Bhagavad Gita*.

VYASA

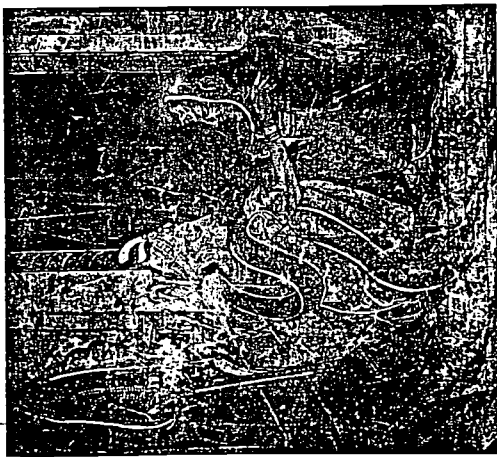
The legendary author of the *Mahabharata*, the sage Vyasa (whose name in Sanskrit means "Compiler"), boasted that "that which cannot be found here exists nowhere". Vyasa was reputedly the son of the ascetic Parasara and the Dasa princess Satyawati. Called "the Homer of the East" (although far more has been ascribed to him than to the Greek poet), Vyasa is said to have composed the entire *Mahabharata* and all eighteen *Puranas* (see p.49), besides compiling the four books of the *Vedas* (see pp.16-17). He was also a priest and teacher.

Many writers now consider Vyasa to be a composite name for the many *brahmins* who worked on the text over the centuries, but he also has a vital place in the narrative. He is the father of some of the principal characters in the epic – the opposed dynasties of the Sons of Darkness and the Sons of Light – and he himself often appears in the story to advise characters in need or to soothe the distressed.

This 18th-century manuscript depicts Vyasa as a seated bearded sage, dictating the *Mahabharata* to the elephant-headed Ganesha, with Durga above and Brahma below.



Bhakti



Krishna's love for Radha symbolizes bhakti devotion in this 19th-century painting.

Bhakti (in later Sanskrit, "reverent devotion") was a movement which stressed the emotional attachment and love of a devotee for his or her personal god. It therefore implied a dualistic relationship between worshipper and god. Although all major deities in the Hindu pantheon had devotional cults, *bhakti* has been especially common in the worship of Krishna, an *avatar* of Vishnu. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, (see pp.60-61), Krishna taught *bhakti yoga* ("the way of devotion"), placing it above other paths to salvation through *karma* (ritual activity) and *jnana* (spiritual knowledge). He declared to his devotees: "Worshipping me with love, I whereby they come to me".

The *bhakti* movement reached its height from c.AD500 to c.AD1500, starting in southern India before spreading

north. Its chief characteristic was an intensely emotional worship, expressed in terms of personal love, yearning, courtship and ecstasy. *Bhakti* cults reacted against the rigid exclusivity of the *brahmin* priests, with their elaborate rituals that required a knowledge of Sanskrit. They often rejected the role of the priest as an intermediary between devotee and deity, teaching instead that divine grace was available to all, irrespective of caste or sex. While *bhakti* scholars filled the temples of southern India, bands of devotees travelled the countryside, visiting shrines, singing devotional hymns and engaging local holy men in debate.

All *bhakti* sects shared the basic doctrine of divine grace and ecstatic love. *Bhakti* poets wrote of an intensity of guilt and a yearning for redemption familiar to Christian theology. Like the New Testament, the *bhakti* sects taught that divine love could also be expressed through love of one's neighbours, whatever their social status. But unlike Christian churches, *bhakti* sects welcomed women into their priesthood.

Bhakti adherents were opponents of Buddhism and Jainism, and they had hastened the decline of both in southern India by the 10th century. The arrival of the Muslims in the Ganges basin from the 12th century onward paradoxically also helped the *bhakti* movement, for *brahmins* with their ritualized Hinduism found it harder to survive without royal support than *bhakti* devotees. *Bhakti* devotionalism even affected Islam: there are Muslim poems which start with the standard invocation of Allah, but go on to claim that Krishna is one of the Muslim prophets.

THE LINGAYATS

The Lingayat sect was founded in the 12th century by Basava, a Shaivite *brahmin* who at the age of sixteen threw away the sacred thread marking his priestly caste to propagate a message of social equality, rejecting orthodox Hinduism. Seeing no need for a priest to mediate between Shiva and his devotees, Basava instructed his



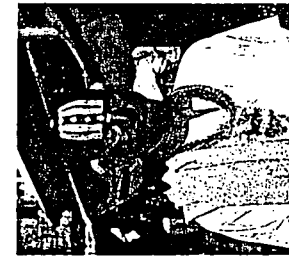
Devotees of Shiva belonging to the Lingayat sect wear silver containers holding miniature lingas around their necks.

followers to wear a small *linga* (see pp.66-7) about their necks and worship Shiva directly. This explains their name, the Lingayats. Basava rejected the authority of the *Vedas* and the *brahmin* caste, declaring that sacred texts were useless if they did not lead to a personal experience of God. Basava

married two untouchable women, and encouraged equal rights for women and the demolition of all caste barriers. When marriage between a *brahmin's* daughter and an untouchable led a local king to persecute Basava's followers, they rose in rebellion and Basava himself was killed.

THE ALVARS

Twelve Alvars (Vaishnavite saints) are recognized as founders of Vaishnavite *bhakti* in southern India. Their hymns to Vishnu and his *avatars* were intensely emotional. Of over 4,000 hymns, most were composed by the Alvars Tirumangal and



Praying to temple deities is the usual form of bhakti. This worshipper has offered his hair as a token of devotion at Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh.

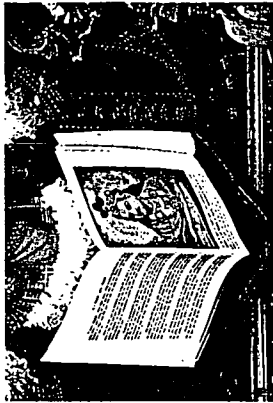
Nammalvar. One Alvar king, Kulashekhar, so loved Rama that he raised an army to rescue Sita, the deity's consort, from demons.

MADHYA

The 13th-century philosopher Madhya was one of the most striking and extreme dualist teachers. His prodigious output included commentaries on the *Brahmasutra* and *Bhagavad Gita*, as well as thirty-five other works. Most

unusually for a Hindu, he rejected the theory of *maya* (see pp.130-31) saying the material world, although transitory, was real. Madhya also believed in eternal damnation and salvation. He was perhaps influenced by Nestorian Christians, for his life has many parallels with that of Christ, most notably his miracles.

The Bhagavad Gita



A modern printed version of the Bhagavad Gita, showing the warrior Arjuna to whom Krishna delivered his great sermon.

The *Bhagavad Gita* ("Song of the Lord") is one of the most important and popular of Indian religious texts, although it is not strictly speaking a *shruti* (a divinely revealed text such as the *Vedas*). It is a comparatively brief episode within the *Mahabharata* consisting of 700 verses in eighteen chapters written in a semi-dialogue form.

It opens with two vast armies facing each other on the "field of *dharma*". On each side are tens of thousands of fearless warriors, as well as gods, demons and giants with supernatural weapons. These were the armies of the Pandavas and Kauravas, cousins and rivals for a single throne. The most glorious warrior of all was Arjuna, so skilled in the art of battle that he was thought invincible. His charioteer was Krishna, Lord of the Universe (see pp.62-3), and behind Arjuna stood legions of mighty allies ready to do battle in his name.

At that moment, as the final trumpets sounded and the air filled with dread, Arjuna looked at the army opposing him and weakness overcame him. "Facing us in the field of battle are teachers, fathers and sons ... I do not

wish to kill these people, even if I myself am killed. Not even for the kingdom of the three worlds: how much less for a kingdom of this earth!" said the warrior to Krishna. "What happiness could we have if we killed our own kinsmen? ... I will not fight," he said, and then fell silent. Krishna smiled and spoke the verses which form the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Krishna first appealed to Arjuna's honour and *dharmaic* duty as a *kshatriya* (see p.25). "There is no greater good for a warrior than to fight in a righteous war," he said, adding that there was no need to be sorrowful about what was inevitable. "Arjuna, you grieve because you think that you are the doer of your actions," he continued. "Think instead of God as the doer. You are but an instrument in his hands. You are only

THE THREE PATHS

The discipline or path of action (*karma yoga*) which Krishna outlined to Arjuna as he hesitated before the battle is not the only way to *brahman* which the *Bhagavad Gita* acknowledged, although it has proved very popular with those who must live and struggle in the world. Mahatma Gandhi was only one of many people in the 20th century inspired by this passage. The other two paths are the discipline of knowledge (*jnana yoga*), in which release is sought through asceticism and contemplative retreat from the world in a way comparable to Buddhism, and devotion to God (*bhakti yoga*). This is considered the highest form of yoga, and in it the self humbly worships God, hoping less for a release from reincarnation than for an ecstatic divine vision. In return for such worship, God extends his favour to his devotees, thereby enabling them to transcend their earthly bonds. All three of the paths share the belief that God is manifest in every single aspect of life, including nature and society.

carrying out his will." But Arjuna was still uncertain. "How can I kill my kinsmen?" he asked, and sank again into despondency, his great bow lying useless on his knees. Krishna answered in one of the best-known passages of the *Bhagavad Gita*. "Death is not final," he told Arjuna. "If any man thinks that he slays, and if another thinks that he is slain, neither knows the truth. The Eternal in man cannot kill: the Eternal in man cannot die. The soul in man is neither born nor does it die. Weapons cannot cut it; fire cannot burn it ... What makes you think that you can destroy the soul?"

Krishna, having defined the *atman* (see pp.24-5) in every person, revealed a new way of releasing the soul from the cycles of reincarnation: the discipline of action, *karma yoga* (see p.86). As opposed to the Buddhist and Jain paths of asceticism and renunciation, this is a

yoga of positive action, a way to *brahman* (godhead) that can be followed by anyone, however immersed in worldly affairs. Krishna argued that it is not acts in themselves which bind people to the round of rebirth, but the selfish intentions so often behind them. The true opposite of selfish action is disinterested or selfless action; total inaction is anyway impossible.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, action is no longer the sole cause of *karma*. The yoga that Krishna taught Arjuna offers a path to enlightenment based on the abandonment of desire. An enlightened mind, he says, is indifferent "to pleasure and pain, gain and loss". "Prepare yourself for the fight," he tells Arjuna. "Whatever you do, do it as an offering to me." Arjuna therefore returned to the world of battle, and his path has since been followed by millions of Hindus.

Arjuna and Krishna on the battlefield, the latter turning his head to deliver the famous sermon known as the Bhagavad Gita, from a 19th-century manuscript.



A New History of India

Fourth Edition

STANLEY WOLPERT

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland Madrid

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1977, 1982, 1989, 1993 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.,
200 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wolpert, Stanley A., 1927—

A new history of India / Stanley Wolpert. — 4th ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index

ISBN 0-19-507659-1 (cloth). — ISBN 0-19-507660-5 (pbk.)

1. India—History. I. Title.

DS496.W66 1993

954—dc20 92-12573

New York Oxford
Oxford University Press

1993

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1
Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

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cent. Learning well their lessons from the experience of their European predecessors, the English invested in cloth woven by the peasants of Coromandal and Gujarat, bought their pepper, indigo, and silk where it was cheapest, and left the souls of Indians to be cared for by their own priests and pundits.] In 1658 the newly solvent company was based at Hughli in Bengal, inheriting the former Portuguese factory more than a hundred miles north of the Bay of Bengal up the Hughli River, Mother Ganga's main tributary to the sea. All factors in Bengal at this time remained, however, under the official control of the governor of Fort St. George. The acquisition of Bombay similarly strengthened the British position in the west, for after 1669, when Gerald Aungier took over as governor of that island and started its fortification, Bombay became the company's premier port and an impervious British bastion.

ELEVEN

GREAT MUGHAL GLORY

(1605-1707)

The Great Mughals, whose reigns span the entire seventeenth century, have with good reason become universal symbols of power and affluence, of tenderness and cruelty, of ferocity and sensitivity; luxury loving, licentious, sentimental, brutal, and poetic, they were the embodiment of all those extremes characteristic of the Indian life-style known as Mughlai. Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb each in his own way epitomized some aspects of the complex cultural syncretism within which they lived and over which they presided. The courts they maintained, the courtiers they chose, reflected a new syncretic patina of civilization that was a blend of Indian, Persian, and Central Asian manners and mores.

Jahangir's Rajput mother can hardly be credited with having converted her son to Hindu ways, but his remarkable Persian wife, whom he renamed Nur Jahan ("Light of the World") after marrying her in 1611, firmly entrenched Persian culture at Agra's court. A thirty-four-year-old widow when she married the emperor, this ingenious woman was, in fact, ruling empress of India long before her uxorious husband died. She raised her Khurasan-born father, Mirza Beg (renamed Itimad ud-Dawlah by Akbar) to the premiership and brought her brother, Asaf Khan, into position to serve the next emperor in that office by arranging the marriage of his lovely daughter, Mumtaz Mahal ("Exalted of the Palace"), to Jahangir's third son, Khurram ("Joyous"), whom she effectively supported as imperial successor to her husband. The combination of beauty, brilliance, and ambition that allowed Nur Jahan first to capture Jahangir's heart and soon virtually to usurp his throne, may not be uniquely Persian, but

following her ascent to power, Persian was no longer simply the language of Agra's court, it set the tone and direction of North Indian administration and cultural life at both provincial and imperial capitals. Agra itself had grown by this time to twice the size of Isfahan, with an estimated population of over half a million. The city was dominated by Akbar's mighty Red Fort on the Yamuna, whose heavily guarded battlements were viewed with awe and terror. Persian poets and artists, architects and musicians flocked to this great capital, which Akbar had found more congenial than Delhi, home of so many hostile Afghans, and which Jahangir, his empress, and their successor, Shah Jahan, sought to make a model of Safavid elegance, luxury, and grandeur. From the glazed tile that covered the inner walls and walks of the palace to the enclosed formal garden, stone lace walls, and inlaid tiles of the domed tomb Nur Jahan had built for her father, precursor of the Taj Mahal, Agra mirrored the architecture of its contemporary Persian capital. The Taj itself, which was said to have taken twenty thousand workers over twenty years to build after the death of Mumtaz Mahal in 1631, was designed by two Persian architects and has often been called the greatest single work of Safavid art ever constructed; in its dependence on Indian materials and craftsmanship, however, not to mention its use of such motifs as the four Rajput canopies built around the base of its dome, it emerges as an excellent example of Mughal cultural syncretism rather than as a Persian import. In many ways, moreover, the love of silks and perfumes, the custom of draping both male and female figures with jewels, diaphanous veils, and peacock feathers, and the delight in song and dance, intoxicating drink, and the pleasures of the harem are habits and traditions at least as deeply rooted in Indian as in Persian soil.] Safavid approval served to validate such behavior for Muslims as well as Hindus, and in a real sense the historic significance of the Great Mughal Persian impact may be said to have been that it helped to Indianize Muslim culture, which is in part why the rule of the Great Mughals proved so stable a unifying force over some two centuries.

What could be more traditionally Indian, after all, than a Mughal procession of silver-tusked, silk-caparisoned elephants bearing jeweled nobles in tassled howdahs? Jahangir's love of wine, women, and dancing girls was in the best of maharaja traditions, as was his lavish expenditure of countless rupees on the month-long festivities

celebrating the marriages of his sons. What did most people care if *mullas* rather than brahmins presided over the ceremony? Agra's impoverished masses must have at least derived some vicarious pleasure from seeing and hearing how richly their royal neighbors lived. They could even forget that these rulers were "foreign conquerors," for as any casual observer of Mughal miniature portraits may note, there was no sharp distinction in either dress or appearance between the Great Mughal emperors and princes and their leading Rajput nobles or other contemporary Hindu chiefs. Koranic calligraphy and geometric designs continued to decorate the fringes of Mughal miniature paintings, but portraits of the hallowed Muslim monarchs were now painted without prohibition by Indo-Persian artists of rare genius, as were the virtually naked figures of servant girls, princesses, and embracing couples in the classic Rajput, and earlier Hindu, tradition. Jahangir's own interest in gardens and natural beauty helped stimulate the emergence of a distinctively naturalistic style in Mughal painting that was again more traditionally Indian than Persian in character. Among the great Persian artists at his court was Aqā Ridā of Herat, his son Abū-l-Hasan, and Mansur, whose vivid paintings of animals won unique acclaim. Govardhan and Manohar were Hindu artists of almost equal fame who worked at court, and we know of another Hindu, Bishandas, of whose portraiture work Jahangir thought so highly that he was sent to Isfahan to paint the Persian emperor, 'Abbās I. Jahangir prided himself on his Persian poetry and artistic skill and wrote memoirs (*Tūzuk-i-Jahāngīrī*) covering most of his reign, which were completed by the Persian Muhammad Hādī. Many other historians resided at court, and they were happy to follow the emperor to the Himalayas for the hot season, an annual royal exodus initiated by Jahangir that the British later loved to emulate.

Jahangir placed his son Khurram in command of his army in 1613, and therefore the prince, who was soon renamed Shah Jahan ("Emperor of the World"), led a number of campaigns against the Rajput forces in Mewar and Kangra and the Deccani sultanates of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, and Golconda.] The only threat to Mughal power in this era came from Persia, when in 1622 Shah Abbas wrested Kandahar from Agra's control. Jahangir was too preoccupied with his gardens, wine, poetry, and women to lead an army over the Baluchistan passes, and Shah Jahan refused Nur Jahan's order that

he do so, rightly sensing that the empress no longer favored him (her own daughter by a former marriage had just married his younger brother, Shahriyar) and was trying to get him away from Agra and Delhi. The year before, Shah Jahan's elder brother, the rebellious Khusrav, had died, probably poisoned by one of his brothers. With Khusrav's death, Shah Jahan was the leading contender for his father's mantle; his real opponent was Nur Jahan, who wished to continue to rule the empire no matter who reigned.

In 1623 Shah Jahan marched in open rebellion toward Agra but was driven off by imperial forces under the command of the mighty general Mahabat Khan, whom Nur Jahan had recalled from exile in Kabul. The rebellious Shah Jahan was chased around southeast India for three years before finally agreeing to return to his father's fold. By then, however, Mahabat Khan was so powerful and popular that Nur Jahan considered him a potential threat and banished him to Bengal, subsequently charging him with embezzlement of imperial funds. Mahabat responded by staging a coup in 1626, taking both Jahangir and Nur Jahan prisoner. He held them captive for several months without harming either, then lost his nerve and let them escape. Nur Jahan pardoned the simpleminded general and sent him off to hunt Shah Jahan, who was advancing north again with an army at his back. The wily empress now appointed her equally shrewd and politically adroit brother, Asaf Khan, premier of the realm. On October 29, 1627, Jahangir died, and Nur Jahan tried to bolster the sagging spirits of her sick son-in-law Shahriyar, who was then at the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore, hoping to imbue him with courage to fight for Agra's treasure. She sought to win her brother's support, of course, but Asaf Khan backed his own son-in-law, Shah Jahan, whom he informed by courier of his father's death. Shah Jahan rushed north to claim his throne, reaching Agra early in 1628. All of his closest relatives, who were potential rivals, were put to death in fine Mughal fashion, and then Shah Jahan enjoyed three weeks of lavish coronation celebrations. Nur Jahan was pensioned off and went to live in solitude at Lahore till her death in 1645.

Shah Jahan ruled for three decades (1628-58). The most lavish spender of all the Mughals, he was addicted to monumental architecture inlaid with jewels and semiprecious stones and to a harem, whose total population numbered five thousand. His beloved wife, Mumtaz

Mahal, bore him fourteen children, only half of whom survived to adulthood, before she herself died at the age of thirty-nine. The eldest son was Dara Shikoh (1615-58), whose deep interest in art, humanity, and eclectic philosophy led many courtiers and foreign visitors to believe that India would soon be blessed with another ruler as wise and liberal as Akbar, but Dara's austere, orthodox brother, Aurangzeb, had other ideas. Shah Jahan's first years as emperor were preoccupied with seeking to subdue rebellion in the Deccan and Bundelkhand. Ahmadnagar and Bijapur were both defeated and promised to pay annual tribute to their Mughal suzerain by 1635, and the following year Golconda also agreed, but the Deccan refused to remain permanently subordinate to northern power. While Shah Jahan's army waged its costly wars in the south, one of India's worst recorded famines desolated the Deccan's peasant population, and only five thousand rupees of imperial funds were spent each week to help relieve the widespread misery and starvation by order of the ruler who soon would lavish billions on a peacock throne and his wife's tomb. It was at Burhanpur, the Mughal provincial fortress in the Deccan, in the midst of that famine- and plague-racked region in 1631, that Mumtaz Mahal died in childbirth. "Empire has no sweetness, life itself has no relish left for me now," Shah Jahan was supposed to have wailed when he heard the news, yet he lived another thirty-five years. Maharashtra had claimed the first of its Mughal royalty, but she would not be the last. The rugged Deccan was to remain a continuing political trap, seductively elusive, a bottomless pit of expenditure and martial loss for the Great Mughals.

Shah Jahan continued to rely on his grandfather's mansabdari system, but while Akbar had eighteen hundred mansabdars, the number of higher bureaucrats dropped to only eight hundred under Shah Jahan, though the upper limit was now escalated to the rank of sixty thousand for Prince Dara Shikoh (Shah Jahan himself held a mansab of thirty thousand before inheriting the throne). The other three princes, Aurangzeb, Shuja, and Murad, were granted much lower mansabs, yet all were above ten thousand. If Shah Jahan was more than generous to his children, however, he was less than expansive to others, for only four of his courtiers held the rank of seven thousand, six were given mansabs of six thousand, and fifteen had mansabs of five thousand. (Aurangzeb was to elevate many more to the higher

echelons of service, primarily because he needed many more generals to wage his expensive Deccan wars.) Soon after his mother's death, Dara Shikoh married his cousin, Nadira, to whom he remained singularly devoted, and who bore his eight children. Aurangzeb (1618-1707) was only fourteen at the time, but he seems already to have hated his elder brother and coveted his father's throne. Apparently in the hope of cooling this brooding prince's ambition by distance, his father appointed Aurangzeb viceroy (*nawab*) of the Deccan in 1636, but remoteness from Agra only fired his appetite for power, and after eight years in exile Aurangzeb quit his post and returned to the northern center of empire. By that time, Shah Jahan had begun construction of a magnificent new capital in Delhi, to which his court would move in 1648.]

Not that Agra was ever totally abandoned by the builder of the Taj, in whose reign the white marble Pearl Mosque (Moti Masjid) was also erected like a giant jewel inside the Agra fort. Perhaps it was the memory of Mumtaz Mahal that troubled the emperor; or the heat, which is always more intense at Agra than Delhi; or perhaps it was merely the desire to build his own city, his own palace, for building became his primary passion now. That passion drove him back to the rusty plain on which no fewer than six earlier Indian capital cities had previously been erected, there to design and order the construction of the seventh, Shah Jahanabad, or what would later be called Old Delhi, after the British began building a New Delhi in 1911. Many of the blocks and bricks required to erect the new walls and massive gateways to Shah Jahan's city were taken from the rubble of Firozabad, the Tughluq's Delhi, whose Purana Qila ("Old Fort") still stands, a shattered fragment of jagged stone and blackened brick, a wretched remnant of the once proud sultanate. Shah Jahan built on a grander scale, though he, too, used the red sandstone of neighboring hills, erecting a Red Fort (*Lal Qila*) even larger than Agra's palace, a city within the city that enclosed almost five million square feet within its towering ramparts. Inside were royal apartments, harems, a secretariat, factories, storehouses, military barracks, a treasury, a mint, and stables, a home for tens of thousands of servants, slaves, courtiers, eunuchs, princesses, and a king mightier than England's monarch, richer than China's, as strong as Persia's. After the fort was finished, a beautiful mosque—the Jama Masjid—was built facing its main en-

trance. [India's largest place of worship, its central courtyard alone is over a hundred thousand square feet, permitting tens of thousands of Muslims to gather there on Friday afternoons for united prayer. It remains India's noblest monument to Islamic culture, even as the Red Fort is still its mightiest.]

In 1639 Prince Shuja, Shah Jahan's second eldest son, had been sent to Bengal, the Mughal Empire's province of "peace, plenty, and pestilence," and he presided over its wealthy destiny for eighteen years, remote from Delhi and Agra. Prince Murad, the youngest brother, on the other hand, was the black sheep of Shah Jahan's sons. He deserted his army in Central Asia, after he had led them to Balkh and Badakshan in 1646 on what was Shah Jahan's most wasteful military venture, a vain attempt to recapture his dynasty's ancestral home of Samarkand. Perhaps, like Babur, Shah Jahan missed the melons of Central Asia, but his youngest son missed only the high life back at court, and [for the peasantry who paid to sustain such imperial folly, the cost of the two-year Central Asian expedition totaled some forty million rupees.] Small wonder that Shah Jahan felt obliged to raise his revenue demands to an average of one-half of all crops, rather than Akbar's one-third. Between his monumental buildings and his martial misadventures—which included three more fruitless expeditions against the Persians at Kandahar—even the fabled surplus exacted from the perspiring backs of one hundred million people swiftly disappeared. Still, the emperor sat upon his Peacock Throne (thanks to which it was said that the world had run "short of gold"), encrusted with the largest diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and pearls ever found, all but blindingly distracted courtiers and visitors, who faced a firmament of unmatched brilliance and wealth whenever they had the good fortune of approaching the imperial presence. Unless required elsewhere on urgent business, all principal *mansabdars* mustered twice daily before the emperor at his Hall of Public Audience (*Diwan-i Am*), while lesser officials stood somewhat more remote, yet still within call should they be needed. [The virtues of humility, obedience, patience, and loyalty were thus instilled in all of the mighty generals and civil administrators, at the cost of intellectual initiative, independence of mind, self-sufficiency, integrity, and courage. Bullied and treated like children by their emperor, it was hardly surprising to find such "nobles" behaving in turn as petulant petty tyrants to their serv-

ants, bearers, soldiers, and peasants.] The whole system was a pyramid of power designed to perpetuate its imperial pinnacle, whether through ruthless violence, extortion, harem intrigue, bribery, or sheer terror. [The formal gardens, marble mausoleums, and Persian miniatures were as nectar squeezed from a subcontinent crushed into obedience, milked of its riches by the few] who had reason to lyricize in Persian couplets carved into the ornate walls of Delhi's Hall of Private Audience (*Diwan-i Khas*). "If there be Paradise on earth, It is Here, It is Here, It is Here!"

Dara Shikoh's intellectual curiosity and religious tolerance was more than counterbalanced toward the end of Shah Jahan's reign by Aurangzeb's Islamic orthodoxy and militant zeal. While Shah Jahan remained healthy, the tension between these polar princes was held in balance, and though factions or parties partial to one or the other emerged at court, the emperor kept them from open warfare. Shah Jahan sent Aurangzeb back to the Deccan in 1652, but did not give him full rein to conquer Golconda and Bijapur by invasion, as Aurangzeb wanted to do, afraid, it seems, of the growing power and boundless ambition of his "prayer-monger" son. Dara, though viceroy of the Punjab, stayed close to his father at court, but he cared little for mundane glory and took less interest in harem intrigue or court politics than he did in mysticism, Hindu as well as Sufi, and in the translation of such Sanskrit classics as the *Bhagavad Gita* into Persian, to which he devoted himself. Thus, while Aurangzeb ventured forth from his capital of Aurangabad to temper his sword in dusty Deccan campaigns that frustrated as well as whetted his appetite for greater conflicts and clearer victories, Dara languished and grew weary in the Delhi *maya*-world of material glitter. Shuja remained in Bengal, and Murad was sent to Gujarat, where he was given as little to do as possible, left to idle his time with a busy cycle of provincial feasts and ceremonies, interspersed by royal hunts and holiday visits to neighboring cities and shrines, arranged by his shrewd "guardian" minister, Ali Naqi Khan. Late in 1657, with the beautiful mausoleum that would immortalize his wife completed, the aged Shah Jahan fell victim to his own insatiable harem lust and all but expired of strangury, throwing Delhi's court into a state of panic over the succession that soon reverberated to the distant corners of princely Mughal provincial habitation.]

Aurangzeb lured simple Murad into alliance against "our disgraceful brother," as he called Dara Shikoh, first by denying that he had any regal ambitions, claiming it was only to save Islam that he stood ready to "defend" the empire against his elder brother, and later by promising Murad the Punjab and Sind for his support. Shuja was first to proclaim himself emperor, minting coin in his own name before the end of 1657 in Bengal, stimulating Murad to do the same in Gujarat. Aurangzeb was more cautious, waiting till July 1658 before he would claim the thrones of Delhi and Agra. By early 1658 Shah Jahan had regained his health, and he tried desperately to help Dara cope with his brothers' lust for power, but the mystic heir had spent too much of his time worrying about otherworldly matters to save his life or retain the empire bequeathed to him. The united forces of Aurangzeb and Murad marched north to defeat Jodhpur Rajput Jaswant Singh's formidable imperial force at Dharmat in April. Agra was mobilized in desperate preparations for the impending onslaught, and Dara set forth atop the mightiest royal elephant to lead his great army of about a hundred thousand troops to Dholpur, on the river Chambal, where he planned to block the advancing rebel force. Aurangzeb, however, was too shrewd a strategist for his brother. He eluded the blockade, fording the river upstream in the blazing heat of May and forcing Dara to fall back in hasty disarray to Agra's abandoned fortress. They met at Samugarh, several miles east of Agra, two elephant-led armies, Dara's riddled with disloyal Muslim cavalry like that led by the Uzbek Khaliullah Khan. Aurangzeb was clearly the stronger general. Rajputs in the thousands died for Dara Shikoh, who fled the field toward Agra, a fallen and hunted shade of his former self; his head was soon to be delivered in a box from the victorious Aurangzeb to their imprisoned father. Murad was at first flattered by his pious elder brother, while his army was still of use to Aurangzeb, who besieged Agra's Fort till he forced Shah Jahan to surrender early in June; soon after that, Murad was taken prisoner by his brother, and three years later he, too, was decapitated.

Aurangzeb ascended the throne of Akbar as Alamgir ("World Conqueror") the First in July 1658 and reigned until his death in March 1707. He was at once the most pious and the most ruthless of the Great Mughals, a single-minded leader of brilliant administrative capacity and as cunning a statesman as ever mounted an Indian

throne. He was hailed by Sunni Islam as India's only caliph and reviled by Hindudom even more than the Ghaznavids and Ghurs had been for the suffering he self-righteously inflicted on non-Muslim subjects in peacetime as well as in war. He had no friends, only worshipping admirers and enemies whose hatred was surpassed only by their fear of his cold fury. He spent more time at prayer than in his harem, and was most methodical in his relentless pursuit of power. Dara, who had fled to Lahore and from thence to Multan, posed no real military challenge after Samugarh. Shuja, who still retained control over Bengal and Bihar, hoped to "liberate" Agra and the imprisoned Shah Jahan while Aurangzeb was busy chasing Dara around the Punjab, but Emperor Alamgir proved too swift, too ubiquitous a force for any and all of his rivals. Defeated at Khajua in January of 1659, Shuja retreated to his Bengali capital of Rajmahal on the Ganga, but was forced soon to abandon that stronghold for East Bengal's delta and Dacca. The next year he was driven out of India entirely, seeking refuge in Burma, where he reportedly met a violent end. Once the war of succession was over, Alamgir turned his energies to problems of an administrative and financial nature. Securing his hotly contested throne had cost the imperial treasury much of the remaining fortune accumulated during Shah Jahan's reign, but Alamgir's taste for building and court luxuries was the austere opposite of his father's. Monumental construction now came to an end, as did most royal expenditure on nonreligious celebrations, especially those including wine, song, and dance, all banished as infidel habits unfit for courtly patronage. Personally puritanical in dress and taste, Alamgir set a tone of zealous sobriety for his courtiers, which amply attested to his strength of character and helped impress his piety on those who had watched his bloody rise to power with misgivings.

The era of religious tolerance and Hindu-Muslim equality of treatment that had been initiated by Akbar was now abandoned. Alamgir appointed "censors of public morals" (*muhstabs*) to every provincial capital and other large city in his realm, ordering them to be sure that Islamic law was obeyed and the proper prayers performed. In 1668 Hindu religious fairs were outlawed, and new Hindu temple permits were issued, nor would royal permission be granted to repair rundown temples. Alamgir even tried to abolish gambling and "illicit sex" from the land that had virtually invented the former and practiced the latter as one means of worship. Hard-

pressed to raise sufficient revenue to support the army he needed to keep himself in power, Alamgir reimposed the hated *jizya* poll tax on Hindus in 1679, after having more than doubled the duty Hindu merchants were obliged to pay on the same produce bought and sold by Muslims. When crowds gathered near his Red Fort to protest such inequity and blatant discrimination, imperial elephants were ordered out to crush them. Alamgir received many warnings that rebellion would spread across India if he persisted in his policy of strict partiality to the religious beliefs of the ruling minority, but he stayed firmly in power and only expanded his imperial domain.

The primary cause of the widespread revolt that occurred in the latter part of Alamgir's reign, however, was economic, not religious. The intolerable increases in revenue demands drove more and more *zamindars* as well as peasants to risk death from rebellion rather than accept inevitable starvation. With Mughal imperial power heavily dependent on its cavalry, administrative *mansabdars* were assigned *jagirs* of land to sustain themselves and the horsemen they were expected to lead into battle at the emperor's call. Greed tempted many *mansabdars* to raise the revenue demands imposed on their peasants, despite central government regulations to the contrary, and to support far fewer cavalry than their rank required, keeping the grain that would have been used to feed those men and horses for their own profit. Such inflation became quite common toward the end of Alamgir's reign and in the period of more rapid Mughal decline that followed. Even during the early years of the reign, however, the harshness of *jagir* demands led peasants in many parts of the empire to flee from their Mughal villages and rally their support behind regional *zamindars*, Jat, Maratha, Sikh, and Rajput.

Hindu Jat peasants under a *zamindar* named Gokulā revolted in Mathura in 1669, and three years later the Satnamis ("Truth Namers"), a sect of Hindu peasants in the Punjab, rebelled, marching toward Delhi until they were blown to shreds by Mughal artillery. The Sikhs by now had twice supported losing aspirants to Mughal power, once in Jahangir's reign, when they backed his rebel son, Khusrāu, and again when they favored Dara's claim; this experience left a bitter residue of anti-Mughal passion in the Punjab, to which Alamgir added an intolerable portion of anguish. The Marathas also emerged throughout the latter part of his reign as bitter thorns in his Deccan side, and the Rajputs rose time and again, yet the "prayer-monger" held his

throne, convinced that he did so by the will of Allah, assisted by a larger and better paid army than any previous Indian monarch had ever sustained. Despite the "bad press" that has haunted Alamgir's reputation since his death, his reign may be read as a lesson in the efficacy of unrelenting force and untiring dictatorial dominance as keys to the control of India's preponderantly docile, hard-working, apolitical peasant population.

Akbar had hoped to win control over all of India by his enlightened policy of "love"—forging a multireligious alliance, reducing taxes, and encouraging tolerance for all sects and ideas. Alamgir achieved greater success through his policy of terror and naked power—if we would measure imperial success, that is, by the conquest and retention of real estate alone. It is, of course, harder to gauge the less tangible, though at least equally important things, such as the "general welfare" or "happiness" of the public at large, especially since there are so few surviving records of the lives and feelings of India's people, other than imperial courtiers. We do know, however, of at least one anonymous letter of eloquent complaint that reached the emperor after he had reimposed the *jizya*, stating in part: "Your subjects are trampled underfoot; every province of your Empire is impoverished; depopulation spreads and difficulties accumulate . . . If Your Majesty places any faith in those books by distinction called divine, you will be there instructed that God is the God of all mankind, not the God of Mussalmans alone."¹ Such sentiment may have prevailed throughout much of India during the latter part of the seventeenth century, and in several regions it led to violent and sustained revolt. The Punjab has been mentioned as the first such major region, perhaps because it had so long been "loyal" to its viceroy, Dara, and his claims to Agra's throne. While Dara still had Lahore's gold to dispense, he retained a substantial following of cavalry, Rajput as well as Muslim, but that quickly melted as Alamgir's sun rose higher, leaving, nonetheless, a hard core of Sikh opposition in the Land of the Five Rivers.

Since the founding of the Sikh² faith by its saintly guru, Nanak,

¹ Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb* (Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar and Sons, 1952), vol. 3, p. 34.

² The best history of this faith is Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1, 1469-1839 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

in the early sixteenth century, this popular new liberal community flourished in the Punjab, drawing its recruits mostly from hard-working peasantry of Hindu as well as Muslim birth. Recording the sacred sayings of Guru Nanak in a specially devised script, called *Gurumukhī* ("from the Guru's mouth"), his chosen successor, Guru Angad (1504-52), gave the community greater cohesion and a clearer sense of its own identity. The third guru, Amar Das, was patronized by Akbar, further inducing converts to the faith, which stressed community eating as well as prayer and abolished female *purdāh* ("seclusion") together with caste exclusiveness and untouchability. Ram Das, the fourth guru, had served at Akbar's court and was granted some land by the emperor between the rivers Sutlej and Ravi in the Punjab, which was to become the site of the Sikh's sacred capital.) Ram Das's son and successor, Arjun (1563-1606), completed the great Sikh temple at this spot, naming the city Amritsar ("Pool of Immortal Nectar") for its tank filled with "sacred" well water. Under Arjun's careful guidance the Sikh scripture, Granth Sāhib, was compiled and deposited in Amritsar's temple. "In this vessel," wrote Guru Arjun of his book, "you will find three things—truth, peace, and contemplation." Jāhangir charged Arjun with treason, however, and had him tortured to death for supposedly aiding the emperor's rebel son Khusrāu, then refusing to admit his "guilt" or abandon his faith. Arjun's martyrdom inspired his own son, Hargobind, to arm his comrades, who stood ready to defend their religion with their lives, converting the pacifist faith of Guru Nanak into a militant new order pitted against Mughal tyranny. Though forced to retreat to Kiratpur in the Himalayan foothills, Guru Hargobind and his band held out against Mughal arms until the guru's peaceful death in 1644.

The seventh guru, Har Rai, was hounded even farther into the mountains, from which he emerged only after 1658 to support Dara Shikoh's claim to the throne. Following Alamgir's victory, however, Har Rai was obliged to send his son, Ram Rai, as hostage to Delhi's court, where the young man became a loyal follower of the emperor, losing his father's support. Shortly before his death in 1661, Har Rai designated his younger son, Hari Krishen, as his successor, but this son, too, was forced to seek Alamgir's favor in Delhi, and he expired there of smallpox in 1664. The ninth guru was Har Rai's granduncle, Tegh Bahadur (1621-75), who was arrested by Alamgir's soldiers in

Agra and brought to Delhi, where he was subsequently beheaded after refusing to convert to Islam. (Guru Gobind Rai (1666-1708), Tegh Bahadur's son, was the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus. He vowed to avenge his father's murder and to devote his life to ceaseless struggle against Alamgir's tyranny. Gobind Rai forged his community into an "army of the pure" (*khālsa*), taking as his new surname Singh, which means "Lion," and baptizing his closest followers with the same name. From this time at least, the Sikhs emerged as a close-knit force of toughened fighters who recognized one another by the sartorial symbols of their faith, for they vowed never to cut their hair or beards, always to carry a saber, to wear a steel bracelet on their right wrists and knee-length soldier's shorts, and to keep a comb for their hair. The Guru now merged with his community, since all were to become hunted men and full-time fighters, but the majority will of the *khālsa* would hereafter represent the Guru who was thus immortalized. Gobind was said to have had more than twenty thousand loyal supporters in his retinue at one time, but Mughal armies outnumbered and harassed him till his last years of struggle and hardship. At least he had the ultimate satisfaction of outliving his hated rival, Alamgir, by a year and a half.

In Maharashtra³ an equally fierce Hindu opposition to Mughal rule emerged under the leadership of Shivaji Bhonse (1627-80), who was hailed by his followers as the founding father of the Maratha "nation" but reviled by the Mughals as a Deccan "mountain rat." Shivaji's father, Shāhji, had served the sultan of Ahmadnagar, northernmost of the five successor-kingdoms to the once mighty Bahmani sultanate. As the sultan's *Jagirdar* in Poona, Shahji was an important local leader and soon found himself wooed by the sultan of neighboring Bijapur, for his was a borderland *jagir*. Shortly before Shivaji's birth, his father shifted allegiance to Bijapur and took a second wife as well as a new sultan. Emotionally abandoned by her husband, Shivaji's devout mother, Jiji Bai, lavished all of her attention and affection upon her son. After Shah Jahan came to power at Agra and advanced into the Deccan, Shahji shifted allegiance once more, accepting a Mughal *mansab* from late 1630 until Shah Jahan returned

³ The best history of the Marathas remains G. S. Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, 3 vols., 2nd impression (Bombay: Phoenix Publications, 1957).

north in 1632, when the adroit Maratha statesman decided to return to his original overlord, the sultan of Ahmadnagar. The following year, however, Daulatabad fell, and the sultan was taken prisoner by the Mughal army. Shahji now sought to rally the remnant of Ahmadnagar forces, using guerrilla warfare tactics against far superior Mughal might in the hostile Deccan terrain he knew so well. With some twelve thousand followers, Shahji retained his independence of Muslim rule for a few years, but when Bijapur concluded a treaty with Shah Jahan in 1636, the fate of Hindu resistance was sealed, and Shahji himself surrendered to a joint Mughal-Bijapur army. He was banished thereafter from Poona, but Jiji Bai raised her son Shivaji in that city, which was to become the capital of Maratha power.]

Shivaji was a fiercer fighter than his father, and he grew to manhood imbued with his mother's love of Hinduism and antipathy to Muslim Bijapuri as well as Mughal rule. That the Deccan sultanates were heterodox Shi'ites, while the Mughals were orthodox Sunnis made no difference to Shivaji's yearning for independence of all overlords, especially those of a "foreign" faith. He wanted "self-rule" (*sva-rāj*) and the full freedom to practice his own religion (*sva-dharma*) in the land of his birth; the Great Country—Mahā-Rāshtra. Shivaji left Poona at the age of twenty, leading a band of young Maratha followers who had been reared in the hills of their rugged region and could most effectively use guerrilla tactics in fighting both Mughal and Bijapur powers. These "mountain rats" would wait for caravans to wend their way into the hill country and then swoop down to plunder whatever they could use to strengthen their band, which soon had the arms, money, and horses to pose a formidable challenge to Muslim garrisons. Securing a number of key mountaintop plateaus as his fortresses, Shivaji soon commanded a substantial portion of Maharashtraian terrain, and though Bijapur tried to coerce him by holding his father hostage, nothing could intimidate this tenacious young Hindu warrior. His first stronghold, Sinhagārh ("The Fortress of the Lion"), dominates the plain southwest of Poona, its sheer rock face rising so nearly vertical that no human was believed capable of scaling its height. Maharashtraian lore claims that Shivaji used a giant Deccan lizard to assist him in this "superhuman" task, tying a rope to the lizard's rough tail and hurling the creature up against the wall so that its suction-cup feet fastened firmly to the sheer cliff and Shivaji and

his men could climb over it in the dead of night to surprise the Muslim garrison there.

Whatever his secrets may have been, Shivaji clearly used an intimate knowledge of his homeland to considerable martial advantage, and he well deserves to be called one of the founding fathers of modern guerrilla warfare, a method he learned in part from Shahji. By 1659 Shivaji's daring exploits roused sufficient Bijapuri concern to launch the powerful general Afzal Khan and an army of several thousand troops, who completely surrounded Shivaji in his "Fortress of Valor" (Pratāpgarh), where he was trapped with insufficient food or water to survive a lengthy siege. Shivaji then offered to "surrender," insisting, however, upon meeting Afzal Khan personally, man to man, to "discuss final terms." The Muslim general was a giant bull of a man, and Shivaji barely more than five feet tall. Afzal advanced unafraid to a level spot just below the high wall of the fortress, and Shivaji left his lair wearing an innocuous-looking, loose-fitting cloth shirt with sleeves that covered his hands, each of which was lethally armed. He carried a "scorpion-tail" dagger in one hand, and had the fingers of the other sheathed in razor-edged iron "tigers' claws." Shivaji rushed to embrace Afzal Khan, who collapsed with a death cry that signaled the Hindu troops, hidden along the road Afzal had taken, to spring from ambush and kill the general's attendants. The leaderless army at the base of the mountain was easily dispersed in panic and despair, once the troops realized that the "invincible" Afzal was dead and there would be no prospect of pay, nor hope of plunder. Shivaji's murder of Afzal Khan marked the real birth of Maratha power; thereafter, no South Indian force would be able to challenge this intrepid Hindu leader, and only the full weight of Mughal imperial might could humble him. Shivaji was strong enough to raid Surat in 1664, plundering much of its wealth and even trying to loot the British factory there, which was stoutly defended by its small garrison. When such embarrassing exploits reached Alamgir's ears, he sent a huge army, led by the Rajput Jai Singh, to deal with this Maratha "upstart." Shivaji was now trapped at another of his hill-top forts, Purandhar; in 1665 he sued for peace, but this time he was obliged to surrender twenty-three of his twenty-five fortresses, in return for a *mansab* in the imperial Mughal service.

Shivaji actually appeared as a *mansabdar* of five thousand horse

at Alamgir's court, but he was so outraged to find himself facing the backs of generals he considered his inferiors that he fussed and fumed and finally fainted, had to be carried off, and was placed under house arrest. Once again proving his ingenious talent for "miraculous" escape, Shivaji eluded his guards by hiding in a laundry or food basket until he was outside, then made his way back to the Deccan, where he was welcomed as a returning monarch. By 1670 he had recaptured most of his fortress perches and could launch a second, even more lucrative attack against Surat. In 1674 he felt sufficiently powerful to have himself crowned Chatrapati ("Lord of the Universe") in a traditional Hindu coronation at Rajgarh ("The Fortress of Rule"), where eleven thousand brahmins gathered to chant the sacred Vedic mantras, while fifty thousand loyal Maharashtrian friends and supporters swore undying allegiance to this reincarnation of Lord Shiva. Shivaji Maharaj thus publicly staked his claim to *svaraj* over the land of his birth, as countless Hindu voices throughout the Deccan took up the cry of "*Shivaji Maharaj-ki-jai!*" ("Victory to Great King Shivaji"). Alamgir was at the time preoccupied with Afghan conflicts and would not be able to focus his personal attention upon the Deccan for some years to come; not, in fact, until after Shivaji's early death in 1680. The death of Shivaji did not mean the end of Maharashtra's struggle for independence, however, since he bequeathed to his sons and courtiers his fierce spirit of Hindu nationalism—at least in this Maharashtra regional form—and they continued his battle against Mughal power. J

The year Shivaji died, the Rajputs of Jodhpur and Mewar rose in united opposition to Alamgir's rule. The emperor sent his son Akbar at the head of a powerful Mughal army to subdue Rajput resistance in 1680, but the young prince decided instead to join forces with the Hindus against his father's tyranny and soon declared himself emperor. The second Akbar could not, however, fully emulate his name-sake; falling victim to Alamgir's greater shrewdness and martial experience, he was forced to flee with a few of his followers to the Deccan. Akbar sought help from Shivaji's elder son, Sambhaji (1657-89), who had also just assumed his father's royal title at Rajgarh. Alamgir now saw no alternative but to march south himself in order to subdue this potentially most dangerous of all rebellions he had faced. By November 1681 he reached Burhanpur, and in March 1682

he established his camp at Aurangabad, the Deccan capital he had built when still a young prince. But it was much easier for Alamgir to invade the Deccan than it was for him to find the Maratha forces he had come to crush. Sambhaji, like his father, used guerrilla-warfare strategy and scorched-earth tactics to harass and hide from the Mughal armies, retaining control of the treacherous hills and their forts, posing a constant source of annoyance and insult to Alamgir's far superior power. [Akbar sought in vain to lure Sambhaji north with him, hoping to march upon Agra at the head of an allied force of Marathas, Rajputs, and those Mughals who rallied round his banner.] Shivaji's son never really trusted the Muslim prince, however, and Indian regional differences once again served to undermine dreams of unification, for [even though the Marathas and the Rajputs were both Hindus, they spoke different languages and hardly knew one another. The theme of regional Indian discord would often be replayed in the face of growing British power, and not until the latter part of the nineteenth century would Indians learn that if they hoped ever to rule themselves they would have to subordinate regional ambitions, prejudices, and fears to a common, united national effort.] After watching his father's invincible force demolish Bijapur's defenses and bring that Deccan sultanate under the ever-expanding imperial umbrella, Akbar fled to Persia in 1686, where he died in exile before Alamgir. Sambhaji continued to evade direct confrontation with Alamgir's army, which moved like a swarm of locusts over the Deccan.

In 1687, soon after Bijapur fell, Golconda, the last of the Shi'ite sultanates, surrendered and was absorbed within the Mughal system, leaving only the Marathas as diehard opponents to the "World Conqueror." [In 1689 Sambhaji was captured, tortured, and butchered to death, firing his people's spirit of resistance even more through the courage of his last anguished hours than he had during the latter years of his lifetime. His younger brother, Rājā Rām, now took the sacred title of Chatrapati and kept the banner of Maratha independence waving for another full decade, till his own death in 1700.] Raja Ram's widow, Tārā Bāi, continued her husband's relentless struggle, heroically refusing to bow to the Mughal yoke. Alamgir had taken Sambhaji's son Shāhu and his mother into his camp, however, and raised the boy as a *mansabdar*, determined to incorporate Maharashtra into the empire that now extended beyond the limits reached even by the

great Ashoka. Never before nor since would so much of the South Asian subcontinent fall within a single ruler's domain. [Great Mughal glory thus reached its pinnacle of power at the end of the seventeenth century, under the fiercely fanatical leadership of an octogenarian despot whose will was obeyed from Kashmir to Hyderabad, from Kabul to Assam.]

Yet the conquest of the Deccan, to which Alamgir devoted the last twenty-six years of his life, was in many ways a Pyrrhic victory, costing an estimated hundred thousand lives a year during its last decades of fruitless, chess-game warfare, in which Maratha fortresses would be taken one week and lost the next, only to be recaptured and relost a month later. [The expense in gold and rupees can hardly be imagined or accurately estimated. Alamgir's moving capital alone—a city of tents thirty miles in circumference, some two hundred and fifty bazaars, with half a million camp followers, fifty thousand camels, and thirty thousand elephants, all of whom had to be fed, stripped peninsular India of any and all of its surplus grain and wealth throughout the quarter century of its intrusion. Not only famine, but bubonic plague arose to take countless more lives during this era of tragic conflict and waste.] The macabre dimension of the drama seems somehow too great for seventeenth-century warfare, sounding more modern in its unyielding butchery, its senseless massacre of human and animal life. Even Alamgir had ceased to understand the purpose for it all by the time he decided to stop firing his guns and turn his army world back toward the north in 1705. The emperor was nearing ninety by then. He spent most of his days reading and copying the Koran, preparing himself for the final reckoning, while at the retreat—ing fringes of his camp, Maratha horsemen rode roughshod over the rear guard, looting, plundering, and picking off Mughal stragglers, gaining strength from the bloated imperial presence that had come to plague the Deccan. "I came alone and I go as a stranger. I do not know who I am, nor what I have been doing," the dying old man confessed to his son in February 1707. "I have sinned terribly, and I do not know what punishment awaits me."⁴ He expired on a Friday and was buried in a village near Aurangabad.

⁴ Quoted by Waldemar Hansen, *The Peacock Throne* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 485.

GREAT WOMEN OF INDIA

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SWAMI MADHAVANANDA
RAMESH CHANDRA MAJUMDAR

THE HOLY MOTHER BIRTH CENTENARY MEMORIAL



Advaaita Ashrama.
(Publication Department)
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014

Published by
SWAMI MUMUKSHANANDA
PRESIDENT, ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, PITHORAGARH, HIMALAYAS

© SRI SARADA MATH, DAKSHINESWAR
THIRD IMPRESSION, SEPTEMBER 1993
2M2C

Printed in India at
GIPIDI BOX CO.
3B CHATU BABU LANE
CALCUTTA 700 014

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ny to seduce with her charms the patriotic hero from his goal
rted into his code of patriotic conduct, disguised herself
saint (*tāpasi*) for achieving this.

rineaire accounts, but women as nuns wedded to service of
anity and to the ways of monasticism are more frequent. The
noble example of affection through service is Patralekhā in the
ambarī. She is the best example of companionship unfeigned
undaunted by the dawn and return of love. Cases like these are
able exceptions. While the woman is not generally prone "to
it, to startle and waylay," and is "a spirit still, and bright with
:thing of an angelic light," it must be admitted that her role
warn, to comfort and command" is hardly ever seriously
npted; and the reason for this omission is to be discovered in
classical writers' sticking faithfully to the *śāstric* ideal of her
; ever in the control of another and not striving to become
urd and self-willed. Woman may be a poet, a philosopher, a
ar, and even a *brahmapauḍīnī* like Maitreyī or Chūdālā, but she
d not present herself in assemblies making a demonstration of
enius. A woman may be learned, but should not be forward.
claim to recognition lies through her service of her lord and
gh her being the mother of a great son, wise or valiant like
Shaṅkara, Chaitanya or the heroic Bharata, as the case may
his is the attitude even of romantic love stories. Vāsavadattā
t because of her being the mother of Naravāhanadatta.

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CHAPTER XII

GREAT WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

1. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

IN A conservative country like India, the position of women in the Buddhist period could not have changed very much from that of the earlier days. Nevertheless, there was some improvement in their condition, due primarily to the basic principles which Buddha laid down in his teachings. These may be briefly stated as follows:

(i) Buddha laid stress on the fact that a woman, like a man, reaps the fruits of her past karma, and that she must depend on her own acts for her future good or evil or salvation, and in this none can help her, not even her parents, teacher or spiritual preceptor. This struck at the root of the belief that a son was needed for the safe passage of an individual after death to heaven. Hence the futility of the invidious distinction made between a son and a daughter in the pre-Buddhist period became obvious to the people, and this ultimately raised the status of a daughter.

(ii) Secondly, Buddha discarded the Brāhmanic rituals in which the wife played a secondary part and a barren woman or a widow had no place. This did away with the unwarranted stigma attached to these two categories of unfortunate women.

(iii) Thirdly, Buddha made no distinction between a man and a woman regarding the attainment of spiritual ends. He delivered discourses for the benefit of both the sexes, and the moral code prescribed by him was to be observed by both. Hence the lower position of women in the sphere of spiritual culture was done away with, and this has been amply evidenced by the several nuns attaining the highest goal, nirvana.

(iv) The order of nuns was open to married as well as unmarried women, irrespective of whether they were barren or not, as also to widows. There was no distinction between one category and another when they became either *śramaṇerīs* or *bhikṣuṇīs*. It is spiritual

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ment alone that counted in the *saṅgha*. Even a courtesan admitted to the order of nuns, and after ordination no disrespect was shown to her for her past career. Buddha gladly accepted the invitation of Ambapālī for meals, much to the chagrin and discomfiture of the rich Lichchavis. He accepted her mango grove and admitted her to the order without the least hesitation. Similar treatment was accorded to a few other courtesans who joined the order.

(v) The education given to female novices and nuns was not different from that imparted to their male counterparts. The female lay devotees also received their training in the principles of Buddhism. The nuns were initiated into the deepest problems of philosophy as also into the subtle mystical experiences attainable through intense meditative exercises. There are instances of *bhikṣhunīs* reciting the texts and elucidating the deep problems of the Buddhist philosophy.

Though it is claimed that the status of women was raised in the Buddhist period, it cannot but be admitted that in the monastic order the place accorded to the nuns was lower than that of the monks. Some of the restrictions imposed on nuns might have been necessary for their physical weakness, but there are a few which cannot reasonably be justified. The restrictions were as follows:

(i) A *bhikṣhunī*, though of a long standing, must bow before a *bhikṣhu* ordained much later than her. This condition was resented by Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, a queen and a mother, but she had to yield to the adamant will of the Teacher.

(ii) A *bhikṣhunī* was not allowed to spend the rainy season (*varṣhāvāsa*) in a place where there was no *bhikṣhu*.

(iii) At the termination of *varṣhāvāsa*, a *bhikṣhunī* had to confess her faults, if any, before both the *saṅghas* of monks and nuns.

(iv) In order to fix the date of the fortnightly assembly (*uposatha*) and exhortation (*ovāda*), a *bhikṣhunī* must take the necessary directions from a monk.

(v) A nun had to seek absolution of certain offences from both the *saṅghas*.

(vi) A nun seeking higher ordination must have the sanction of both the *saṅghas*.

(vii) A nun could in no circumstances admonish a monk, while any monk could admonish a nun.

(viii) A nun must never abuse a monk.

Buddha at first was averse to the admission of women into his system, but when it was pointed out to him that such refusal of ordination to women clashed with his basic principle that only an individual could help himself or herself in achieving salvation, he agreed to the formation of the order of nuns. He realized that though on principle both men and women should be placed on the same footing, there were chances of abuse by those who were in the lower stages of spiritual culture. The restrictions stated above were actually meant for the nuns under training, and could not have applied to a *bhikṣhunī* who had attained one of the four fruits of sanctification. Celibacy, austerity and strict mental discipline were the key-notes of Buddhism. Hence the existence of the orders of monks and nuns was a source of great anxiety to Buddha, and this led him to make the rules governing the life of nuns so stringent.

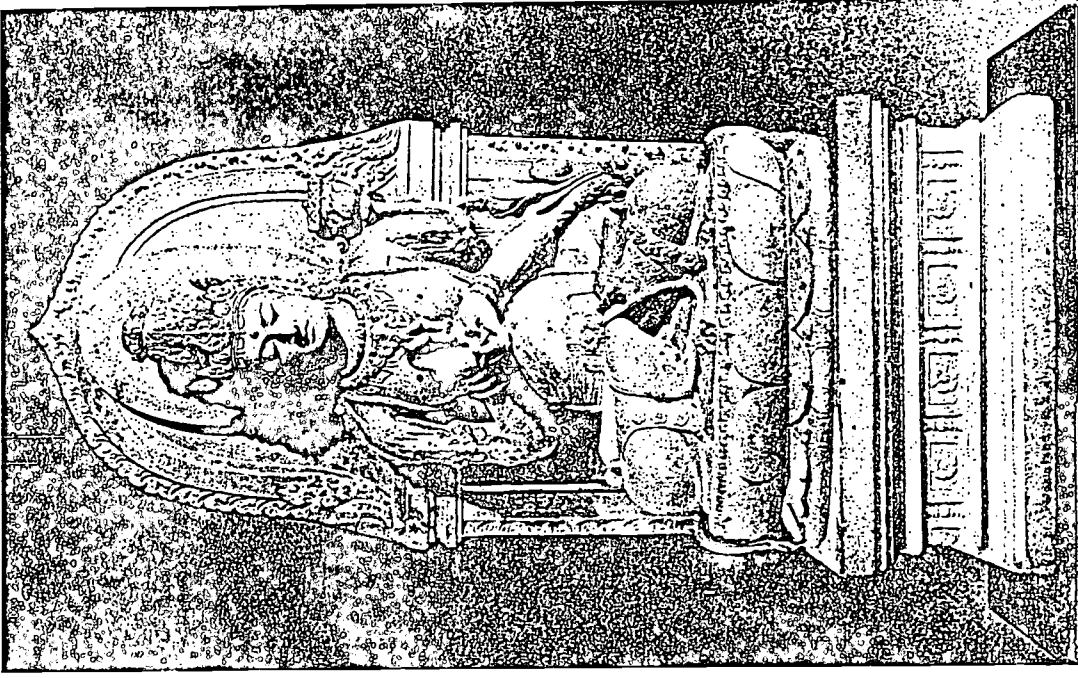
Buddhism was primarily a religion for recluses, male or female, and hence the women who became famous in Buddhist history were mostly those who rose to the highest stage of spiritual culture known as *arhat-hood*.

Sources: The only Pali text which throws any light on the spiritual achievements of women is the *Therī-gāthā*, a small text containing only five hundred and twenty-two stanzas said to have been uttered by several nuns giving expression to their joy at the attainment of the highest goal, nirvana. The commentary *Paramattha-dīpanī* on this text furnishes us with biographical accounts of the *therīs* (senior nuns), but many of them seem to have been drawn from imagination. There is another commentary *Manoratha-pūraṇī* on the *Anguttara Nikāya*, in which appears a list of the foremost *therīs* (nuns), *shramaṇerīs* (female novices), and *upāsikās* (female lay devotees). The commentary offers a biographical sketch of each of these female notables, and the sketches are similar in nature to those in the *Paramattha-dīpanī*.

We shall now relate a few typical accounts of the lives of women who attained distinction in the history of Buddhism.

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī: Mahāpajāpatī was born as a daughter of King Ashoka of the Gupta Empire, the younger sister of Mahānāyā, daughter of Devanātha. She was the youngest of seven children, when grown up, were married to King Shaddhredana. Mahānāyā died seven days after the birth of Siddhārtha, and her sister Mahāpajāpatī took charge of her child and reared him as her own. After Mahānāyā's death, Mahāpajāpatī became the chief queen. She gave birth to a son, Rāhula, and a daughter called Śāradā. She entrusted the care of her children to the king and she herself reared Rāhula and Śāradā.

After the attainment of *bodhi* (illumination), Gotama Buddha paid a visit to Kapilvastu and delivered a few discourses. After that he had been King Ashoka's lay convert, attaining the first stage of sanctification, known as *sāpanna* (placed in the stream of long nirvāṇa). Nanda, son of Mahāpajāpatī and Rāhula joined the order of monks. After the death of King Śāradā, she became a recluse and remained to the end of her worldly life. At this time a quarrel broke out between the Śākya and the Koliyans for drawing water from the river Rohiṇī. This ended in a disastrous fight between the two clans, bringing about the loss of many lives. With Mahāpajāpatī's consent, the widows of the dead Śākyan warriors fled forth from their homes with their children to become recluses. She approached Buddha, who was then residing at Vaiśālī, and sought for his permission to join the order of Buddhist recluses. On a previous occasion, a similar request of hers was turned down by the teacher; so this time Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and her five hundred companions had their hair cut, put on yellow robes, and went to Vaiśālī to obtain the permission of Buddha. Buddha at first was very unwilling to form the order of nuns, but he eventually gave the reason as follows: "I have women in my order who are not to blame for men in order to attain liberation. He at first intended she was to become Buddhist nuns on eight conditions, as stated above. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī after negotiation took to recitations exercises under the direct supervision of the chief teacher and soon attained perfection. She lived up to the age of one hundred and twenty and



IRAJĀNĀPĀRAMITĀ

Courtesy: Kern Institute, Leiden, Holland

as declared by the Teacher as the oldest and the most experienced of
dained nuns (*rattaññamini*). Buddha did not show any special
consideration to her. It is said that on one occasion he refused to
accept the excellent robe made by her from extraordinary materials
and thereby disappointed her very much, and even Ānanda's inter-
cession on her behalf was of no avail; he directed her to offer the
gift to the *saṅgha* as a whole. But Buddha paid her visits when she
was on her death-bed, and gave suitable discourses after altering the
bed that a monk must not go near the bed of a sick nun.

The greatest achievement of Mahāpajāpatī was to secure
Buddha's consent for the formation of the order of nuns in the
Buddhist system, and it was at her instance that several rules were
enacted for the disciplinary guidance of nuns, which were known as
bhikkhūnī-prātimokṣha-sūtra. The *Therī-gāthā* attributes to her a
gāthā, in which she offered her respects to Buddha saying that
she had saved many a being from worldly sufferings, and that because
of her she herself had been able to put an end to her thirst, the
source of all miseries. She practised the eightfold path and realized
that her present body was the last one of innumerable such she had
previously had as mother, son, father, brother, grandmother, etc.
She also realized that she would have no more rebirth, since she was
energetic and had put in all her efforts to end her worldly existence.
It was really for the benefit of many that Mahāmāyā had given birth
to the child Gautama, who had shown the path to countless beings
and to how to end their sufferings—in these words she offered her
salutations to the great Teacher.

Kṣhemā: Kṣhemā was born at Sāgala in the royal family of
the Mādrās. When grown up, she had an exquisite appearance with
a complexion like molten gold. In course of time she was married
to King Bimbisāra and lived at Rājagriha as the chief queen. At
that time the Teacher resided at Veluvana, the royal garden, given
in charity by the king to the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Queen Kṣhemā came to
know that Buddha condemned infatuation with one's own personal
beauty, and so she preferred to remain away from him and thus
avoid being criticized for her love for beautiful appearance. The
king deliberated within himself that as he was the chief lay supporter
of Buddha, it was not proper that his chief queen should not approach

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the Teacher to listen to his discourses. So he instructed his bards to sing about the charms of the Veluvana within the hearing of the queen, so that her curiosity might be roused for the beauties of the garden, and ultimately she would be taken there. The plan had its desired effect. The queen expressed her desire to see the garden and sought the permission of the king, who granted it with the request that she should pay homage to the Teacher while visiting the garden. She, however, did not give any reply, but proceeded in her royal chariot to the garden. The king instructed the men accompanying the queen to persuade her to pay her respects to Buddha, but in case they failed to do so, they were directed to take her in some way or other to Buddha's presence. The queen, after amusing herself in the garden for the whole day, wanted to return to the palace without seeing the Teacher. Much against her wish, the men escorted her to Buddha, who in the meantime magically created a woman of exquisite beauty and made her fan him with a palm leaf. The queen was taken aback at the beauty of this woman, felt that she was not worthy of being even her maidservant and regretted her vanity. She stood there, amazed observing the charms of the woman, when the Teacher changed her into a middle-aged one, then into an old woman and ultimately made her fall down on the ground with the fan in her hand. On account of her accumulated merits in previous lives, Queen Kṣhemā began to ponder over the fact that every body must pass through these stages, when she heard the Teacher uttering the verse: "Those who are given to attachment fall into the stream (of repeated existences), like the spider (caught) in the net created by itself. One who has no attachment gets rid of his sufferings and goes out by tearing asunder (the net)"—(*Dhammapada*, 347).

On listening to this utterance, the queen obtained *arhatood* (perfection) then and there, but as one cannot remain an *arhat* as a householder, she decided to take ordination at once. On her return to the palace, the king inquired if she had seen the Teacher. In reply she said that what the king had seen of the Teacher was negligible; it was the real Teacher that she had visualized. She then asked for his permission to become a *bhikṣhunī*, which the king gave with his whole heart and sent her to the nunnery in a golden palanquin. In course of time she became very learned in the

śāstras, and so Buddha gave her a very high place among the vastly learned *therīs*.

In the stanzas attributed to her in the *Therī-gāthā*, Kṣhemā relates that a young man of excellent appearance wanted to entice her with worldly enjoyment, but she spurned his proposal saying that what were pleasures to him pierced her like a sharp dart. She was sick of her physical body, a storehouse of diseases having only a fleeting existence. She had acquired perfection in knowledge and had crushed all her desires for worldly matters. She had reached the goal by following the instructions of the Enlightened One, and not by worshipping the stars and kindling sacrificial fires in the forest. On one occasion, when she was staying in a hermitage near Shrāvastī, King Prasenajit was looking for a teacher with whom he could have some philosophical discussions. He was apprised of the presence of Bhikṣhunī Kṣhemā, as one vastly learned and proficient in the exposition of abstruse doctrines, in the hermitage of Torāṇa-taṭhu. The king approached her respectfully and put the question whether the perfect Tathāgata existed after death or not. Bhikṣhunī Kṣhemā said that a question like this should be left aside, since it was as absurd as attempting to count the drops of water in an ocean. She explained to the king that the Tathāgata after death, could not be located by material ingredients (*rūpa*) or feeling (*vedanā*) or constituents which composed a being; hence the question of his location after death could not arise. She added that such questions had been treated by the Teacher as indeterminable. This exposition satisfied the king, who was highly impressed by her erudition.

Pañcāhārā: She was born in the family of a banker of Shrāvastī. When grown up, she fell in love with an employee of her father and kept this love affair secret. Her father, however, selected a young man of equal family status and proposed her marriage with him. To avert this unwelcome situation, the girl one night eloped with her lover, went to a village near by and lived there. At the time of the birth of their first child, she wanted to return to her father's house, but she was dissuaded by her husband. After some time, when she was going to have her second child, she determined to go back to her father, overriding the will of her husband. On the way, however, she gave birth to the child, and her husband hurried to

the near-by jungle for collecting some straw and reed to make shelter for the mother and child. To the misfortune of all, the young man was bitten by a snake when he was collecting the straw and died then and there. The girl waited and waited and at last in despair went in search of him and found him dead. She was dumbfounded at the sight and returned to her crying children. Grief-stricken as she was, she started for her father's place with her two children, one in her arms and the other holding her fingers. On her way, there was an overflowing stream which she had to ford, and she was at a loss how to do it with her two children. She planned to ford the stream with one child at a time. Leaving the older child on the bank, she crossed the stream with the baby. She placed the baby on a stone, covered it with grass and was returning to fetch the other child. When she was in mid-stream a hawk swooped on the baby. To drive it away she waved her hands, but the older child thought that he was being called by his mother and so he got down into the stream and was carried away by the current. Thus she lost her husband and both the children, and on reaching her destination she learnt that her parents and brother also had died the previous night by the crashing of the house and were being buried on the same pyre. At this she lost her nerves and became insane.

One day she was noticed by Buddha when he was delivering a discourse to an assembly. She was brought to her senses by the Teacher by the exercise of his extraordinary powers. She then properly covered her body, approached Buddha and related to him her endless sufferings. He consoled her saying that she had shed tears on the death of her dear ones in countless previous existences also, and that if those tears could be collected, they would make four seas. He then told her that no son or daughter or other relative could render any help to a person after death; no blood relation would come to one's aid in mitigating one's suffering. Realizing this hard fact, one should try to become wise by following the path chalked out by the Buddha. Pañchārā, after listening to these words, became a *srotā-āpanna* (placed in the stream leading to nirvana) and expressed her desire to join the order of nuns. She was duly ordained and made a *bhikkhūnī*.

One day, after washing her feet, she observed that the water flowed to a certain extent and then disappeared. She poured water

again and observed its course till its disappearance. She realized therefrom how life was transitory. She then listened to a discourse in which Buddha explained that all beings were subject to death, and therefore it should be the aim of every being to see that the five constituents did not combine to form another perishable body for him. She meditated over these words of Buddha and soon attained perfection, the *arhathood*. She expressed her joy in these words: A man ploughs his field, sows seed therein and thus earns wealth to maintain his wife and sons; why then should she not attain nirvana by observing the moral precepts and following the teachings of Buddha? She declared that she had obtained control over her thoughts by meditating on the course of water poured on the ground. One night she took a lamp, seated herself on the bed and with the help of a needle smothered the burning wick within the oil. By observing this her mind became completely emancipated.

Pañchārā became proficient in the disciplinary rules (*vinaya*) and was praised by Buddha as the foremost of the female *vinaya*-reciters. Her name Pañchārā—*pāṇi* (proficient) in *āchāra* (duties)—was very likely given for her strict adherence to the *vinaya* rules. She trained thirty nuns and guided them in the way in which she had attained perfection. It is said that all the thirty nuns obtained higher powers and destroyed their ignorance.

Bhaddā Kuṇḍalakeshā: Bhaddā or Subhaddā, was born at Rājagriha in the family of a very rich banker. On the day of her birth a son was born to the priest of the realm. He was named Sattuka. From his very childhood Sattuka developed a strong tendency for stealing, and when quite young, he used to steal whatever articles he could lay his hands on. He could not be corrected by his parents in spite of their best efforts. At last, when he was grown up, they turned him out of their house. From that day onward, with the help of a hook and a rope he stealthily climbed into the upper storeys of houses and stole as much property as he could manage. He made such attempts on almost every house in the town. The matter drew the attention of the king, who ordered his town guard to arrest him at any cost under the threat of punishment. The town guard alerted his subordinates and was able to arrest Sattuka along with the stolen articles. The thief was placed

before the king, who sentenced him to death by a fall from the appointed cliff. He was severely beaten and was being taken to the cliff, when he was seen by the banker's daughter Subhaddā. Strangely enough, Subhaddā at first sight fell in love with Sattuka, and prevailed upon her parents to save his life and get her married to him. She being his only daughter, the father bribed the town guard, who released Sattuka secretly and killed another person in his place to satisfy the king.

After this incident, Subhaddā did not think it proper to return home; she made up her mind to become a recluse and practise rigorous asceticism. She joined the order of Nirgranthas by taking ordination in proper form. Her hairs were removed by the petiole of a palm leaf, but hairs again came out in curly heaps, for which she was given the appellation of *Kuṇḍala-keshā* (curly-haired). She studied there various subjects, particularly dialectics. She then visited different places where renowned teachers lived, and learnt from them the art of disputation along with other sciences. She became a great disputant and found none who could join issue with her. Wherever she went, she would make a sand heap, fix on it a *jambu* branch, and announce to the people residing near that any one who dared to enter into disputation with her was invited to trample upon the *jambu* branch. For seven days she would wait and then, if none came forward, she would depart from the place with the branch. In this way she reached *Shrāvastī*, where Buddha was residing at the time. As usual, she put up the sand heap with the *jambu* branch and waited there for disputation. The sand heap was noticed by Buddha's chief disciple *Sāriputta*, who, on learning the object of it from the boys standing near by, on learning When Subhaddā learnt that she had been challenged by *Sāriputta*, she collected her friends and admirers and with a large following proceeded to debate with *Sāriputta*, who was then taking rest after meals. *Sāriputta* gave her the option to put questions, which she did, and all of them were answered by him very quickly. When her questions were exhausted, *Sāriputta* put to her only one question, which she failed to answer. She then acknowledged him as her 'master'. She was taken to Buddha, who delivered to her a suitable discourse, which opened her eyes, and she shortly attained perfection.

Sattuka was brought to the banker's house and was fed and clothed most luxuriously. He was taken to Subhaddā, who adorned herself with all her precious ornaments and received him with due honour. Sattuka, however, set his thoughts upon those ornaments and began to devise a plan to steal them. After a few days, when Subhaddā was seated near him comfortably, Sattuka told her that he had something very secret to disclose to her. This confidence of Sattuka pleased Subhaddā very much, and she readily agreed to carry out his wishes. Sattuka then told her that he had taken a vow at the time of his death sentence that if by any means his life was saved, he would make offerings to the presiding deity of the death-cliff, and this worship he wanted to offer in her company. Subhaddā made all the necessary preparations for making the offerings. She put on her best ornaments, and both of them proceeded in a vehicle to the cliff. Sattuka left the men at the foot of the hill and asked Subhaddā alone to carry the offerings. When thereupon found out his real intention. When on the top of the hill, Sattuka asked Subhaddā to put her ornaments on a piece of cloth and make a bundle. When she protested, he disclosed his real intention. At this Subhaddā said that not only the ornaments belonged to him but her person also, and she further said that she was one with him and had no interest apart from him. Before taking off the ornaments, she said she would once embrace him from the front and then from the back. This was agreed to by Sattuka. After embracing him from the front, Subhaddā proceeded to embrace him from the back, when she pushed him down the cliff and sent him to his destiny. The gods thereupon uttered some verses saying that men are not necessarily wise in all circumstances; there are also women who are wise and intelligent.

She then expressed her deep gratitude to Buddha in these words: She with her hair plucked out used to wander about wearing one piece of cloth and covering her body with dust. She discarded what was right and practised what was wrong. In the afternoon she met Buddha on *Gṛidhrakūṭa* Mount, and there saluted him with bent knees. Buddha gave her the ordination with two words, "Come, lady." For fifty years she roamed about in *Aṅga*, *Magadha*, *Vajji*, *Kāśhī* and *Kosala* living on alms. She would not consider herself in

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obt to the givers of alms, since she knew that great merit was assured to them who had been charitable to her.

Ambapālī (Amrapālī): She was found in the mango garden of the Śākya noble Mahānāma, a rich citizen of Vaishālī. One day when Mahānāma was amusing himself along with the members of his family in his pleasure garden, a newly-born babe was found there by his gardener. Mahānāma, who was childless, welcomed the baby and handed her over to his wife, who reared her amid pomp and luxury as her own daughter. When the baby grew up, she became exquisitely beautiful, and her hand was coveted by the sons of rich people. Mahānāma was placed in a dilemma in selecting a suitable bridegroom for his adopted daughter, for he knew he would be incurring the displeasure of those whom he would refuse; then again, he was bound by custom to marry his daughter to a young man of the clan. He therefore decided to call a meeting of the Assembly of the Lichchhavis and place the proposal of his daughter's marriage before it. The members expressed their desire to have a look at the girl, so Mahānāma brought her to the Assembly. The members were struck with amazement at her beauty and decided unanimously that she should be enjoyed by all (*gana-bhogyā*). This decision was a great shock to the father, who could not think of his daughter becoming a courtesan. The decision of the Assembly, however, could not be disobeyed, and so he felt nonplussed. The daughter came to his rescue and agreed to abide by the decision, much against his will. She asked for five conditions to be fulfilled by the Assembly. These were as follows: (i) she should be provided with a house in the best locality of the city; (ii) only one person would be entitled to enter into her premises at a time; (iii) her fee would be 500 *kāṣhāpaṇas*; (iv) her house could be inspected on the seventh day in case of a general search for an enemy or a culprit; and (v) there should be no watch over persons coming in or going out of her house. The Assembly accepted all the conditions.

Ambapālī then selected a house in the best locality. She had the walls of her house painted by an artist with the portraits of kings, ministers, nobles, rich bankers and traders. While scanning the portraits, she became enamoured of the portrait of King Bimbisāra and became very anxious to meet him. King Bimbisāra also got the

information that Ambapālī had a nymphlike appearance, and became very curious about her. At that time the political relation between the Lichchhavis and the Magadhan king was much strained, and so King Bimbisāra was warned that he should not take the risk of entering into his enemy's territory. He, however, did not listen to any counsel and proceeded with his general Gopa to the house of Ambapālī in Vaishālī. It is said that the Lichchhavis came to know of the presence of an enemy in their territory and started a search of all the houses, but they were unable to search the house of Ambapālī without a notice of seven days. King Bimbisāra could therefore stay safely in her house for six days, and Ambapālī conceived during that time. The king thereupon gave her a finger-ring tied in a thin piece of cloth as a royal token in case she needed any help for the child. After nine months Ambapālī gave birth to a son. The child grew up into a sturdy boy, but he was often derided by his playmates as being an illegitimate child and the son of a maidservant. His position became intolerable, and so he was sent to King Bimbisāra, who recognized him as one of his sons. In course of time he became a Buddhist monk known as Vimala Kondañña.

Ambapālī plied her trade and amassed huge wealth. She became a lay devotee of Buddha and hurried to pay her respects to him when he reached Koṭigāma near Vaishālī in his last journey. She listened to the discourse delivered by the Teacher for her benefit, and invited him along with his disciples to her house for the forenoon meal. The acceptance of her invitation by Buddha disappointed the Lichchhavis, who came in a body to invite him. On the following day Ambapālī served food to Buddha and his party to her entire satisfaction, and at the end of it offered her mango garden with its buildings to the *bhikkṣhu saṅgha*. This gift was also accepted by the Teacher.

Some time after this, one day she listened to a discourse delivered by her son Vimala, and made up her mind to become a *bhikkṣhunī*. Not long after her ordination she obtained insight into the truth. Observing the changes that came upon her once beautiful physique at the advanced age, she realized the impermanence of worldly existence and attained *arhat*hood. She gave expression to her mind in verses.

3. LAY DEVOTEES

Isidāsī: Isidāsī was born in the family of a pious rich banker of Ujjayinī. She was the only child of her father and was brought up with great care. When she came of age, she was married to the son of a very respectable banker of Sāketa, and got at the time of her marriage many valuable presents from her husband's family. As instructed by her parents, she saluted her father-in-law and mother-in-law every morning and evening. She was all attention to the sisters of her husband. She would take care of whatever food and drinks there were in the house, and distribute them to the members of the family according to their needs. She would attend her husband punctiliously, cook for him and serve him in every way; but in spite of all her efforts she could not please him. She incurred his displeasure so much that he threatened to leave the house if he was to live with her under the same roof. His parents reasoned with him and pleaded for the poor wife, whom they found hard-working and very good in nature, but they failed to change his mind. They inquired of Isidāsī if she knew the reasons for such displeasure of their son, but she also pleaded ignorance of any fault on her part. At last she had to leave her husband's home and return to her own parents at Ujjayinī. Her father got her married for the second time with another young man not so rich as her former husband. This time also she rendered service to her husband and the members of his family to the best of her ability. But she could not satisfy them, and at last had to leave that house also and return to her parents.

At such repeated misfortune of his daughter, her father persuaded a young recluse of good nature to give up his yellow dress and begging bowl, and marry his daughter. After this marriage they lived as husband and wife for barely fifteen days when her husband felt disgusted with the worldly life and wanted to revert to his life as a recluse. Her father became greatly disappointed and advised her to lead a religious life at home. At this time she came across Bhikṣuṇī Jinadattā, who paid a visit to her house, and prayed to her for admission into the order of nuns. In spite of her parents' protest she retired, and was ordained by Jinadattā as a nun. Soon after ordination she attained the highest knowledge and came to know her past existences, in which she had committed the sin of adultery. It was for this that she suffered so much in this life.

Sāmāvātī: She was born as the daughter of a banker (*setthi* or *shreshthīn*) of the town Bhaddiya. Some time after her birth a famine broke out in the country; so her father with great difficulty took her and her mother to Kaushāmbī, where lived his old friend Ghoshaka Setthi. They found shelter in a cottage. At that time Ghoshaka Setthi opened a house of charity for giving food to the poor and needy. The Setthi of Bhaddiya felt ashamed to go to his friend in the miserable condition he was in, and sent his daughter Sāmāvātī to bring their food from the charity house. Sāmāvātī, being born in a respectable family, avoided the rush of the poor clamouring for food and stood on one side quietly and bashfully. Her demeanour drew the kindly attention of the officer in charge of the charity house. On the first day she took food for three persons, on the second day she asked for two persons, while on the third day she asked for only one. The Superintendent derided her saying that she had now realized the capacity of her stomach and was asking for food for one person and not for two or three. At this suspicion of the Superintendent she disclosed to him the sad death of her father and on the following day of her mother. On inquiry she divulged the particulars of her parents to the Superintendent, who thereupon adopted her as his daughter.

One day she suggested to the Superintendent the ways and means for bringing order into the chaotic conditions created at the time of the distribution of food. She said that an area should be enclosed by a fence, within which the food was to be kept. There should be two passages, one for incoming and the other for outgoing seekers of food. This suggestion of Sāmāvātī was readily accepted by the Superintendent, and the distribution of food became orderly and noiseless. This drew the attention of Ghoshaka Setthi, who thereupon came to know the particulars of Sāmāvātī. He had her brought to his house and gave her a daughter's place with due honour and suitable attendants.

One day King Udayana of Kaushāmbī met her while she was going to a river for bath, and was charmed by her extraordinary beauty. He asked for her hand in marriage, but Ghoshaka declined his offer. At this the king got angry, and turned him out of his house

and sealed it with his royal seal. When Sāmāvati came to know this plight of his foster-father, she advised him to agree to the king's proposal, provided he allowed her to take with her the five hundred girls who used to attend on her. The king accepted the proposal and made Sāmāvati his queen.

Some time after this, King Udayana married another equally beautiful girl called Chūlamāgandīya, whose parents once tried to get her married to Buddha, who turned down the proposal with a sharp rebuff. At this refusal she bore a bitter grudge against a compassionate Teacher.

In the course of his peregrinations Buddha once came to Kaushāmbī and was received with great honour by Ghoshaka Sethi, who offered his garden called Ghoshitārāma for his residence along with his disciples. Chūlamāgandīya, who was then a queen of the place, wanted to avail herself of this opportunity to take revenge for the insult flung upon her by Buddha by spurning to accept her hand in marriage. She engaged two wicked ruffians to hurl abuses on the Teacher, but the latter remained untouched by such abuses, on the his sojourn at Kaushāmbī and delivered his discourses, continued

An attendant of Queen Sāmāvati, called Khujjuttarā, heard of the fame of Buddha in the house of the garland-maker from whom she used to purchase garlands for the queen every day. She listened to the discourses of Buddha and remembered them well. One day, on Sāmāvati's insistence, she reproduced in her presence those discourses, which made a strong impression on her mind and roused her faith in Buddha, his *dharma* and *saṅgha*. She became anxious to have a look at the Teacher, but this she was unable to do, since King Udayana had no faith in Buddha. The queen therefore waited for a chance to see Buddha, when he would be passing by the palace, through the windows of her apartments. She used to wait at the window holes to catch a glimpse of the Teacher. This was noticed by the other queen Chūlamāgandīya, who wanted to exploit this regard of Sāmāvati for Buddha as an expedient for bringing her into disrepute in the eyes of the king. Failing to rouse the anger of the king by the information of Sāmāvati's regard for Buddha, she took to many other artifices and at last was able to enrage the king so much that he took up a bow and poisoned arrows to shoot Sāmāvati and her attendants. They, however, remained unperturbed at this

attitude of the king, and exercised their *maitrī* (goodwill) feeling towards him in such a way that he could not even release the bow and arrows from his hands. He became dumbfounded at this discomfiture of his and did not know what to do. Then at Sāmāvati's intercession, he got rid of the bow and arrows, and knelt down asking for her pardon, which, of course, was readily vouchsafed. Sāmāvati then secured the permission of the king to offer gifts to Buddha and his disciples. She also wished that the king should invite a monk to the palace daily to deliver discourses, and this the king complied with by requesting Ānanda to do so. For her perfection in the practice of goodwill, she was complimented by Buddha as the foremost of the female lay devotees who perfected themselves in the exercise of goodwill to others.

Khujjuttarā: Khujjuttarā was chief of the vastly learned female lay devotees (*upāsikās*). She was born as the daughter of a nurse in the house of the banker Ghoshaka of Kaushāmbī. As she was hunchbacked at her very birth, she was named Khujjuttarā from *Kubjā* Uttarā the hunchbacked Uttarā. She became one of the attendants of Queen Sāmāvati, who used to give her a little sum every day for purchasing garlands. The blessed Buddha once reached Kaushāmbī and stopped at the Ghoshitārāma built for and dedicated to him by Ghoshaka Sethi. One day the Teacher along with his disciples paid a visit to the house of the chief garland-maker. At that time Khujjuttarā went there for garlands and was told that all the garlands would be given to the Teacher and his disciples, and so there were none to spare for her queen. The garland-maker asked her to help him in sending food to the Teacher and his disciples, to which she gladly agreed. On listening to the discourse delivered by the Teacher after taking his food, she not only committed to memory every word of it but also attained the first stage of sanctification, *śrota-āpatti*. She became truth-conscious and would not touch others' money. Henceforward she gave up the habit of stealing half of the little money given to her by Queen Sāmāvati for purchasing garlands. As a consequence of this, she took a double quantity of garlands for the queen, who noticed this sudden change and inquired of her the reason for it. She then disclosed to the queen that she had been stealing half the amount given to her, and that the teachings

uddha had brought about the change in her habits. Learning the greatness of Buddha and realizing the excellence of his teaching, the queen pardoned Khujjuttarā, relieved her of her duties as a maidservant and entrusted her with the duty of listening to the discourses of Buddha and repeating them to her for enlightenment. Khujjuttarā could remember whatever she heard once, and so she agreed to comply with her wishes. At the time of repeating the discourses it was arranged that she would occupy a high seat like a teacher, and the queen was to sit on a low seat as a listener. Every day she would go to Buddha, listen to his discourses and repeat the same to the queen. The discourses so delivered became a collection, which has come down to us as the Pali text *Itivuttaka*. In due course she became vastly learned, and so she was complimented by the Teacher as the foremost of the vastly learned female lay devotees.

Vishākhā: She was born as a daughter of Sumanādevī and Dhanañjaya, son of Meṇḍaka, the fabulously rich banker of the city of Bhaddiya in the province of Aṅga. Meṇḍaka was very pious, and so was practically his whole family. In the dominion of King Bimbisāra there were five bankers of untold wealth, and Meṇḍaka was one of them. King Bimbisāra was requested by King Prasenajit of Kosala to persuade one of the five rich bankers of his kingdom to come over and settle down in Kosala. To oblige his royal friend he suggested to Meṇḍaka to send his son Dhanañjaya to Kosala. King Prasenajit selected Sāketa, a place about seven *yojanas* (about fifty-six miles) distant from Shrāvastī, as suitable for his residence.

Meṇḍaka was a great devotee of Buddha, and so when the latter once reached Bhaddiyanagara in the course of his peregrinations, he was warmly received by Meṇḍaka, who also asked his grand-daughter Vishākhā to pay her respects to the Teacher with her five hundred companions. Vishākhā felt very happy to do this and proceeded in a vehicle as far as it was proper and then went on foot to meet the Teacher. She listened to his discourse and became then and there a *strotā-āpanna*, the first stage of sanctification in Buddhist doctrines.

At Shrāvastī there lived a banker called Migāra, who had a grown up son called Puṇṇavaddhana. He was looking for a bride for his son and deputed his men to find out a suitable girl. In the course of their search for such a girl they met Vishākhā and were

struck by her beauty and demeanour. When the men were observing her features from a distance, it began to rain, and her friends ran hither and thither looking for a covered place. Vishākhā, however, without minding her clothes that were being drenched, walked slowly towards a shelter. Her quiet and steady movement roused the curiosity of the watchers, who wanted to know the reason of her slow gait and at the same time to find out what her voice was like; so they entered into a conversation with her. They asked why she was not walking fast like her companions, though her clothes were getting wet. She replied that she had ample clothes in her house so she did not mind her clothes being drenched; and she walked slowly because she did not like to take the risk of injuring any of her limbs, inasmuch as a grown-up unmarried girl with a broken limb was like a broken water-pot, to be thrown away. The men were very much impressed by her talk and threw the garland over her head as a sign of selection as a bride. She felt shy, since she knew that she was going to be married soon; so she was screened off by her friends and attendants. The men followed her, met her father Dhanañjaya and proposed to him the marriage of his daughter with Puṇṇavaddhana, the son of Migāra. Dhanañjaya said that though the wealth of the bridegroom's father did not bear any comparison with his, he would accept the proposal, since they were of the same social status.

When the news of Dhanañjaya's acceptance of the proposal was communicated to Migāra, he was very happy that his daughter-in-law would be coming from a very rich family. He informed King Prasenajit of the proposal and sought his permission to go to Sāketa for performing the ceremony. The king expressed his willingness to grace the occasion by his presence and proceeded to Sāketa along with Migāra and his people. Dhanañjaya made lavish preparations to receive the king and his retinue as also Migāra, his relatives and friends, so much so that his guests were all taken aback. The king thought that it would be difficult for Dhanañjaya to act as their host in such a lavish manner for a long time, and so he inquired of him when he would be prepared to send his daughter to her father-in-law's place. Dhanañjaya replied that as the rainy season had already set in, he would entreat his guests to remain there for four months and receive the same hospitality. Three months passed

available in the house for the purpose of making fire. The four months at last elapsed, and the day arrived for the departure of the bride.

On the day previous to her departure, her father gave her instructions about avoiding gossip, being careful about lending helping poor relatives, taking particular care of her parents-in-law and husband and giving alms to the recluses who might come to the house. Along with these instructions Dhanañjaya deputed eight relatives to watch the actions of his daughter and correct her if there should be any lapses in her conduct.

Vishākhā was adorned with creeper-like ornaments worth a huge sum. She was also given countless other articles as dowry. After giving a befitting farewell party to the king and his retinue and the bridegroom's family, Dhanañjaya sent her daughter to her father-in-law's house.

Vishākhā preferred to enter into the city of Shrāvastī in an open carriage, so that the people of the city might have a good look at her. The people of Shrāvastī were amazed at the beauty and grandeur of the bride, as also at the large amount of dowry given by her father. Vishākhā endeared herself to the people of Shrāvastī by distributing among them the presents given to her by her father.

In order to celebrate the occasion of his son's marriage, Migāra, the bridegroom's father, invited the monks belonging to the Nirgrantha faith, which was professed by him, to his house. He then sent for Vishākhā to pay them her respects. In response to his call, Vishākhā came quickly, but became disappointed to see the monks naked. She turned back in disgust. At this the monks became angry and reprimanded their host for bringing an inauspicious daughter-in-law, who had faith in Gautama Buddha, and advised him to turn her out of the house. Migāra regretted his inability to act according to their advice, and said that she came of a very rich family and could not be so easily asked to leave the house. He supplicated them to excuse her, since she was yet very young and not so wise.

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requested the monk to move to the next house, saying that her father-in-law was then eating "stale" food. On hearing this Migāra got enraged, because he had been served with "stale" food by his daughter-in-law, and asked her to remove the food at once and at the same time to leave his house. Vishākhā protested strongly saying that she was not a water-carrying maid brought from a river bank, but was the daughter of good parents who were alive, so she could not be turned out of the house in that manner. Even if she committed any mistake, there were the eight relatives sent by her father for correcting her omissions and commissions. Migāra informed her relatives of the "stale" food served by Vishākhā. On inquiry she explained that by calling the food "stale" she meant that her father-in-law was enjoying his food as a result of his past meritorious acts, and he was not accumulating fresh merits by giving alms to monks.

One night Vishākhā went out of her apartment with her maid, servants carrying lamps to help the delivery of a mare. Unaware of this fact, her father-in-law charged her with the guilt of going out at night at her sweet will. He placed this along with some other complaints before the eight relatives, who then convinced him of the groundlessness of his apprehensions. He realized his mistakes and expressed regret for them. He also requested Vishākhā not to mind his misapprehensions. Vishākhā was very much pleased at the admission of mistakes by her father-in-law, and took this opportunity to obtain his permission to invite Buddha and his disciples to the house and offer them food whenever she wished. The permission was granted, though grudgingly. But Migāra gradually became a devotee of Buddha and gave up his former faith. In his illness, Vishākhā looked after him with great care, for which he became such an admirer of her that he looked upon her as his mother, and so Vishākhā came to be known as Migāra-mātā.

Vishākhā was a frequent visitor to the places where Buddha delivered his discourses. When visiting these places she preferred to go without any ornaments on her body. One day she offered all her ornaments to Buddha, but as gold could not be accepted by the monks, she sold them out and collected nine crores of *kārṣhāpanas*. With

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Date : March 18, 1997
To : ERIC/ Ms. Rosalie Gendimenico, Program Officer, USED *
From : O.P. Bhardwaj, Director (Admin. & Finance), USEFI 
Subject : 1996 Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program: India Seminar

As per terms and conditions set forth in the award for the subject seminar, each participants is required to complete the curriculum project which is relevant to his/her school's/college's use on an individual or small group basis. As required, we are submitting herewith the following curriculum projects submitted by participants of 1996 Indian seminar:

Patricia Barry ✓
Anne Holland
Melissa Kantor
Diana L. Raham
Julia Rockett
Kimberly Roen
Robert G. Shamy
Robin Weaver
Ronald Wolfson

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