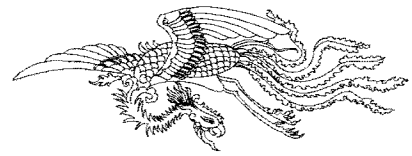

Cows, Elephants, Dogs, and Other Lesser Embodiments of *Ātman*

Reflections on Hindu Attitudes Toward Nonhuman Animals

LANCE NELSON

> The wise see the same [reality] in a Brahmin endowed with learning and culture, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and an outcaste.
>
> —Bhagavad Gītā 5.18

The *Deccan Herald* of January 25, 1999, reports that, a few days earlier, in the town of Shakarapuram near the South Indian city of Bangalore, a group of devotees gathered to hear a talk on the *Bhagavad Gītā* by a famous scholar, Bannanje Govindacharya. He was visiting from Udipi, a Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage center of great sanctity. As part of the function, the *paṇḍit*'s new Kanada translation of the much-loved Hindu epic the *Rāmāyaṇa* was being formally released to the public. As Govindacharya alighted from his vehicle, proceeded into the hall, and ascended the stage, an adult monkey followed close behind. The organizers tried to shoo the monkey off the platform, but it refused to budge, so they decided to let it be. When it came time to release the book, the audience of 350 watched as the monkey took the new *Rāmāyaṇa* from the author's hand, removed the ceremonial wrapping, and spent a few seconds scanning the pages. Having returned the book to its author, the monkey then descended from the platform and, while the scholar gave his talk, sat harmlessly and unharmed in the lap of one astonished member of the audience after another. When the function was over, it departed. The human participants were most impressed. Surely, it was concluded, this was a visit from Hanumān, the famed monkey god and hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* who—in addition to being famed for his unmatched prowess in battle—is known for his perfect mastery of Sanskrit grammar.[1] Was he there to scrutinize the new version of the story in which he figures so prominently, and to signal his approval? As a *cirañjīvī*—a "long-lived" one, a near immortal—Hanumān is believed to appear wherever the *Rāmāyaṇa* is being read and honored. Partly because of their association with Hanumān and the *Rāmāyaṇa,* monkeys are treated as sacred everywhere in India.[2]

We are perhaps not surprised to hear such reports in connection with the Hindu tradition. After all, is not Hindu India home of the proverbial "holy cow"? Dorane Jacobson tells of a central Indian villager who was accused of "cow murder," even though the animal's death was

accidental. He was sentenced to social and religious ostracism until he could pay a substantial fine, which took him ten years to save the money to pay. Even then, for many years after that he was still known as "the one who murdered his calf."[3] The cow was associated with the sacred, though not yet completely sacrosanct, in the ancient hymns of the Vedas (second to first millennium BCE). Since then, she has undergone a gradual apotheosis, becoming over time a key symbol of all that is sacred to, and unifies, Hindus.[4] There is evidence of concern for giving shelter and maintenance to unproductive cattle as early as the fourth century BCE,[5] and homes for aging and enfeebled cattle (*gośālas*) are attested in India by the sixteenth century CE.[6]

Gośālas continue to be a prominent feature of Hindu religious institutions. Hindu faithful refer to the cow as "our mother" (*go-mātā*). The cow in Purāṇic myth is Kāmadhenu, "yielder of the milk of all desire," source of nutriment and prosperity.[7] She is Surabhi, "the Fragrant," the symbolic embodiment of the Earth; she is Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune. Respondents in the holy city of Varanasi, where Brahmins can be found who daily perform *go-pūjā* (cow worship), confided, "We believe that 330 million Hindu gods live in every atom of the cow's body," and, "We believe in going to heaven by the aid of the cow."[8] A cow donated to Brahmins is said to carry the departing soul across the river Vaitaraṇī, which separates the world of the living from the world of the dead. This belief is enacted in the Vaitaraṇī ritual, in which the worshiper clutches the tail of a cow with both hands. In death as well as in life, human beings thus depend upon the cow as upon their mother.[9] The cow, further, is associated with the world-stabilizing purity of Brahminhood, and indeed is said to be the animal whose form is typically inhabited by souls prior to their incarnation as Brahmins.[10] Touching a cow is a source of good fortune and ritual purification, as is the use of *go-mātā*'s milk, curd, clarified butter, urine, or dung. Even more purifying is the ritual application of these "five products of the cow" (*pañcagavya*) combined, a preparation also known as "the five-fold nectar" (*pañcāmṛta*). In recent centuries, the cow has emerged as a prime symbol of "Hindu nationhood," and the Cow Protection Movement has become a focus of Hindu identity vis-à-vis the Muslim and colonial British Other.[11]

Sacred monkeys and holy cows do not tell the whole story of nonhuman animals in India. Other species have symbolic religious value: snakes, as emblems of fertility; lions, associated with the Goddess Durgā; even rats, as we shall see below. On the other hand, one should not get the impression the Hindu world represents a secure zone for nonhuman animals. Animal sacrifice, for example, plays a not insignificant role in Hindu religious history up to the present. Animal rights activists tell the story of a woman in Hyderabad during the 1990s, who had just received what in the United States would be called a "career break." She had been given a part in a Hindi film, and was on her way to name and fame, at least on a local level. Out of thanks, she started a small temple for animal sacrifice. Her celebrity apparently attracted others to offer sacrifices in search of similar boons, and the small shrine soon became, we are told, "a fountain of blood."[12] More recently, in June of 2002, King Bir Bikram Shah Gyanendra of Nepal and his wife, Queen Komal Rajya, stirred up controversy by flying directly from Kathmandu to Guwahati, Assam, to perform a *pañcabali,* or sacrificial offering of five animals, at the famous (for some Hindus, infamous) temple of the Goddess Kāmākhyā. After the sacrifice, the king and queen attended a lunch held in their honor at the official residence of the Governor of Assam. Unmoved by the protests of animal rights activists, the king and queen moved on to Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), where they offered a goat in sacrifice to the Goddess Kālī at the Kalighat temple.[13]

The attitudes toward nonhuman animals within Hinduism are immensely complex and often, as the incidents recounted above illus-

trate, strike the observer as antithetical. I will explore here the main outlines of Hindu thinking on the subject of the moral and spiritual status of nonhuman animals. As a thematic motif, I will take a well-known verse from the *Bhagavad Gītā* (c. 200 BCE), and explore its implications through references to Hindu legal traditions, theology, myth, and popular stories. In the process, I will give considerable attention to the *Laws of Manu* (*Mānava Dharmaśāstra,* 200 BCE–200 CE), the most important work on Brahminical concepts of *dharma* (social and religious duty).

The Sanskritic orthodoxy of the Brahmin elite has tended, as we shall see, toward a narrow, anthropocentric (one might well say, "androcentric") view of the world, one that conceptualized nonhuman animals as "lower" forms of existence and allowed for animal sacrifice. At the same time, it does contain material that undermines humanity's vision of itself as a privileged species, and, by the classical era, it had incorporated as a core value the ethics of nonviolence or noninjury (*ahiṃsā*). In addition, there have always been elements within the tradition that have criticized and even sought to subvert or reverse elements of the orthodox worldview and practice. These have to some extent provided more positive images of nonhuman life forms. I will consider them as well.

Sameness of Self and Transmigratory Journeying between Species

A number of passages in the *Bhagavad Gītā* have been cited as demonstrating an ecologically supportive ethic of respect for life in all its forms. Particularly interesting in this connection is *Gītā* 5.18, which reads: "The wise see the same [reality] in a Brahmin endowed with learning and culture, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and an outcaste (or 'Dog-Cooker,' *śvapāka*)." This verse brings to the foreground a number of important issues concerning Hindu attitudes toward nonhuman animals. I will use it as the point of departure and thematic touchstone for my remarks as we proceed.

First, *Gītā* 5.18 brings to mind the Hindu doctrine that is perhaps most fundamental to understanding the Hindu conception of the spiritual and moral value of every life-form. This is the idea, shared by nearly all of the many schools of Hindu thought, that the true spiritual Self (*ātman*) is qualitatively identical in all beings—from, as it is said, the creator god Brahmā down to a blade of grass (see *Manu* 1.50). The Vaiṣṇava commentator Rāmānuja (eleventh-twelfth century CE) explains the text:

> Although the selves (*ātmans*) are being perceived in extremely dissimilar forms, the wise know the selves to be of uniform nature. ... The dissimilarity of the forms is due to [the various] material [adjuncts], and not to any dissimilarity in the self. (*BhGR* 5.18)

There is a vigorous dispute between Hindu theists such as Rāmānuja, who believe there are many *ātmans*, one for each being, and the nondualist (*advaitin*) theologians, who hold that the Self is quantitatively as well as qualitatively identical, there being only a single, universal *ātman.* But the idea that all beings ultimately have the same spiritual potential is the same for both. So the sages here see—quite literally, since it is assumed that their mystical vision is fully awakened—all beings as endowed with a Self that is equal in potential and equal in value. On the level of spirit, at least, there is an essential equality between the Brahmin, the cow, the elephant, the dog, and the outcaste.

Extending the principle embodied in this verse, the *Gītā* itself, in certain passages, articulates a vision of universal empathy, as at 6.32, which echoes the golden rule: "When one sees the pleasure and pain in all beings as the same in comparison with self ... one is considered the highest *yogin.*" The great nondualist commentator Śaṅkara (seventh century CE) takes this text as suggesting the universality of consciousness and, therefore, a reflective basis for univer-

sal compassion: "Just as for me pain is both disagreeable and undesired, so is it for all living beings" (*sarva-prāṇinām, BhGŚ* 6.32). Holding to this standard, the *Gītā* espouses as its ideal sages who "delight in the welfare of all beings" (*sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ,* 5.25), that is, *all* beings, not just human beings.

Perhaps equally important in determining the Hindu view of nonhuman beings is the related and complementary notion of transmigration or rebirth (*punar-bhāva*). It is the same consciousness that may appear at different times all life forms, whether Brahmin, cow, elephant, dog, or outcaste. As is well-known, Hindus believe that each being, on its journey toward its ultimate goal of *mokṣa*—final beatitude in release from the cycles of rebirth (*saṃsāra*)—goes through a succession of innumerable lives, during which the *ātman* undergoes a wide variety of embodiments. These embodiments may be in plants as well as animals, not to speak of gods and other beings inhabiting other, "higher" planes of existence.

An essential notion here, of course, is that each of us was once embodied in plant and animal forms, and may again be, as may others who are near and dear to us. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* suggests that we ought to be mindful, and may through yogic practice actually become aware, of our former incarnations in animal form.[14] As we shall see below, the Purāṇas contain many stories of individuals who, for various reasons, were reborn as animals. At Deshnok, Rajasthan, one may today visit the temple of Karṇī Mātā, a fifteenth-century female mystic, associated with the ruling families of Bikaner, who came to be regarded as an incarnation of the Goddess Durgā. The temple where she is now enshrined as Deity has imposing silver gates and exquisite marble carvings, but is most famous as the "Temple of Rats," because it is filled with scurrying rodents who are understood to be deceased members of the clan of Karṇī Mātā. In consequence of a boon given to the saint, these, her relatives, never descend into the kingdom of the god of death, Yama, but wait out their time until their next human birth in the bodies of these rats, protected in this temple. Devotees bring food offerings to present to the rats; they allow the rodents to climb all over them and finish off any food the rats may leave. Eating *prasād* (offertory food) that has been nibbled or sipped by these sacred rats, and thereby consecrated, brings good fortune.[15]

The Doctrine of Noninjury

These two notions, equality in spirit and awareness of reincarnation, are closely associated with the well-known, though not exclusively Hindu, doctrine of *ahiṃsā* or noninjury. The *Mahābhārata* proclaims repeatedly, "*ahiṃsā* is the highest duty (*dharma*)" (1.11.12, 3.198.69, etc.) and the Hindu law books teach uniformly that noninjury is the common duty (*sādhāraṇa-dharma*) of all human beings.[16] In the Hindu tradition, the *ahiṃsā* ethic is especially incumbent on ascetics. The ritual of *saṃnyāsa* or renunciation involves giving a promise of "safety to all living beings" (6.39). "To protect living creatures," the renouncer "should inspect the ground constantly as he walks, by night or by day" (*Manu* 6.68). Patañjali's *Yogasūtras* (c. 400 CE), a manual for ascetic practice, requires *ahiṃsā* as the primary virtue of *yogins* (practitioners of *yoga*). It is defined by the commentator Vyāsa as "the nonharming (*anabhidroha*) of all beings everywhere at all times" (*YSV* 2.30). The Yoga system encourages *yogins* to investigate the subtle roots of violence within their own psyches through deep meditation and counter them by developing strong waves of "contrary thought" (*pratipakṣa-bhāvana, YS* 2.33). According to Vyāsa the *yogin* should think as follows:

> Burning with the terrible fire of rebirth, I have sought refuge in the practice of *yoga* after promising safety to all living beings. If I, the very person who had once given up perverse thoughts [of violence], were to revert to them, I would be behaving like a dog. ... One who reverts to what

> has once been renounced is like a dog licking up its own vomit. (*YSV* 2.33)

The *yogin* is encouraged to thoroughly contemplate violence, its motives, and its consequences. As to the latter, Vyāsa recommends that the following be deeply pondered:

> Having robbed the victim of strength, the killer loses the vigor of his body and senses. Having caused pain he suffers pain—by being born in hell, in [the bodies of] animals, in the wombs of evil spirits, and so on. (*YSV* 2.34)

We will take up below the negative characterization of the dog in the Hindu tradition, evidenced here, as well the use of the threat of animal rebirths as a moral deterrent. The point here is that the *yogin* is engaged in a struggle to entirely uproot violence from consciousness. Ascetics who succeed in this endeavor develop the power to completely neutralize all hostility in their environment (*YS* 2.35). This includes, in yogic lore, the power to pacify dangerous animals and to cause species that are mutual enemies to live together in peaceful harmony.

An example of such a saint is Ramana Maharishi, the great twentieth-century sage of South India. Ramana was known not only for his personal realization of the highest truth of Advaita (nondualism), but also for his extraordinary affection for, and ability to communicate with, animals. He knew the habits, likes and dislikes, individual personalities and biographies, and even the inter- and intra-species politics of the various animals and animal communities that shared his *āśrama* (hermitage) with his human devotees: dogs, cats, squirrels, peacocks, crows, sparrows, monkeys, cows, snakes, and scorpions. Bhagavan (the "Blessed One"), as Ramana was known, used personal pronouns, and often individual names, when referring to these creatures, and he is said not to have discriminated between his human and nonhuman devotees. "We do not know what souls may be tenanting these bodies," he would say, "and for finishing what portion of their unfinished karma they may seek our company."[17] He is reported to have understood the language of the monkeys that lived in the environs and earned their trust to the extent that they brought their disputes to him to adjudicate.[18] Ramana refused to allow cobras and other snakes that appeared in the *āśrama* to be killed, which would have been the ordinary practice. A devotee reports that once a large green snake had taken to frequenting a *paṇḍāl,* a large pavilion built for a festival. Ramana was reluctant to have this new inmate of the *āśrama* chased away, until it was pointed out that the snake might suffer at the hands of festival-attendees, who were likely to be less tolerant of reptiles than himself. "It might be so," he responded. The account continues:

> Bhagavan thereupon looked at the snake for a while, steadfastly and graciously. Immediately after that the snake, which was remaining still all the time we were discussing, got down [from] the pandal rapidly, went into the flower garden and disappeared. There was no knowing what message he received when Bhagavan gazed at him. ... The snake was never seen afterwards.[19]

Ascetics, of course, represent only a small fraction of Hindu society. Householders, the vast majority, cannot follow the *ahiṃsā* ethic as rigorously, but neither are they expected to. Indeed, the situation of the upper-caste householder in this respect was for centuries complicated by the obligations of the ancient Vedic sacrificial cult. The practice of animal sacrifice (*paśu-bandha,* "animal-binding") was by the time of the major Hindu law books (200 BCE–200 CE) in decline. There was discomfort within the Brahminical tradition about sacrificial violence,[20] as well as anxiety regarding its possible consequences for the perpetrators;[21] in addition there was the external pressure of critiques from Buddhist and Jaina advocates of *ahiṃsā.* Nevertheless, Vedic sacrifice was supported by the prestige of antiquity and was still in vogue, and the authors of the law books take the sacri-

ficial ideology into account. For householders, at any rate, animal sacrifice was permitted, even required (*Manu* 4.25–28). Indeed, Manu proclaims that animals were created for sacrifice, declaring, "killing in sacrifice is not killing," and that violence (*hiṃsā*) ordained by the Veda is really *ahiṃsā* (5.39, 44). Plants and animals killed in sacrifice are reborn in the "highest level of existence" (*Manu* 5.42).[22] Still, Manu shows the influence of the rising tide of *ahiṃsā*-thinking. He recognizes that even plants have consciousness and experience happiness and unhappiness (*Manu* 1.49–50). Noninjury is highly praised as the preferred ideal for the virtuous, even among householders (*Manu* 5.45–47).

Slowly, the *ahiṃsā* ethic triumphed over the ancient sacrificial *cultus,* and animal sacrifice came to be condemned as a practice no longer permissible, especially among followers of the *bhakti* (devotional) traditions.[23] The Vaiṣṇava *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (*BhP,* eighth-ninth century) forbade the offering of meat in sacrifice and its consumption as a violation of the principle of *ahiṃsā* (*BhP* 3.25.7–8, 7.15.7–8, 10, 11.5.14). The *Purāṇa* attributes awareness of human intentions—as well as feelings of fear—to animals confronted by the threat of sacrificial death: "Seeing someone about to sacrifice with material offerings, beings are filled with dread, fearing 'This self-indulgent [human], having no compassion, will slay me'" (*BhP* 7.15.10). Starting in the tenth century, Hindu legal writings include animal sacrifice in lists of *kali-varjyas*, actions that are "prohibited in the Kali Age," the present era of moral and spiritual decline, despite their being enjoined in the ancient texts.[24] By the thirteenth century, we find the Vaiṣṇava theologian Madhva recommending across-the-board substitution of animal effigies (*piṣṭa-paśu,* or "flour-animals") for living victims in Vedic rituals.[25] This was a generalization of a practice that began in the late Vedic period[26] and may be observed today in modern reenactments of the ancient rites. Sacrifice continued, however, in the temples of the goddesses Kālī and Durgā, in tantric rites, and regional village traditions.[27]

A practice closely connected with the ethic of nonviolence, and one for which Hinduism is rightly well-known, is vegetarianism. Along with the killing of animals, the ancient sacrificial rites allowed the consumption of animal flesh, including beef, in a ritual context.[28] By the ninth century, however, vegetarianism was becoming the norm for Brahmins and followers of *bhakti* sects, especially Vaiṣṇavas, although the ruling castes—the Kṣatriyas—retained their traditions of hunting game and eating meat. As, however, the development of Hindu vegetarianism is well documented by Edwin Bryant in the next essay, I need not dwell on it here.

Hierarchy, Anthropocentrism, and Symbolic Denigration

There is a common presupposition that vedantic panentheism entails a Hindu sense of oneness with nature, seen as a manifestation of the divine. In fact, classical Hindu theology and social thought present a view of the world that is unapologetically hierarchical and anthropocentric. The idea of the superiority of human beings is justified, not on the basis of their possession of a soul, for as we have seen the same *ātman* is found in all beings. Even plants, we noted, have consciousness and experience happiness and unhappiness (*Manu* 1.49). Neither is it argued in physical or emotional terms, for as the *Hitopadeśa* tells us, "Human beings share food, sleep, fear, and sexual activity in common with animals" (*HN* 1.25). For the Brahmins who set the rules, the key distinction is rather cognitive, moral, ritual, and soteriological: only human beings have the capacity to receive and appropriate revelation (*śruti*), in the form of the Veda, and thus only human beings have access to that which comes from the Veda, namely *dharma* (correct ritual behavior and morality). "*Dharma* is the distinctive quality," the *Hitopadeśa* verse continues, "without which human beings are the same as animals." And in the end, only human beings, in the ordinary course of

things, have access to *mokṣa* or *mukti* (spiritual liberation). To be more precise, to have full and direct access to these cosmically valenced privileges, one must—for many conservative teachers—be a "twice-born" Hindu, that is to say, a male member of the upper three castes. For some, like Śaṅkara, access to *mokṣa* requires that one be no less than a Brahmin male, and a *saṃnyāsin* (world-renouncer) to boot.[29]

As is well known, Hindu teachers, despite their many theological differences, all agree that one's station in this hierarchical universe, and the course of one's journey through *saṃsāra,* is determined by one's karma, the moral consequences of one's actions. The circumstances of one's birth, whether in human or nonhuman form, is attributed to one's karma. And it must be kept in mind that the process is not strictly linear, for one can, over the course of rebirths, fall into "lower" states of existence as well as rise to enjoy "higher" forms.

In Manu we find an interesting systematization of this hierarchical scheme, and its transmigratory consequences, articulated in terms of the theory of the *guṇa*s, the three psychophysical "qualities" or "strands" that, according to the traditional Hindu worldview, are the stuff of existence, combining to make up the entire range of phenomena, mental as well as physical. *Sattva* ("goodness," "lucidity"), the most highly valued of these constituents, is the *guṇa* of intelligence, creativity, and spirituality; *rajas* ("energy"), the *guṇa* of passion and dynamism; and *tamas* ("darkness"), of ignorance and lethargy (*Manu* 12.24–29, 38). At *Manu* 12.39–51, we learn of the postmortem transmigratory destinies of human beings who have cultivated a preponderance of each of these three qualities: "People of lucidity [*sattva*] become gods, people of energy [*rajas*] become humans, and people of darkness [*tamas*] always become animals" (*Manu* 12.40). When one considers that among the qualities associated with *tamas* Manu lists ignorance, confusion, sensuality, inability to reason, lack of intelligence, greed, sleepiness, incontinence, cruelty, atheism, and carelessness, one begins to see that the portrait of the nonhuman world, onto which these qualities are projected, is not a very positive one. Among possible human destinies, rebirth as an animal is a frightening punishment. Thus:

> Violent men become carnivorous (beasts); people who eat impure things become worms; thieves (become animals that) devour one another... Women, too, who steal in this way incur guilt; they become the wives of these very same creatures. (*Manu* 12.59, 69)

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (5.10.7–8) promises rebirth as a dog or pig to those whose conduct has been evil. Those who neglect or despise Vedic values, the text tells us, will be reborn again and again as "small creatures." Śaṅkara comments:

> They take birth as these small creatures—gadflies, mosquitoes, and other insects—which are reborn again and again.... They spend their time in mere birth and death, having opportunity for neither ritual nor enjoyment. (*CU* 5.10.8)

The fact that Hindu theologians understand the self or "soul" (*ātman*) within all living beings to be qualitatively identical—and that some, like Śaṅkara, see all selves as metaphysically one—is often cited as evidence of an egalitarian, even communitarian, spiritual outlook. The related concept of reincarnation, in which the same soul may appear in different forms, human and nonhuman, has likewise been offered as implying an "organic solidarity between humanity and nature."[30] To be sure, our text from the *Gītā* tells us that the wise see the same transcendent essence and final spiritual potential in Brahmins, cows, elephants, and dogs. But how do the sages respond to the empirical actuality of these diverse species? Here is Śaṅkara's take:

> In a Brahmin, in whom *sattva* predominates and who has the best latent mental impressions (*saṃskāra*), in an intermediate being like a cow, which

> is dominated by *rajas* and is without [such] impressions, and in [beings] such as elephants, which are wholly dominated by *tamas* alone—those wise ones are "equal-visioned" whose habit is to see equally the one immutable Brahman. (*BhGŚ* 5.18)

Śaṅkara sees oneness on the level of spirit, no doubt; that is what he is known for. However, he also sees very clearly the kind of anthropocentric hierarchy we have been discussing. So does Viśvanātha Cakravartin (eighteenth century), the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava commentator, who sees Brahmins and cows as being alike in the highest class of beings, those who are predominant in *sattva* (*sāttvika-jāti*). The elephant for him is in the middle (*madhyame*), while the dog and the outcaste Dog-Cooker (*śvapāka*) are together at the bottom, in the group dominated by *tamas* (*tāmasa-jāti, BhGV* 5.18). This is an interesting kind of solidarity between humans and animals, to be sure. It reflects how the nonhuman world becomes symbolically connected with the system of caste, and shows clearly the connection between oppression of nonhuman animals and the oppression of marginalized human beings. This is the symbolic set that our *Gītā* verse assumes and wants to evoke. Cows, as emblematic of all that is pure and holy, are associated with Brahmins. Dogs, on the other hand, are regarded as the Candālas or outcastes of the animal world, being stigmatized as thoroughly impure.

The orthodox tradition has held that dogs are indiscriminate in their eating habits and their sexual behavior. Designated "vomit-eaters," they haunt cremation grounds where they become eaters of carrion; they have sex with members of their own family and menstruating females. The behavior of dogs, in short, resembles that attributed to outcastes, both being utterly abhorrent to Brahmin sensibilities. Dogs, along with Candālas, pollute the food of Brahmins if they happen to glance at them while they eat; a dog pollutes sacred offerings likewise by sight (*Manu* 3.239–42). Thus, as Doniger has pointed out, "the dog [is] to the cow in the world of beasts what the outcaste is to the Brahmin in the world of men."[31]

Animal Heroes, Animal Stories

One more set of issues must be raised. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* in a passage quoted above, describes the fear experienced by animals at the prospect of facing the sacrifice. This raises the question of the moral and spiritual sensibility of animals. The theological texts, interestingly, do not really address this issue. We must look at mythic, literary, and popular narrative sources for such information. We can afford to bypass here the fables of the *Pañcatantra* and *Hitopadeśa,* which clearly intend to teach about human behavior and polity, not about animals or how we should regard them. Other treatments of animals in Hindu literature are more promising resources for our present concern.

In Kālidāsa's famous play *The Recognition of Śakuntalā,* we find the nonhuman world expressing grief in an extraordinarily poignant way when the beloved heroine must leave her father's hermitage. Says Śakuntalā's friend:

> The bitterness of parting is not yours alone;
> look around you and see how the Holy
> Grove grieves, knowing the hour of
> parting from you is near:
> The doe tosses out mouthfuls of grass,
> the peacocks dance no more;
> pale leaves flutter down
> as if the vines were shedding their limbs.
> (Act 4, vs. 14)[32]

In numerous passages in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* all of nature is portrayed as responding in love to the beauty of Lord Krishna, the divine incarnation, and the call of his flute: deer worship, birds are dumbstruck, cows hold Krishna reverently in their minds (*BhP* 10.21.10–14). Be-

yond this, all of India knows of the noble Jaṭāyu, the vulture-king of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* who sacrificed his own life attempting to save Sītā, Rāma's beloved wife, from abduction by the demon Rāvaṇa. The great bird's funeral rites were performed by the very hand of the divine incarnation, Rāma, and he thereby obtained *mokṣa.* Even more beloved is the loyal, devoted, and heroic Hanumān, the monkey who led Rāma's forces in the battle to rescue Sītā. We have already encountered him in his appearance as a monkey to a group of devotees, as documented by the *Deccan Herald.*

Among the more interesting animal stories are those which show animals attaining *mukti,* or *mokṣa,* spiritual liberation. In what follows, I will observe the order of the animals of *Gītā* 5.18: cows, elephants, and dogs. Consider first the story of Lakshmi, a cow who was counted among the most faithful devotees of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, the twentieth-century saint whose fondness for animals has already been mentioned. Lakshmi grew up in the *āśrama* of the saint, and waited daily on Ramana, for whom she seemed to have a single-minded devotion. Devotees noticed that, while the saint was normally undemonstrative, "the open expressions of his Grace that Lakshmi used to receive from him were quite exceptional."[33] At the hour of her death, the Maharshi gave her his most tender attention, placing his hand on her head and heart in a gesture of special blessing. On Lakshmi's tomb—erected in a prominent location in the *āśrama* and graced with a statue depicting her—was engraved an epitaph composed by the saint, declaring that the cow had attained *mukti.* Asked whether "liberation" was here used figuratively, Ramana replied that the words meant what they said, actual liberation.[34] There had been much speculation as to the reason for the extraordinary attention that Ramana had given this cow. The general consensus was that she had known the master in a previous birth. A. D. Mudaliar, a devotee of the *āśrama* during Ramana's life, writes:

> Although Lakshmi now wore the form of a cow, she must have attached herself to Sri Bhagavan and won his Grace by love and surrender in a previous birth. It seemed hard to explain in any other way the great solicitude and tenderness that Sri Bhagavan [Ramana] always showed in his dealings with her.[35]

It was decided that Lakshmi must be the reincarnation of Keeraipatti, an elderly woman who had rendered much devoted service to the master prior to her death in 1921. This seemed possible, as Lakshmi had arrived at the *āśrama* as a small calf in 1926. Ramana would not confirm this speculation on the cow's former human life directly, but hinted that it was the case.[36]

Returning to classical texts, in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (8.2–4) we read perhaps the most famous story in the Hindu tradition dealing with animal spirituality; it focuses on the second animal mentioned in our *Gītā* verse. The story of "liberation of the elephant" (*gaja-mokṣa, BhP* 8.2–4) tells of Gajendra, the leader of a great elephant herd, who—while bathing in a lake—was caught in the jaws of a giant crocodile and found himself being dragged into the water toward his likely death. Realizing that escape was impossible, the elephant-king focused his mind, repeating mentally a Sanskrit hymn in fervent praise of Lord Viṣṇu. The Lord Himself appeared, mounted on his heavenly vehicle, the giant bird Garuḍa. With great difficulty, the elephant uttered the words, "Hail to Thee, O Nārāyaṇa [Viṣṇu], Preceptor of the Universe!" (*BhP* 8.3.32) upon which the Lord, dismounting, pulled both Gajendra and the crocodile out of the lake, split the attacker's jaw with his discus, and freed the elephant.

It turned out that the crocodile was a heavenly being, a celestial musician (*gandharva*), who had been incarnated as a crocodile as the result of a curse. Freed from his sin and this unfortunate embodiment by the touch of the Lord, he prostrated and returned to his heavenly abode. Gajendra, having been delivered from

the jaws of the crocodile, was delivered also from his elephant body, being granted *mukti* by the Lord. And in his case too we learn that the animal was more than merely an animal. In his previous life he was Indradyumna, a noble king turned ascetic, who had been devoted to the Lord. It was in this former life that he had learned the rather longish (twenty-seven-verse) Sanskrit hymn he had just, as an elephant, remembered and mentally recited to attract the Lord's solicitude. King Indradyumna, like the *gandharva*-crocodile, had also been condemned to his uncomfortable animal rebirth as the result of a curse. He had made the mistake of slighting the temperamental Brahmin sage Agastya, who uttered the following imprecation: "May this impious, malevolent, and feeble-minded fellow, who has insulted a Brahmin just now, sink into in blinding ignorance. Since he is stupid like an elephant, let him be born as one" (*BhP* 8.4.10).

In the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta,* a biography of the sixteenth-century Bengali saint Caitanya, we read of a dog who had been tagging along with a group of disciples journeying to meet their master, Lord Caitanya, at Jagannāth Purī. One of the disciples, Śivānanda Sena, had been caring for and feeding the dog. He had even gone to the trouble of bribing a boatman who had been reluctant to take the dog across a river with the party. One day as they traveled, the dog disappeared, only to turn up at Purī after the disciples had arrived. Śivānanda and his comrades were astonished to come upon the dog sitting at the feet of the master, who was feeding him. At Lord Caitanya's coaching, the dog was chanting "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!" Overcome at this amazing sight, Śivānanda bowed. Later, they learned that the dog's love for God had been awakened by this contact with the master, and that the dog had been liberated from his canine body into Krishna's heavenly paradise (*CC* 3.1.12–28).[37] Commenting on this episode, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada remarks, "Śivānanda Sena's attachment to the dog was a great boon to that animal," and goes on to explain that the dog's salvation was made possible by *sādhu-saṇga,* the spiritually uplifting effect of association (*saṇga*) with holy persons (*sādhu*). "This result is possible," he concludes, "even for a dog."[38]

In the *Mahābhārata,* we read of Yudhiṣṭhira's faithfulness to a dog who was faithful to him. Marching through the Himalayas toward Mount Meru, Yudhiṣṭhira was stunned to find the god Indra appearing before him to announce that he—Indra, the king of the gods—had come to take him to heaven. Yudhiṣṭhira begged to be able to take his faithful companion, the dog, with him. Indra refused, saying "there is no place for dog-owners in heaven," and in the exchange that followed, Indra explained all the ways in which dogs are sources of pollution. Yudhiṣṭhira remained adamant; he would not abandon the dog: "People say that to abandon one who is devoted to you is a bottomless evil equal to murdering a Brahmin. Therefore, great Indra, I will never, in any way, abandon him now in order to achieve my own happiness." At that point the dog, who had been listening to the conversation, changed appearance, manifesting his true form as the god Dharma, or Righteousness. He blessed Yudhiṣṭhira, who was in fact the god's son. Yudhiṣṭhira then mounted Indra's divine chariot and achieved what no other had: entry into heaven with his earthly body (*MBh* 17.2–3).[39]

A number of considerations ought to be brought to bear in evaluating stories such as these. First, it must be understood that in many cases their power derives largely from their presenting something unexpected. The cow Lakshmi would not in the normal course of things be considered able to attain *mokṣa,* since the orthodox teachers proclaim only humans are eligible. Still, she is a cow, and cows—we have seen—are holy. So while unusual, and perhaps thought-provoking, her spirituality is perhaps not overly surprising. But animal spirituality gets more surprising, in the Hindu context, the "lower" on the conventional scale we go. By the

time we get to the dog, the orthodox Brahminical system of values and symbols—as decreed by Manu—is challenged, as if by a parable that sees to overthrow the established order of things. The despised species may become a profound, if unorthodox and potentially antinomian, symbol of the inbreaking divine. Hinduism, too often judged by outsiders as trapped its own rigid and oppressive categories, here reveals itself as self-critical, even capable of the subversion of its most well-established rules.

Second, the hearer may learn from these stories—as in the cases of dogs revealed to be gods—that the divine is to be waited upon in all life forms and that the sacred can manifest itself through all beings, no matter how "lowly." This is a lesson that it is difficult to apply consistently. Indeed, in an important study Nagarajan[40] has shown that Hindus in daily life apply notions of sacrality only selectively and intermittently. Still, the lesson remains—no matter how imperfectly appropriated—and it is an important one.

Third, and now from a more critical standpoint, one wonders here to what extent these stories, in apparently extolling the spiritual potential of animals, are really subordinating them to humans. As Jaini points out, the idea of a human being "temporarily shackled by a lower destiny" is a common motif in the Hindu epics. Is it possible, as Jaini believes, that this "reduces the relevancy of the tale[s] as referring to animals,"[41] except perhaps insofar as it reemphasizes the conventional belief in the wretched nature of animal existence? I think it is. Was Lakshmi the cow liberated because, as a cow, she manifested extraordinary devotion or because she incarnated devotional sensibilities previously cultivated as a human? We know well that the cow is a special case in the Hindu context. Still, the devotees were not satisfied in their understanding of the master's behavior toward Lakshmi until they had settled on the theory that she was human, and a devotee, in her immediately preceding life. Again, would Gajendra, as an elephant, have spontaneously remembered the Lord if memories and tendencies from his past life as a royal ascetic had not been activated? Probably not, we must conclude. Śivānanda Sena's dog was not a god in disguise, nor did the narrator suggest that he was recently born in human form. But would he, as a dog, have attained Vaikuṇṭha, the Lord's abode, were it not for the benefit of contact with human devotees, and their God-intoxicated master, whose spirituality was somehow transferred to awaken the dog's fortunate heart? The story tells us in the end more about the transformative power of the master's spirituality than the spiritual potential of the dog. The birds of Krishna's Vṛndāvana forest, who respond so extraordinarily to the Lord's beauty, are—after all, we are told—really not animals but ancient sages (*ṛṣi*), incarnated to enjoy the Divine play on earth. Even Hanumān, beloved as the monkey god, is more deity than monkey, being commonly recognized as an *avatāra* of Śiva and son of Vāyu, the god of the wind.

The doctrine that all beings have souls that are qualitatively equal may, as we have seen, suggest empathy and compassion. Lest we read too much into the Hindu view of things, however, it should be said that this doctrine in itself does not entail any developed psychic or moral life in animals. Even less does it suggest the possibility of any real communion between humans and nonhumans. *Ātman* in its transcendence is aloof, inactive, and—though a witness of things—certainly noncommunicative; no *ātman*-to-*ātman* communication is envisioned. In Hindu thinking, communion would occur, not on the level of *ātman,* but on the level of mind. And Hindu thought does not, as we have seen, generally have a high estimate of the cognitive abilities of animals who, despite their possession of *ātman,* are dominated in their empirical being by the dullness of *tamas*. Hence, any powers of, or potential for, *communio* would be limited.[42]

Conclusion

In the Hindu context, nothing is simple; judgments must always be made cautiously after long study. We must keep in mind, whatever truth we may see in them, that critiques such as I have just offered can be pushed beyond the point of usefulness. The theologies and sacred stories of Hinduism are appropriated by Hindus from within their own mythic canopy, not from outside, and this mythic universe is still very much alive. When I complained to a Hindu friend about the reductionism that treats manifestations of extraordinary spirituality in animals as human traits explainable by reincarnation, he responded, "But then, *all* animals were once human, were they not? Just as all humans were once animals!"

Nonhuman animals are embodiments of the eternal Self that is universally present in all beings. As such they carry the infinite value of Spirit, even if its manifestation in their psychic life is limited. On another level, a notch down from ultimacy, animals may be vehicles for the consciousness of our deceased relatives or friends (however veiled), or the lively awareness of saints; or they may even be the earthly manifestations of gods. Such ideas cannot, in the Hindu context, be considered insignificant. Even on the empirical level, religious dimensionalities and resulting distinctions must be taken into account. True, nonhuman animals are in the classical tradition generally ranked low in the hierarchy of beings. But then remember the cow, sattvic in nature, whose value is tantamount to that of the Brahmin.

Brahminism itself, which sees things inevitably from the "top down," is not the only voice in the Hindu tradition. With no enforcer of orthodoxy, this is a tradition with multiple voices, a diversity of visions. "Who speaks for Hinduism?" is a constantly contested question. There are yogic exemplars like Ramana Maharshi, who collapse orthodox categories in many ways, among these their quasi-shamanic communion with animals. There are professional tellers of "God-stories" (*hari-kathā*), men and women, immensely popular, who still vividly recount puranic tales of gods, *gurus*, and animals miraculously shape-shifting back and forth across hierarchal boundaries. And there are millions of devoted Hindus for whom those stories are yet very real. In short, despite the secular trends in contemporary India, which give support on many levels to narrow human self-centeredness,[43] there is material in the Hindu tradition that may well lend itself to the emergence of a new vision of human-animal relations.

ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise indicated, the translations from Sanskrit provided are my own.

BhG *Bhagavad Gītā*. See *BhGŚ*.

BhGR *Śrī Rāmānuja Gītā Bhāsya*. Text with translation by Svami Adidevananda. Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, n.d.

BhGŚ *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā with the Śrīmat-Śaṅkarabhāsya*. Ed. with several other commentaries by Wasudeva Laxman Sastri Pansikar. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978.

BhGV *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā with the Commentaries Sārārthavarṣinī of Viśvanātha Cakravartin and Gītābhāsya of Baladeva Vidyābhūsana*. Kusumasarovar, Mathura: Kṛṣṇadasababa, c. 1966–67.

BhP *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Ed. J.L. Shastri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999.

CC *Caitanyacaritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja*. Trans. Edward C. Dimock. Ed. Tony Stewart. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

CU *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* with Śaṅkara's *Bhāsya*. In *Ten Principal Upanishads with Śaṅkarabhāsya*.

Works of Śaṅkara in the Original Sanskrit. Vol. 1. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964.

HN *Hitopadeśa of Nārāyaṇa.* Ed. with translation and notes by Max Muller as *The First Book of the Hitopadeśa.* London: Longman, 1864.

Manu *The Laws of Manu.* Trans. Wendy Doniger with Brian K. Smith. London: Penguin Books, 1991. (I have used Doniger and Smith's translations.)

MBh *Mahābhārata.*

YS *Yogasūtra of Patañjali with the Commentary of Vyāsa.* Ed. and trans. Bangali Baba. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976.

YSV *Yogabhāsya* of Vyāsa. See *YS.*

NOTES

1. *Deccan Herald,* January 25, 1999, http://www.deccanherald.com/deccanherald/jan25/ctman.htm (May 16, 1999). Also: "Monkey Steals Show During Auspicious Function," *Indian Express,* January 26, 1999, http://www.indianexpress.com/ie/daily/ 1999 0126/02652055.html (March 23, 2003).

2. According to recent reports, there are as many as 10,000 or more monkeys wandering the streets of Delhi. They occupy government buildings and create other nuisances. It even seems that a man was killed by a flower pot dropped by a monkey. Authotities are at a loss as to how to control them without offending Hindu sensibilities. See, e.g.: Daniel Lak, "Monkeys Create Havoc in Delhi," BBC News, April 14, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/713151.stm (March 23, 2003); Rahul Bedi, "Indians Jail Marauding Monkeys," news.telegraph, January 12, 2002, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2002/01/12/wmonky12.xml (March 23, 2003).

3. Dorane Jacobson, "A Reverence for Cows," *Natural History* 108 (June 1999): 58, 63.

4. Frank Korom, "Holy Cow! The Apotheosis of Zebu, or Why the Cow Is Sacred in Hinduism," *Asian Folklore Studies* 59 (2000): 181–204.

5. Deryck Lodrick, *Sacred Cows, Sacred Places: Origins and Survivals of Animal Homes in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 89.

6. Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 90.

7. Madeline Biardeau, "Kāmadhenu: The Mythical Cow, Symbol of Prosperity," in *Asian Mythologies,* ed. Yves Bonnefoy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 99.

8. Deryck O. Lodrick, "On Religion and Milk Bovines in an Urban Indian Setting," *Current Anthropology* 20 (March 1979): 242.

9. van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism,* p. 87.

10. Biardeau, "Kāmadhenu," p. 99; Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, "Serve God or Serve Dog," 1976, http://www.prabhupadavani.org/web/text/236.html (February 8, 2003).

11. van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism,* pp. 86–94; Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 204–10.

12. Poornima Harish, "Animal Sacrifice: One Brave Woman Leads the Fight for a Total End to Ritual Killing," *Hinduism Today,* April 1999, http://www.hinduismtoday.com/1999/4/1999-4-12.html (March 23, 2003).

13. G. Vinayak, "Gyanendra visits Kamakhya Temple; 5 animals sacrificed," rediff.com, June 27, 2002, http://www.rediff.com/news/2002/jun/27nep.htm (February 8, 2003); "Nepal King Sacrifices Animal Again," rediff.com, June 28, 2002, http://www.rediff.com/news/2002/jun/28nep.htm (February 8, 2003).

14. Swami Venkatesananda, *Vasiṣṭha's Yoga* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 620–21.

15. See Karnimata.com, n.d., http://karnimata.com (January 18, 2003); "Deshnok Karni Mata Temple," RealBikaner.com, n.d., http://www.realbi

kaner.com/temple/deshnok/index.html (January 18, 2003); "Deshnok," Deshnok.com, n.d., http://www.deshnok.com (January 18, 2003).

16. Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmasastra: Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law India,* 6 vols, 2d ed., rev. and enlarged, Government Oriental Series; Class B, no. 6 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1968), 2 (pt. 1):10; 5 (pt. 2): 945.

17. Arthur Osborne, *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* (London: Rider, 1973), p. 110.

18. T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Ramana Maharshi: The Sage of Arunacala* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1977), p. 55.

19. Suri Nagamma, "Letters from and Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam," Sri Ramanasram, n.d., http://www.ramana-maharshi.org/lettrec.htm (January 18, 2003).

20. Jan E.M. Houben, "To Kill or Not to Kill the Sacrificial Animal (*Yajña-Paśu*): Arguments and Perspectives in Brahminical Ethical Philosophy," in Jan E.M. Houben and Karel R. Van Kooij, eds., *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 117–24.

21. A number of passages in the Brāhmaṇas express fear that, in the next world, the sacrificer will be eaten by his victim. See *Kauśītaki Brāhmaṇa* 11.3; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.6.1 and 12.9.1.1 and *Jaimanīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.42–44. *Manu* 5.55 warns that one who eats mean in this life will, in the next, be eaten by the same animal.

22. Cf. *Ṛgveda* 1.162.21: "You do not really die here, nor are you injured. You go to the gods on paths pleasant to go on" (quoted by Henk W. Bodewitz, "Hindu *Ahiṃsā* and its Roots," in Houben and Van Kooij, eds., *Violence Denied,* p. 24, n. 2 [Leiden: Brill, 1999]).

23. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra,* 4:424–25.

24. Houben, "To Kill or Not to Kill," p. 153.

25. Ibid., p. 156.

26. D.N. Jha, *The Myth of the Holy Cow* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 41; Michael Witzel, "The Case of the Shattered Head," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 13/14 (1987): 412.

27. Hugh B. Urban, "The Path of Power: Impurity, Kingship, and Sacrifice in Assamese Tantra," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69 (December 2001): 798. A fact that may or may not comfort moderns disturbed by "animal" sacrifice in Hinduism, whether of the Vedic or Tantric variety, is that human beings have not always been excluded from the lists of animals to be offered. In the late Vedic period human sacrifice, if perhaps no longer practiced, was somewhat nervously remembered and still countenanced as, at the very least, a theoretical possibility. See Witzel, "The Case of the Shattered Head," pp. 390–92; Houben, "To Kill or Not to Kill," pp. 120–23, 127–28; Danielle Feller Jatavallabhula, "Raṇayajña: The Mahābhārata War as a Sacrifice," in Houben and Van Kooij, eds., *Violence Denied,* pp. 69–104. Tantric rites included (and perhaps occasionally still include) the ritual slaughter of humans in addition to goats and buffalo (Urban, "The Path of Power," pp. 806–9; Alex Perry Atapur, "Killing for 'Mother' Kali," *Time Asia,* July 29, 2002, http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673, 501020729-322673,00.html [February 8, 2003]).

28. Rajendralala Mitra, "Beef in Ancient India," in *Indo-Aryans: Contributions Toward the Elucidation of their Ancient and Medieval History,* vol. 1, pp. 354–88 (London, E. Stanford, 1881; reprint Delhi: Indological Bookhouse, 1969); D.N. Jha, "Myth of the Holy Cow."

29. Perhaps the most dramatic statement of this radically elitist view occurs at the opening of Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (vs. 2). See also *BhP* 3.29.28–34 and my "Theism for the Masses, Non-dualism for the Monastic Elite: A Fresh Look at Śaṅkara's Trans-theistic Spirituality," in *The Struggle Over the Past: Fundamentalism in the Modern World,* edited by William Shea (Latham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 61–77.

30. Rajagopal Ryali, "Eastern-Mystical Perspective on Environment," in Dave Stefferson, Walter J. Herrscher, and Robert S. Cook, eds, *Ethics for Environment: Three Religious Strategies,* pp. 47–48 (Green Bay: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973).

31. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 173.

32. Chandra Rajan, trans., *Kālidāsa, The Loom of Time: A Selection of His Plays and Poems* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1989), p. 224.

33. A. Devaraja Mudaliar, *The Cow, Lakshmi* (Tiruvannamali, India: Sri Ramanasramam, 1996), p. 11.

34. Mudaliar, *The Cow, Lakshmi,* pp. 14–15.

35. Ibid., p. 11.

36. Ibid., p. 12.

37. Edward C. Dimock, trans., *Caitanyacaritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja,* edited by Tony Stewart (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 782–83.

38. Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī,* Part 3, vol. 1 (New York: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1975), pp. 13, 17.

39. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed. and trans., *Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 53–56.

40. Vijaya Rettakudi Nagarajan, "The Earth as the Goddess Bhū Devī: Toward a Theory of 'Embedded Ecologies' in Folk Hinduism," in *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India,* ed. Lance E. Nelson, 269–95 (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998).

41. Padmanabh S. Jaini, "Indian Perspectives on the Spirituality of Animals," in David J. Kalupahana and W. G. Weeraratne, eds., *Buddhist Philosophy and Culture: Essays in Honor of N. A. Jayawickrema,* 169–78 (Colombo: N. A. Jayawickrema Felicitation Volume Committee, 1987), p. 170.

42. If we recall the identification of dogs and Candālas in the classical tradition, and that large numbers of *human* beings (low caste, untouchable/dalit, etc.) in Hindu India remain hierarchically marginalized—dare we say, like animals?—the ideal of including nonhuman animals in a world that is a communion of subjects may seem all the more remote.

43. Unquestionably the most visible animal rights campaigner in India today is Maneka Gandhi, daughter-in-law of the late Indira Gandhi, three times elected to the Lok Sabha (India's parliament), former environment minister, and lately welfare minister. A tireless campaigner for the protection of India's endangered species and such varied causes as nonviolent silk production, resistance to multinational fast food outlets, and the abolition of animal experimentation, she is a founder and current chairperson of the NGO, People for Animals. Lamenting that India nowadays seems "to measure progress in the move from vegetarianism to non-vegetarianism" (Mark Gold, "Diet for the New Century," March 1999, http://www.animal-aid.org.uk/campaign/vegan/feed99.htm [March 23, 2003]), Gandhi asserts: "Hindus are seen as a gentle people coexisting and caring for all plants and animals and setting an example to the rest of the world. Perhaps that was once true, but look at us now. Today India is the largest exporter of meat in Asia with 75% exported. 37% of our crop is going to feed Europe's meat animals and over 300,000 cattle are killed in abattoirs daily. Factory farming is becoming the norm" (Maneka Gandhi, "Statement in Support of Animal Aid's 'Veggie Month, 1997,'" n.d., http://www.animalaid.org.uk/Veg98/warning.htm [May 16, 1999]).