THE MYTHS AND GODS OF INDIA

ALAIN DANIÉLOU

The Classic Work on Hindu Polytheism from the Princeton Bollingen Series
The Nature of the Ultimate

The Origin of Existence

"In the beginning, my dear, this world was just nondual Being (sat). To be sure, some people say that in the beginning this world was just nondual non-Being (a-sat), and that Being arose from non-Being. But how could that be? How could Being be produced from non-Being? In the beginning this world must have been pure Being, one and without a second." (Chandogya Upanisad 6.2.1–2. [6])

Thus did the sage Āruṇi state the question of the ultimate origin of gods, men, and the cosmos.

The methods of yoga, which the Aryans had probably learned from earlier inhabitants of India, had made them conscious, through introspection, of an ultimate void within themselves, of a stage beyond thought and dream, beyond perception, beyond knowledge, motionless, indescribable, unbounded by space and time. Was this the causal principle? Was there a motionless substratum for matter, one for time, as there seemed to be one for thought? Were these different substrata the forms of a still more subtle one? The philosophers of the Upaniṣads pondered over these problems.

The Perceptible Continua: Space, Time, and Thought

When attempting to reach the root of any aspect of the manifest world we are led to imagine that there must exist beyond its form, beyond its appearance, some sort of causal state, some undifferentiated continuum, of which that particularized form would be an apparent development.

The first of the continua underlying all perceptible forms appears to be space. Absolute empty space is defined by Indian philosophers as a limitless,
The Nature of the Ultimate

undifferentiated, indivisible continuum in which are built the imaginary divisions of relative space. The apparent localization of heavenly bodies and their movements creates the illusion of a division of space. But, according to the traditional example: “Space within a pitcher is not really separated from the space outside. It was not distinct before the pitcher was made; it will not be distinct once the pitcher is broken and is not therefore really distinct while the pitcher exists.”¹ All the divisions of space into atoms and heavenly spheres are mere appearances. The space within the atom can be as immense as that within a solar system, and there can be no limit to the number of possible worlds contained in another.

Similarly time was called an “indivisible rod” (aḥaṅga-dasyayamāna),² or continuum. This absolute time is an ever-present eternity which seems inseparable from space. Relative time results from the apparent division of space by the rhythm of heavenly bodies.

The third perceptible continuum is thought. Everything that exists appears with a form, within a co-ordinated system. It seems to be the realization of a plan, the materialization of an organized dream. Hence the visible universe was conceived as the form of the thought of its creator. Whenever we go to the root of anything we find no longer a substance but a mere form, a concept, whose nature can be identified with that of thought.

The Three Modes of Being: the Substrata of Space, Time, and Consciousness

If we envisage the cosmos not merely as an unconscious mechanism but as a creative process, as the manifestation of a conscious power, we are led to search for an active or conscious substratum for each of the perceptible continua.

The substratum of space is existence (sat), the substratum of time is experience or enjoyment (ānanda), the substratum of thought is consciousness (citta).

Before there can be location, place, dimension, there must be something to locate, some sort of existence. There can be no location of the nonexistent. Hence existence must pre-exist space.

Time exists only in relation to perception. A nonperceived time can have no extension, cannot be the measure of anything. The principle of perception

¹ Cited in Karṇapāla’s “Āhamartha aur śīmā,” Siddhānta, II, 1941–42. I could not trace the original.
² This term is used by Yogarājaṇandā in his “Kāla tattva,” Śiva-rātri, but must come from an ancient work on Śāhīhāya.
must therefore pre-exist time. That first undifferentiated potential perception, that first principle of experience, is said to correspond to pure, absolute enjoyment, the innermost nature of existence.

"Know the Principle (brahman) to be enjoyment. From enjoyment are all beings born; once born they are sustained by enjoyment and leave this world to return into enjoyment." (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.6. [7])

"There is no experience, no enjoyment, without being, and no being without experience (enjoyment). When we speak of enjoyment (ānanda) as ‘self-illumined existence’ (svaprakāśa-sattā), enjoyment is shown as something other than sensation, and by saying that existence is the form of enjoyment, existence is freed from the notion of inertia.” (Karapātri, "Liṅgopāsanā-rahasya," Siddhānta, II, 1941–42, 158.)

The lord-of-sleep (Śiva), who is the principle of disintegration (tamas), the source of an ever-expanding (disintegrating) universe, is the principle of time, the destroyer, and at the same time the embodiment of experience, of enjoyment, whose symbol is the fount of life, the source of pleasure, the phallus (liṅga). Thus enjoyment that is life and time that is death are shown as the two aspects of one entity. The source of life and immortality (a-mṛta) is the same as that of death (mṛta), a symbol that expresses itself in all traditions as the oneness of love and death (a-mor and mor-tis).

Enjoyment being the form of experience, the enjoyment continuum, basis of experience, is also known as “feeling” (rasa) or “emotion.” “He [the Total Being] verily is but feeling.” (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7.) The experience of pure, unbounded enjoyment as the innermost nature of things implies the realization of absolute time, which is ever-present eternity. The being who reaches that stage is freed from the bonds of action.

"He who knows the enjoyment of the Immensity does not know fear from any quarter. He is not tormented by the thought ‘Why did not I act rightly? why did I sin?’ He who knows that [right and wrong are relative things] reaches the Soul.” (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.9. [8])

The substratum of thought is consciousness. Thought can exist only in a conscious mind. There can be no thought independent of a thinker, of someone conscious of the existence of thought. Consciousness is therefore the fundamental substratum of thought and is linked with the notion of individual existence, of an individual monad, or self, or being.

The formless Immensity that appears to be the innermost nature of things can be grasped as the void, the silence, the absolute darkness, which lies beyond

3 Rasā vai sāḥ.
mind, beyond intellect, and can be realized as the stratum of man’s own
nature, as his own Self, his own Soul (Ātman).

"Vast, resplendent, of unthinkable form, it shines forth more subtly than
what is subllest. Farther than the far, it is here at hand, hidden in the hearts of
the seers.” (Mṛgadāka Upaniṣad 3.1.7. [9])

"That Soul is not ‘this’ nor ‘that’; uneizable, it cannot be grasped; in-
derstructible, it cannot be destroyed; unattached, it has no contacts; unbound, it
knows no anguish; it cannot be injured.” (Brhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.9.26 and
4.5.15. [10])

Unbounded by space and time, the individual soul is as small as an atom,
as vast as the universe. "He who realizes the sphere of space hidden in the
cavern of his heart grasps all that may be desired and comes into contact with
the Immensity.” (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.1. [11])

The Soul is the unity that links all individual beings. It is the indivisible
continuum in which beings appear as individual conscious units. Every existing
thing contains a part of the universal Soul, just as every form encloses a part of
space and every duration a part of time. But, although this individual fragment
of the Soul, like the fragment of space in the pitcher, gives existence to the
living being, at no moment is the individual soul really separated from the
universal continuum of consciousness, the Ātman.

The experience of the universal Soul is an experience of identity; hence
absolute consciousness is spoken of as the Self, the own self of each being. "For,
where there is a duality, one sees another, one smells another, one tastes an-
other, one speaks to another, one hears another, one thinks of another, one
touches another, one understands another. But where everything has become
just one’s own self, then who can be seen by what? who can be smelled by what?
who can be tasted by what? who can speak to what? who can hear what? who
can think of what? who can touch what? who can understand what? who can
understand that through which all things are understood?” (Brhad-āraṇyaka
Upaniṣad 4.5.15. [12])

As the substratum of consciousness, the Ātman is the Self, the innermost
nature of all divinities, of all the forms of the manifest universe, of all living
beings.

The Soul is the sum of all the gods. “All the gods are this one Soul, and
all dwell in the Soul.” (Manu Smṛti 12.119. [13])

"The ruler-of-heaven (Indra) and all the gods are the Supreme Soul.
It is supreme because it includes all.” (Kullūka Bhāṣṭa, commentary on ibid.
[14])
As the one [inner] Fire pervading the worlds takes the endless forms of things, the one Soul within all beings fills their forms and the space around.

As the one Air pervading the worlds takes the endless forms of things, the one Soul within all beings fills their forms and the space around.

As the one Sun, the eye of the worlds, is not affected by defects of sight, the one Soul within all beings is not defiled by suffering.

There is but one Self for all beings, [one Power] that controls all, one Form that creates all forms. The strong who witness it within their hearts alone know everlasting joy.

It is the eternity of things eternal, the consciousness of the conscious, the unity of multiplicity, the fulfillment of desire. The strong who witness it in their hearts alone know everlasting peace. (Katha Upanisad 5.9–13. [18])

The Soul, the all-pervading continuum of consciousness, becomes the sole object of the meditation of the realized sage.

“This Soul indeed is below, this Soul is above, this Soul is to the west and to the east. This Soul is to the south. This Soul is to the north. This Soul indeed is the whole world.” (Chandogya Upanisad 7.25.2. [16])

“It is not born, nor does it die. It has not come from anywhere, has not become anyone. Unborn, everlasting, eternal, primeval, it is not slain when the body is slain.” (Katha Upanisad 2.18. [17])

The Soul is not affected by the accumulated actions which shape the individuality of the living being. Yet, in contact with individual characteristics, it appears colored by them just as a crystal placed near a China rose appears red.

“He who sees this, who knows this, who understands this, who desires the Soul, who plays with the Soul, who makes love with the Soul, who attains voluptuous bliss in the Soul, becomes his own master and wanders at will through the worlds. But they who know otherwise are dependent. They dwell in perishable worlds and cannot wander at their will.” (Chandogya Upanisad 7.25.2. [18])

The “I” and the Self

There is a considerable difference between the notion of the Self or Soul and the entity known as the individuality. The Soul is a continuum which exists within and without all things. The “I” or individuality, on the other hand, is a
The Nature of the Ultimate

temporary knot, a “tying together” of different universal faculties in a particular point of consciousness. It is a center within the Self just as any object is a group of energies tied together in a particular location within indefinite space. The Soul can exist independently of the notion of particularized existence, without thought, without individuality; not so the “I,” which is the center of the vibrations of thought.

The Realization of the Soul

BEING THE substratum of man’s own consciousness, the Soul is the universal substratum easiest for man to reach. The realization of the universal Soul is thus the highest realization accessible to man. The Soul is man’s absolute. There is for him no other transcendent reality.

“That Soul is hidden in all things; it does not shine forth, but it can be perceived by the seers with the subtle eyes of the intellect.” (Kaśha Upaniṣad 3.12. [19])

The point where the identity of the individual soul and the universal Soul is realized, the point where all living beings unite, is called the “point-limit” (bindu). It is the point where space, time, and all the forms of manifestation begin and through which they are ultimately withdrawn. In the order of manifestation, the bindu is described as the limit between the universal Consciousness (cit), which is passive and extensionless, and the universal Intellect (buddhi), which is active and thus requires a sphere of activity, some form of extension.

The “experience of the Soul,” identified with the bindu, is the point where the universal Being and the individual being unite.

“The Soul is a bridge that links together these worlds so that they may not part. Neither day nor night, nor old age, nor death, nor sorrow, nor good or evil deeds, can cross over that bridge.

“All evils turn back therefrom, for that immense world is free from evil. Therefore, upon crossing that bridge, the blind regain sight, the bound are liberated, those who suffer are freed from pain. Upon crossing that bridge, the night appears as the day; for that immense world is ever luminous.” (Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.4.1–2. [20])

“The Soul is not realized through teachings, nor by intellect, nor by learning. It can be reached only by the one who wows it. To him the Soul reveals its form. He who has not renounced action, who is not at peace, who cannot concentrate, who has not silenced his mind, cannot obtain it by mere intelligence.” (Kaśha Upaniṣad 3.25–26. [21])
"It cannot be grasped by sight nor by speech, nor by any of the sense organs, nor by penance or deeds. He who meditates and whose nature is purified by knowledge can behold it in its undivided entirety." (Mandala Upanishad 3.1.8. [28])

"Hence be who knows this, who is at peace, calm, quiet, patient, sees the Self in himself. He sees the Soul everywhere. Evil does not overcome him; he overcomes all evil. Evil does not burn him; he burns all evils. Free from evil, free from impurity, free from doubt, he becomes a knower of the Immensity." (Bhadrāranyaka Upanishad 4.4.8. [29])

Immensity (brahman), the Common Substratum

That the three continua may be the different aspects of one further, still more subtle, causal substratum is a hypothesis which can never be verified, since all its elements are beyond the reach of perception and the methods of logical reasoning cannot apply to regions which are beyond the reach of natural laws. This potential, imaginary substratum is spoken of as "the Immensity," the Brahma. It is a prodigious generalization, a most inspiring idea, which became also a dangerous instrument in the development of Hindu thought, indeed of all later religions.

The Immensity, which can be described as the space-time-thought continuum, is the absolute and ultimate stage in which are united existence, the source of spatial form; consciousness or knowledge, the basis of thought; and limitless duration or eternity, the basis of experience or enjoyment. Thus, "the Brahma is indivisible existence, knowledge, and eternity" (Taittirīya Upanishad 2.1 [94]).

This ultimate principle is beyond the reach of form, of thought, of experience. It is beyond all categories of manifestation, beyond divisible time, beyond divisible space, beyond number, beyond name and shape, beyond the reach of mind and words. It is spoken of as the stage "whence mind and speech, having no hold, fall back" (Taittirīya Upanishad 9.9 [95]).

There sight cannot go, speech cannot go, nor the mind.
We cannot know, we cannot understand. How can one explain It?
It is other than all that is known. It is above the Unknown.
(Rena Upanishad 1.5. [28])

This ultimate stage cannot be called either non-Being or Being. It is neither one nor many. We can only define it negatively, saying that it is nothing of
The Nature of the Ultimate

what man can know or conceive, neither god, nor man, nor thing. It is thus spoken of as nondual, unknowable, formless, changeless, limitless, etc. It cannot be positive or negative, male or female; hence it is spoken of in the neuter gender.

“Invisible, inactive, beyond grasp, without qualifications, inconceivable, indescribable, it is the essence aimed at through the notion of Self, ever aloof from manifestation. Calm, peaceful, auspicious (śīna), it is the nondual, unmanifest Fourth stage [beyond the three stages of existence, gross, subtle, and causal, beyond the three corresponding stages of experience, waking consciousness, dream consciousness, and deep sleep].” (Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 1.7. [27])

This Immensity, this Void, this Unknown, this nonexistent Absolute, is the innermost nature of everything.

*It is the hearing of the ear, the thought of the thinking faculty, the spoken word of speech, as also the breathing of the breath and the sight of the eye.*

(Kena Upaniṣad 1.2. [28])

“That which speech cannot express but through which speech is expressed, that indeed know as the Immensity and not what is here worshipped. That which thought cannot conceive but through which thought is thought, that indeed know as the Immensity and not what is here worshipped. That which sight cannot see but through which sight sees, that indeed know as the Immensity and not what is here worshipped. That which hearing cannot hear but through which hearing is heard, that indeed know as the Immensity and not what is here worshipped. That which breath cannot breathe but through which breathing is breathed, that indeed know as the Immensity and not what is here worshipped.”

(Kena Upaniṣad 1.4–6. [29])

“The sun does not shine there, nor the moon, nor the stars; lightning does not shine there, nor the [earthly] fire. As he shines, everything is illumined after him. The whole world shines by his light.” (Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 2.2.10; Kaṭha Upaniṣad 5.15. [30])

“It has never begun; one cannot say that it exists nor that it does not exist. . . . All the perceptions of the senses rest upon it, yet it perceives nothing. It knows no connections, yet supports all things. It has no quality, yet it is the enjoyer of all merits. “External to all things, it dwells in all things, animates or inanimates. It is so subtle that it cannot be grasped. Always near, it is ever beyond reach. In-
divisible, it only appears in the fragmentation of life. It feeds all that lives, yet
devours it and gives it birth again.

\[\text{It is the light of lights beyond darkness.}
\text{It is both knowledge and the object of knowledge,}
\text{which knowledge [alone] can reach,}
\text{and it dwells in the hearts of all.}
\text{Thus the field [of knowing (i.e., the mind)], knowledge, and the thing to be known}
\text{are spoken of as one.}
\] (Bhagavadgītā 18.19, 14–18. [51])

The Three Fundamental Qualities and the Trinity

When—through the power of illusion, which is its own nature—the first
tendency, the first movement, appears in the undifferentiated Immensity, this
already implies the existence of three elements: two opposing forces and their
opposition. Thus the first stage of manifestation from nonduality is, of necessity,
a triad. We shall soon discover that this triad pervades all things and appears in
all the aspects of the universe, physical as well as conceptual. These three basic
forces or tendencies, known as the three fundamental-qualities (guna), cannot,
in their essence, be directly grasped by the mind. We can only try to understand
their nature through the observation of their operation in the different fields of
the manifest universe.

In cosmology the three qualities are envisaged as the centripetal-attraction
(udāna), the centrifugal-force (uḍhānti), and their equilibrium (pratiṣṭhā),
from which originate the revolving impulse and movement of all the spheres.

The centripetal attraction, which creates cohesion, is known as exist-
ence (sattva), for existence is concentration of energy, a coming together, a
power of agglomeration. On the mental plane the power of cohesion appears
as the tendency that creates light, oneness. It can be pictured as the attraction
toward the Sun of Consciousness, source of light and life. This tendency, which
binds the world together, is the preserving tendency personified in Viṣṇu, the
All-Pervader, the Preserver of the universe, the embodiment of sattva.

The centrifugal force, known as darkness or inertia (tamas), is the power
that aims at preventing concentration. It is obscurity, since dispersion of energy
leads to darkness just as concentration of energy is light. Tamas, the centrifugal
tendency, the tendency toward dispersion, dissolution, annihilation of all in-
dividual, cohesive existence, can be taken as the symbol of dissolution into
non-Being, into the unmanifest causal Immensity. It thus represents liberation
from all that binds, all that is individual and limited. This tendency, which
ever aims at dissociating, destroying the universe, is personified in Rudra, the
lord of tears, the destroyer of the worlds, also called Śiva, the lord of sleep,
who embodies the abysmal obscurity into which all activity in the end dissolves.
“This Great-Lord (Maheśvara) is the innermost nature of all things” (Līgā
Purāṇa 1.17.18).

“Ultimately everything arises from disintegration (tāmas) and ends in
disintegration. Because he rules over disintegration and controls it, the lord of
sleep is the principle of the universe.” (Karapātra, “Līgāpāśā-rahasya,”
p. 155.)

The balance of sattva and tāmas, of the centripetal and the centrifugal, of
cohesion and dispersion, of light and darkness, gives birth to the third tendency,
the revolving tendency, known as “activity” or “multiplicity” (rajas). It is the
source of the endless variety of the forms of the manifest universe.

From rajas, from the revolving tendency, comes all motion, all rhythmic
division of the continua of space and time, all cerebration or mental activity
that is rhythmic division of the thought continuum. This third tendency is the
process through which creation in its endless variety of forms takes place in
the divine mind. It is personified as the Immense-Being (Brahma), the Cre-
ator, who builds the universe. Brahma is the source of all rhythms, all forms;
he is the thought-form from which the universe rises, the universal Intellect
from which springs forth the Golden-Embryo (Hiranya-garbha), the world’s
egg.

Though fundamentally distinct, the three qualities are inseparable and
cannot exist without each other. If we stress their unity, we can consider them
as the forms of the power of manifestation of the Immensity (brahman). We
shall see that this manifestation is thought to be a mere appearance and that
the three qualities thus constitute the power-of-illusion (māyā) of the Im-
nensity.

When manifestation begins, when the whirlpool of illusion first appears,
the two other tendencies arise from the state of absolute rest which is the lord
of sleep, the tāmas tendency.

“First there was only [absolute] darkness (tāmas). Stimulated by quiddity,
it became unbalanced, and the form of the revolving-tendency (rajas) appeared.

4 Sarvātmatāt mahaṁvarah.
5 Brahma is the nominative singular masculine of Brahman, the personified
form of Brahma, the nominative singular neuter of which is Brahma.
6 Cf. Līgā Purāṇa 1.17.18: Hiranya-garbha rajasā.
Stimulated, this revolving tendency became unbalanced, and out of it the tendency toward disintegration, the centrifugal-tendency (tamas), appeared. Stimulated, in its turn it became unbalanced, and the tendency toward cohesion (sattva) appeared." (Maitrayani Upanishad 5.2. [92])

The conception of the three qualities appears to pertain to the ancient Saivite tradition. The word guna, which means "quality," first appears in the particular acceptation of the three fundamental qualities in the Maitri Upanishad and the Svetasvatara Upanishad, which are connected with Saivite philosophy. The word guna itself seems to have meant originally "part of a whole" or, more concretely, one of the filaments constituting a rope. The word tri-murti, meaning "trinity" and used to represent the personification of the three qualities as the three gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, seems to be comparatively recent and never was widely employed.8

The Three States of Experience

The realization of the three tendencies is linked with that of existence-consciousness-experience. We find again here the three substrata of space, thought, and time. This realization is said to take place, respectively, in the three states of awareness, dream, and deep sleep. Awareness is linked with rajas, dream with sattva, and deep sleep with tamas.

The revolving tendency, rajas, which depends on the substratum of space,

---

7 The symbols connected with the Hindu trimurti are not altogether unconnected with the Christian conception of the Trinity. Shiva as the ultimate cause is called the Progenitor, the Father. His symbol is the linga, the organ of procreation. In the notion of "God the Father" the person of the procreator has been substituted for the symbol of procreation.

Vishnu as the Protector always descends in the world as an avatar, an incarnation. It is he who ever redeems angels and men when they go astray from their destinies. As such he corresponds to the Son, the God incarnate. Many of the symbolic elements found in the stories relating to the birth of Christ have very near equivalents in the tales of the birth of Krishna and other avatars.

The Holy Ghost is represented as the link between the Father and the Son, proceeding from both. A parallel can be made with the rajas tendency resulting from the equilibrium of sattva and tamas and personified as Brahma.

It might not be difficult to find a historical link between the Trinity and the trimurti. Hindu philosophical conceptions were known in Greece and the Middle East before and after the beginning of the Christian Era. It may, however, be noted that, whereas the Trinity is presented in Scholastic philosophy as a mystery, it is a fundamental definition of Hindu religious philosophy.

8 See L. Renou and J. Filizot, L’Inde classique, I, 518. (Hereafter cited as: Louis Renou, L’Inde classique.)
The Nature of the Ultimate

is the origin of all the spheres of perceptible existence. In the state of wakefulness, man experiences existence as depending on relative space and time manifested in the principles-of-the-elements (tattvas), which are the basis of perceptible forms. This state is thus associated with Brahmā, the Immense Being, the Creator. Action—and more particularly ritual action—is the corresponding way of realization.

In the state of dream, man experiences the centripetal tendency, the substratum of thought, which is the process of manifestation of the world's subtle scheme. The man who dreams behaves like the sleeping Viṣṇu resting on the causal ocean. The corresponding form of realization is through thought, or knowledge.

The sleeping man verily re-creates the world.

"When he goes to sleep, the worlds are his, . . . he becomes a great king, or a learned man; he enters the high and the low. As a great king, taking with him his people, moves around his country as he pleases, even so here, taking with him his senses, he moves around in his own body as he pleases." (Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 2.1.18. [33])

"When a man goes to sleep, he takes along the material of this all-containing world, tears it apart, and builds it up again in his dream, illuminating this inner world with his own light.

"There are no chariots there, no yokes, no roads. But he projects out of himself chariots, yokes, roads. There are no joys there, no happiness, no pleasures. But he projects from himself joys, happiness, pleasures. There are no pools there, no lotus ponds, no streams. But he projects from himself pools, lotus ponds, and streams. For he is the Creator." (Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.5.9–10. [34])

Deep sleep, that is, the unconscious state of consciousness, is the blissful causal stage of experience, just as the disintegrating-tendency (tamas) is the causal form of the three qualities. Thus wakefulness and dream are said to spring from the obscurity of deep sleep and to fall back into it.

The state of dreamless sleep is connected with Śiva, lord of sleep. It is in nonaction, in the complete silence of the mind, that we may realize the higher state of consciousness, the perfect joy of pure existence. From the standpoint of human realization, Śiva represents the final dissolution of the individuality—and toward this end the metaphysically inclined mind will tend—while the Pervader (Viṣṇu) represents supreme enlightenment, transcendent divine experience, to which all religion aims. Indeed, most religions speak and know of the Viṣṇu principle only.
The Three Qualities and Manifestation

The silence which is at the origin and the end of manifestation is found at both ends of consciousness, in the supraconscous and the subconscious states. Thus *tamas*, the disintegrating tendency, is said to be the nature of the transcendent faculties, beyond thought, as well as the nature of the unconscious inertia of matter. While dealing with the relative action of the three qualities within the manifest universe we shall meet mainly the inert, subconscious form of *tamas*, since its transcendent aspect is the Unmanifest.

The hierarchy of the three qualities therefore varies according to the standpoint from which they are envisaged. From the point of view of worldly action *tamas* is the lower aspect, *sattva* the higher one. *Tamas* is associated with death, evil, inaction where action alone seems to bring results. Yet from the point of view of spiritual achievement, where action is the main obstacle, *sattva* is the lower state, that which binds with the bonds of merit and virtue, *tamas* is the higher state, that of liberation through nonaction. Thus there are two main paths through which man can escape from the bonds of Nature (*prakṛti*). The lower path, which is the way of merit and its fruits, leads toward concentrated power, toward union with manifest divinity, that is, toward the concepts of Heaven and salvation. On the other hand, the higher path is the path of liberation and nonaction, through which man becomes free from the bonds of individual existence and dissolves into the immensity of Infinite Bliss.

In the process of manifestation more and more complex relations between the three qualities appear. These give rise to different types of existence, different beings, different entities.

"Among the energies of each universe, those energies in which the disintegrating tendency predominates are the source of the world of physical-forms (*bhaṅgūka pratipāta*). In these lower aspects of existence, some elements of the cohesive and of the revolving tendencies are, however, found. From the cohesive element are formed the inner faculties 9 and the senses of perception; 10

9 The inner faculties are four:

a. Mind (*manas*), the nature of which is discussion, deliberation.
b. Intellect (*buddhi*), the nature of which is choice or decision.
c. The mental-substance (*citta*), upon which is imprinted memory.
d. I-ness or notion-of-individual-existence (*abhaṅkira*).

10 There are five senses of perception and five forces of action corresponding to the five elements (ether, air, fire, water, and earth), which are but the spheres of action of the senses.

The senses of perception have as their organs "ear, skin, eye, tongue, and the fifth, the nostril," while the corresponding forces of action have as organs "voice, hands, feet, genitals, and anus."