SRI MALAYALASWAMI
ON RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

MAHASHI SADGURU SRIMALAYALA SWAMI
FOREWORD

I have great pleasure to introduce to the innumerable admirers and devotees of Sri Sadguru Maharshi Sri Malayalaswami the present work of Dr. P. Munikrishnaiah of Sri Venkateswara University.

The present work which is the result of several years of reading, thinking and writing, is the first recognised research publication in English on the contributions of the Swamiji to contemporary Indian thought.

In point of profundity Sri Malayalaswami is second to no thinker in recent Indian Philosophy, though in point of popularity he is little known outside the Telugu speaking areas. All the publications of his discourses, teachings and writings were in Telugu and no sustained efforts were ever made either to translate them into English or other major languages of the country or write independent works on him in English so as to enable the contributions of this saint of Yerpedu reach other parts of the country or overseas.

The Swamiji rightly called "Yatindra" or "the king among saints" is an uncompromising champion of Sanatana Dharma. He carried on a relentless fight against all forms of evil perpetrated in the name of dharma and mata. The Swamiji made real and meaningful efforts to carry the message of Sanatana Dharma to the vast populace of the rural parts of Andhra Pradesh. His discourses on the Gita, the Upanishads and Vedanta had a tremendous impact on the people in the villages and helped the cultivation of spiritual values in them.

Through his discourses and writings in 'Yathartha Bharati' the Swamiji tried to effect a revolutionary change in the people's
thinking on vital social issues such as caste system, religious harmony, women education, and popularization of the Sanskrit language.

Like Gautama Buddha, the Swamiji is not so much a Metaphysician as he is a moralist. Not that he has no metaphysics. His is the metaphysics of Vedanta. But the whole burden of the Swamiji’s teachings is on the enunciation, enlightenment and education of the ethical teachings that the rich Indian heritage could offer. The ethics of the Swamiji is the ethics of humanism. For him, the goal of all religious inquiry, and the terminus of all philosophical investigations is the attainment of eternal Bliss and spiritual glory.

I am happy that Dr. P. Munikrishnaiah asked me to write the Foreword to this valuable work. I wish that Dr. Munikrishnaiah writes many more books of this kind and makes Indian Philosophy and spiritualism richer.

Dated: 29.4.95

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SRI MALAYALASWAMI
ON RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE

Since I was a native of Srikalahasti, I used to hear a lot about the Vyasasramam of Yerpedu, and its founder His Holiness Sri Malayalaswami from my younger days. Sri Malayalaswami was held in high esteem by the people of the area. The people deified him and worshipped him. Though he was a Malayalee, he came to Andhra and practised penance on the sacred hills of Tirumala and attained enlightenment. He founded an Asramam named after the sage Vyasa in between Tirupati and Srikalahasti, the famous pilgrim centres of Vaishnavism and Saivism respectively. He rendered invaluable services to Andhra desa. Despite an apparent spiritual outlook, all his efforts and contributions were pregnant with social concern and social upliftment.

The Swamiji never entertained a blind belief in the teachings of Sanatana Dharma. He maintained a harmonious balance between the claims of reason and revelation. While on the one hand placing due reliance on the authenticity of the Sastras, he used to examine the truth or falsity of their import from a critical stand point, on the other. This is the reason why he happened to express on many an occasion to express views very much different from the fundamentalists. In this respect, he can be ranked with the great Vedantins like Swami Vivekananda, Ramatirtha, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Sri Dayananda Saraswati.

"Sushka Vedanta Tamo Bhaskaram" his magnum opus, which he wrote in 1919 while he was practising penance at Tirumala hills effected a revolutionary change in the attitudes of the people, spiritually and socially. While on the one hand proving his reformatory and welfare conceptions and doctrines
with illustrations, he has expounded in this epoch-making book his bold and revolutionary ideas on caste system, women education and their competence to receive Brahma Vidya. The traditionalists reacted to his views very sharply. But the enlightened people could discern and appreciate the truths and validity in Swamiji’s arguments. This is the reason why the Book has received immense popularity and converted thousands of people as his devotees. Even after 70 years since its publication, the book has as much relevance as it had those days.

His works in Telugu run into thousands of pages and they are all published by the Vyasasramam. An attempt is being made to publish his works in an organised manner under the caption ‘The complete works of Malayalaswami’. There is immense scope for Research Scholars to take up studies in his works which will be a source of inspiration for the people in the spiritual field. I have touched in my thesis only some aspects.

India is said to be the land of Religion. There are various branches even in the Hinduism. Other religions also entered into this country and established their positions firmly. What is required today is an integration of all these religions by which the country will prosper in peace and happiness. Sri Malayalaswamiji has shown the path to achieve the unity and integrity of various paths of religions by his teachings and practices. It is indeed a god-given opportunity to me to write this thesis on the great Mahatma and I will consider of my efforts to be more than compensated if the teachings of the Swamiji are appreciated and practised.
FOREWORD

It gives me immense pleasure to write these few lines here.

Sri Malayalaswamiji who established the Vyasasramam, was an embodiment of Anushthana Vedanta. He was a combination of Karma, Bhakti and Jnana Yogas.

Even in the present age, Bharat, the Land of Vedas, gave birth to several noble personages like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramatirtha, Ramana Maharshi and Swami Sivananda Saraswati. Sri Malayalaswamiji also belongs to this category.

Dr. Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, the former President of India, described Swamiji in the following words:

“Swamiji was a revolutionary fighting against narrow casteism. He was imparting Vedic education to all. He was a great saint and spiritual leader.”

(Centenary Souvenir p.14)

Swami Chinmayananda, the founder of Chinmaya Mission, paid rich tributes to Swamiji in the following words:-

“Such a colossus in spiritual world comes and serves the community but rarely. Malayalaswami was one such stupendous saint of infinite blessings. He brought living Vedanta into the hearts of Telugu people through camps and lectures, books and journals, Asrams and temples, schools and satsangs”.

(Ibid - p.11)

The services rendered by Sri Malayalaswamiji were not confined to spiritual field only. They were extended to social field also in various ways due to which lakhs of people were immensely benefited.
The Swamiji, through his brilliant and dedicated services has endeared himself to the people of entire Andhra desa.

Sri R.M. Challa who translated some of the important books of Swamiji into English has rightly observed that no other saint in this century has done so much social good as did H.H. Malayalaswami and the world community of seekers of truth is to recognise the fact that Malayalaswami is the Saint of the Century.

I had the opportunity of learning Sanskrit in my boyhood in Sri Vyasasramam established by Sri Malayalaswamiji. I had also the special privilege of writing his life history in Telugu which was published in 1976, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Asram. This biography of Swamiji is very popular among the devotees.

English is the only suitable language, through which the message of Swamiji can reach large number of people throughout the world. Though English translations of some works of Swamiji are now available, no critical estimation of his writings is so far attempted by anybody. I consider this book as the first step in that direction. It will show the way to the scholars in future to study not only the vast spiritual literature created by Swamiji, but also various movements led by him to serve the society.

I was expecting this type of research work about swamiji since a long time and my wish has been fulfilled by this dedicated work of Sri. P. Munikrishnaiah who accomplished this task under the fruitful and able guidance of Dr.M. Veeraiah, Professor in Philosophy, S.V. University.

May Swamiji's blessings be upon Sri. P.Munikrishnaiah, Dr.M.Veeraiah, as well as the readers of this precious research work.

Dated: 27.4.'95

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The present work is a revised version of my Ph.D., Thesis. I am grateful to the Sri Venkateswara University, for allowing me to publish it.

I am highly indebted to Professor M. Veeraiah who was my Supervisor and Guide for my Ph.D. work. It was he who encouraged me to undertake studies in the Philosophy of Sri Malayalaswami of Yerpedu. He encouraged me in my studies, discussed various religious and philosophical issues relating to the Swamiji’s teachings with me and made it possible to bring out a work of this kind. Most importantly it was his way of interpreting the Swamiji’s concepts and theories which functioned like a guiding star for me.

I must gratefully express my gratitude to Sahitya Siromani Sri Samudrala Lakshmanaiah of Sri Venkateswara Oriental College, Tirupati who initiated me into the Swamiji’s teachings. He is not only the author of “Sri Malayalaswami Jivita Charitra” but also a devout and devoted disciple of the Swamiji and he has contributed yeoman service to spread the teachings of the Swamiji through his erudite and eloquent lectures on the one hand, and scholarly writings and publications on the other. But for his utmost cooperation, the present work would not have attained its present form.

I am highly beholden to His Holiness Pujiyasri Vidyananda giri Swami, the present Peethadhipati of Sri Vyasa Asramam, who took great interest in the present work on the Swamiji and provided me with all the necessary facilities on my occasional visits to the Asramam and placed at my disposal all the relevant literature available in the Asramam. The Swamiji encouraged me in my studies.
My grateful thanks are due to the authorities of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati and Sri Vyasasramam, Yerpedu, for providing the necessary financial assistance towards the publication of this work.

It is my duty to pay respect to my parents who all through my career have showered their blessings on me. I am thankful to my wife who has been a source of inspiration to me in completing this work.

Last, but not the least, I owe a debt of gratitude to all the inmates of Sri Vyasasramam for their very friendly and helpful attitude towards me in the preparation of the present work.

P. Munikrishnaiah
INTRODUCTION

The last part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century has seen many social reformers and philosophers. As told by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gītā, whenever there is a danger to Dharma, God himself came down to protect. We must take true measure of India from the poets of the Vedās, the sages of the Upanishads, the founders of the Vedānta and Sāmkhya philosophies and the authors of the oldest law books, and not from the millions of people who have never for one moment been roused out of their drowsy dream of life. We had Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa, the sun that ablazed the whole religious sky through his beloved disciple Swāmi Vivekānanda. Similarly, in south India, Sri Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai, Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry, Sri Nārāyana Guru of Kerala, Sri Malayālaswāmi of Andhra Pradesh are the most famous. Sri Ramana Maharshi attuned the Jñānins and Sri Malayālaswāmi chistled and shaped the uneducated women in Andhra Pradesh. Thousands of women were made to recite and get byheart the Slokas of Bhagavad Gītā and Upanishads. They all have come down with strong determination to spell the dark clouds of ignorance in the minds of thousands of people. They led a life of purity and discipline and set an example of ideal living and paved the way for many to tread their path.

Kerala State has a historical significance in ancient Hindu tradition of philosophy as well as its natural scenes. Sri Sankara, the greatest exponent of Advaita philosophy was born in Kerala. Sri Nārāyana Guru, a great social reformer and a religious leader was also born in Kerala. He was a teacher of Siddha Sivalinga Guruswāmi, the teacher of Sri Malayālaswāmi.
The whole Andhra Desa, had become spiritually vibrant by the very presence of Sri Malayālaswāmi. His teachings of compassion, fraternity, and equality made the people realise the greatness of Hinduism and the significance of Sanātana Dharma. By his well versed knowledge of the scriptures, he dispelled ignorance and educated the Telugu people in the perennial Hindu philosophy and brought about a general climate of spiritual values of life among them, besides giving personal guidance to individuals who required it from him. Owing to his compassion and piety, the women and downtrodden people were given an opportunity to study the Bhagavad Gītā. Swāmi Sivānanda, commented “His personal life was a living commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā.”

Sadguru Maharshi Sri Malayālaswāmi was born in a middle class family in Engandiyur village near Guruvāyur, a famous pilgrim centre in Kerala State on 27th March, 1885. His parents were Nottiyamma and Kariyappa. His original name was Velappa. Nottiyamma was a strict disciplinarian. Under her care, from the early boyhood, Velappa was stressed on good behaviour. Velappa’s greatness was witnessed even during his boyhood. Unlike other children, he would obtain from playful acts and spend much of his time alone. Aggressiveness so natural to children was almost absent in Velappa.

At the age of five, his parents sent him to a school. There he learnt Sanskrit and Malayālam. Classical Sanskrit literature was the main subject taught. There Velappa started his education with ‘OM’ a syllable used by every teacher in the beginning. He used to practice meditation for hours in a secluded place, without food. He used to be very receptive to talks on Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata. He would seek the blessings of elders and mendicants visiting the village. This boy was filled with pity even for small birds and insects.
Velappa’s daily activities used to be prayer and participation in Bhajans. He would never believe what others said but would discern and discriminate. Thus from his childhood, he was a keen observer and exercised his discretion. While observing the yogic practices of Velappa, Nottiyyamma felt that her son would one day or the other leave the house in search of Truth. Her prediction came true. After finishing elementary education, Velappa had the opportunity of prosecuting Sanskrit education. This greatly helped him in his later life. Sri Nārāyana Guru exercised a tremendous influence on the later life and activities of Velappa.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Kerala society was pregnant with social imbalances and caste prejudices. The so called middle and rich classes treated low castes as untouchables and exploited them in every way. As a consequence millions of Hindus got converted into either Christianity or Islam and it gained for them many favours. The atrocities perpetrated by the higher castes on the lower in Kerala, were totally inhuman, a phenomenon that prompted Swāmi Vivekānanda to call it a “lunatic asylum”. Nārāyana Guru has tried to canalsie the caste feelings and achieved solidarity and strength of the downtrodden people through his poems and verses in Sanskrit, Malayālam and Tamil.

Nārāyana Guru was a social reformer and a truly ‘Jīvanmukta Karma Yogi’. He gave orientation to the ancient wisdom and culture of India, to make them broad based and applicable to the whole world. He was well versed in Vedās and the scriptures. His studies and meditations had led him to conclude that there was absolutely no difference between man and man. Today, the conditions in Kerala are totally different. Though casteism still exists, untouchability has been mostly eradicated. Nārāyana Guru’s teachings and
works have contributed a great deal towards the making of modern Kerala. Sri Nārāyana Guru established three Institutions each in Aruvippuram, Sivagiri and Alwaye - an eloquent testimony to Swāmījī’s love for natural beauty. He also established an ‘Advaita Ashram’ in Alwaye on the banks of Alwaye river. There he opened a residential Sanskrit School for students of all castes. He did not build a temple or install an idol at ‘Advaita Ashram’. Arrangements were made only for conducting prayers and reading strictly in accordance with Advaita. Aruvippuram was the centre of all his activities. His philosophy was firmly rooted in Sankara’s Advaita and carried it to its logical conclusions. He therefore, opposed caste system as well as other systems that segregated human beings. The Guru also established the Dharma Sangham, which was purely meant for his Sanyāsin followers. Nārāyana gurukula at Nilagiri ceaselessly continues till today the propagation of ‘Brahma Vidya’.

Swamiji established an organisation known as “Sri Nārāyana Dharma Paripālana Yogam” (S.N.D.P. Yogam) in 1903 with the aim of improving the religious and social conditions of the low caste people. Many educated young men were enlightened and became Swāmījī’s disciples and monks. Swāmījī used to propogate his thoughts through leaflets and public speeches. Their slogan is “One caste, one religion and one God for men”. Each man did not have a separate caste, a separate creed or separate God, since all men belong to the same species. Whatever be their religion, dress, language, etc. there is no objection to their marriages or taking food together. His actions proclaimed his love for the lower classes. He always laid special stress on the noble values of life in all his directives. The S.N.D.P. Yogam’s motto was “Strength through organisation. Freedom through education. Fight for social justice.” The organisation propagated the message of Nārāyana Guru to the people
that caste has to be eschewed. Otherwise, there is no salvation. Caste should be abandoned to maintain the state. Men should live as one caste. They should maintain purity in thought, word and deed. Whatever be the creed, man should be good. This opinion should be universally accepted.

His message of “One caste, one religion and one God” has effect ed improvement in the social and religious sphere. As a religious leader, he was respected throughout India. As a social reformer, he was looked up to by the down-trodden people and the benefits they derived were immeasurable. He did not want man to be tied to any particular religion. For him man was more important than religion. In his own words, “Whatever be the religion, man must be good”. The aim of all religions is the same. Religions are there only to provide in the individual soul an attitude in favour of progress. What distinguished Nārāyana Guru were his noble qualities such as his unparallel religious faith, deep scholarship in the philosophy of Advaita, spirituality, compassion and unassuming concern for the welfare of the world.

The Vaikom Satyagraha is an agitation which was started in 1924 at Vaikom under the supervision of Nārāyana Guru, against the prohibition of temple entry. This had attracted the All-India leaders like M.K.Gandhi and the Indian National Congress.

It was under the influence of Nārāyana Guru, a number of young and educated persons were enlightened and joined in the Sangham. Among the dedicated students of Sri Nārāyana Guru, ‘Sivalinga’ was one. He did meditation and penance and attained ‘Jīvanmukti’ and so people called him Siddha Sivalinga Swāmi. Siddha means one who attained Liberation. With the benediction of his Guru, Siddha Sivalinga Guruswāmi established an Ashram in the name of Sri Nārāyana Guru as “Nārāyana Ashram” in the village ‘Peringotukara’, which
is ten miles away from Engandiyur, the birth place of Sri Malayālaswāmī. People considered him as the representative of Nārāyana Guru. He came to be well-known not only in his village but all over the district.

With the permission of his parents, Velappa left for Nārāyana Ashram, viewing Siddhasivalinga Guru as his spiritual master and the Ashram was the seat for his further course of studies in Sanskrit and Vedānta. He received Velappa as a disciple for special training. With great zeal and enthusiasm, Velappa started his studies. Daily he used to recite the Sabdas (Grammar testimony) and slokas with strong determination and constant perserverance. Apart from education, Velappa used to perform daily pooja and meditation. He did hard work during his stay in Gurukula. Velappa was convinced that great saints like Sri Sankara became world teachers due to their education and spiritual discipline. According to Ashram discipline he started practising five outward disciplines - wearing clean cloths, living in a pure place, taking limited food, uttering good words, and keeping the body clean. He also started in the Gurukula itself the practice of internal disciplines. Those are - abstinence from certain foods, timely meditation, stay in one place, control over mind and senses. The Sāstrās say that all these disciplines are essential for any aspirant.

On one auspicious day, Siddhasivalinga Guru was pleased to impart to the young Velappa the true secrets of Yoga (i.e. the eight methods of Ashtānga yoga), the ways of meditation and its realisation, and the meaning of Mahāvākyās. Thus he was blessed by his preceptor. He practised Siddhāsana, Padmāsana and was in complete control over his respiration, so that his physique became fit and healthy. In the practice of yoga, the study of books like Hathayoga Pradeepika, Gheranda Samhita, Yoga
Sikhopanishad, Yoga Kundalini Upanishad, etc. helped to acquire further knowledge. Velappa became master in Sanskrit and paragon of Vedānta. Bhagavad Gītā was his regular study. He mastered both major and minor Upanishads. He was well acquainted with Yoga Vāsishtha. He studied the life histories of Buddha, Christ, Muhammad and the like and understood all the intricacies of these religions. He was also inspired by the teachings of Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa and Swāmi Vivekānanda. This hard work during his stay in the Gurukula kept him in good stead in his later days when he became a Sadguru Malayālaswāmi in Andhra Desa.

The devotion with which he performed the daily pooja helped him in later days. He realised that mental worship is more superior than idol worship. Fix one’s heart as the temple, deity is the idol, chanting of mantra is mental worship. His innate egoism being annihilated, he was free from afflictions and physical bondages. He was determined to attain Nirvāṇa. By then, his education was completed in the Gurukula. With the blessings of Sidda Sivalinga Guru, Velappa left for Sivagiri to meet Nārāyana Guru, who is the personification of knowledge. Nārāyana Guru could easily recognise the saintly symptoms on his face and blessed him. Velappa was already enlightened by his revolutionary teachings. Attracted by his social and philosophical trends, he stayed there for some time and returned to ‘Peringotukara’.

II

At the age of 20, Velappa made up his mind to visit pilgrim centres in India where great saints lived. His mind started thinking like this. By sticking to one’s own home nothing can be attained. Without sacrifice nothing can be achieved. How could Siddhartha, the prince attain Nirvāṇa? How could Sankara become the world teacher without
renunciation? Through his sacrifice Jesus Christ became the son of God. Holy Muhammad became a Prophet by giving up all his away. In ancient times, Maitreyi, Gārgi, Sulabha and other saintly women renounced the world and sacrificed their worldly affairs. Praise worthy are the love and sacrifice of Meerābai. In recent times, the life and activities of Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa, and Swāmi Vivekānanda reveal that by trials and tribulations only man achieves enlightenment. When oil burns and evaporates then only it gives illumination. Thinking thus, he left the house and entered the arena of the world in search of truth.

He realised visiting pilgrim centres have great advantages. During these travels one may come across a good master, if he already had none. One can learn the customs and traditions of various peoples of different languages. In some places, the rivers and streams have good effect and in some other places the minerals in the earth impresses well on the body. All these facts help the spiritual aspirant in his meditation. That is the reason why Velappa preferred to travel on foot only. He walked twenty miles a day and wherever there was a choultry, he took food offered to him. If not so, he begged for food from residences of the house-holders. Firstly, he travelled through Karnataka. By visiting Ashrams and temples, he reached Udipi, the place of Madhvāchārya. He visited many Sanskrit schools, since Udipi is a centre of Sanskrit learning. He proceeded to Subrahmanya Kshetra located in the dense forest area ideally suited to meditation. In Karnataka, Velappa went to Dharmasthala, where Lord Manjunādheswara was being worshipped. After visiting Sankara Nārāyana Kshetra, he proceeded to Mahābaleswara which was located on the western coast.
Encountering many difficulties on the way, Velappa entered Pandharpur in Maharashtra where great Bhaktas like Gyānadev, Tukaram, Sakkubai, Muktabai were liberated. After Pandhur visit he left for Bombay. Omkāreswar was a pilgrim centre on the banks of river Narmada where he stayed for two days. He visited Gīrnār and Sudhāma Ashram and then directly proceeded towards Punjab. There he met Hathayogins. He visited golden temple in Amritsar and then proceeded to Kāshmir. After enjoying the scenic beauty of Kāshmir, he travelled towards Haridwār. Further, in the course of his journey, Velappa visited famous pilgrim centres like Madhura, Brindāvan, Gokula etc. In Brindāvan, the Bhakti cult of Krishna Chaitanya and the devotion of the people and their concentration in chanting Hare Rām, over-joyed him. He stayed there for about a month. There he conversed with priests and pundits in fluent Sanskrit and in other places he used to talk in Hindi. And then, on his way to Haridwar, he reached Kurukshetra where Lord Krishna taught Gītā to Arjuna and also visited many Ashrams and Gurudwāras. There he found the Institutions of Arya Samāj founded by the famous religious and social reformer Sri Dayānanda Saraswathi. Velappa was greatly inspired by the Gurukulas established by the Arya Samāj, separately for girls and boys and the ideals with which these Gurukulas were established. He was very much attracted to the way of their study of the Vedās, their practice of celibacy and habits of food, their sense of equality and above all limitations of caste and creed and the reform movements. These unique contributions of the Arya Samāj made Velappa form a high opinion of Dayānanda Saraswathi, its founder. In the opinion of the Swāmīji, Dayānanda is a great soul, who gave prominence to the quality of the self in the place of the
caste of an individual. When he visited the Gurukula for girls, the Swāmījī on hearing the girls chanting the Vedās said that he was reminded of the Rishi Kanyas of the ancient times. It must be said in this context that the establishment of the Gurukulas by the Swāmījī in later times owes to a large extent to the tremendous impact of the Gurukulas of Arya Samāj.

From Haridwar, Velappa went to Rishikesh where there were plenty of Ashrams on the bank of the river Ganga. He spent three months in the sacred hermitages of the Sādhus. He was highly pleased with the pious and calm atmosphere of Himalayas and was absorbed in meditations. After reaching Badari, he plunged into the ‘Agnikunda’ a famous warm spring and worshipped Badari Nārāyana. It was at Badari, where Vyāsa did penance and Adi Sankarāchārya wrote his commentary on Brahma Sūtras. He meditated and contemplated the Brahma Sūtras several times in that sacred place. Further, he went to Brahma-kapāla Kshetra. After staying for forty days visiting all the important centres he started back to Rishikesh and Haridwar.

Naimisāranyā was a historical and sacred place where the Rishis and kings conducted sacrifices for hundreds of years with a view to realise the Self. The significance of the ancient literature and culture was revealed by Soota to Saunaka and the like in the religious assemblies held here. Soota was well-versed in the epics and purānās and knew everything that Vyāsa and other sages knew. Velappa spent three days in Naimisāranyā and ten days in Ayodhya where Rāma was born. He proceeded towards Prayaga - the confluence of Ganges, Jamuna and Saraswathi, where deep rumbling noise is distinctly heard. Taking two pots of water, he went to Banaras.

Kasi, the centre of Veda and Sanskrit learning attracted him very much. He spent his days visiting all the Vedā
Schools and Mutts. But he was very much surprised at the caste discrimination shown by learned men in teaching Sanskrit. Velappa was greatly impressed by ‘Varanasi’ not only for its religious sanctity as a pilgrim centre, but also for its being a great centre of Sanskrit learning. Pundits were spell-bound and heard his replies in Sanskrit at their questions in Vedas and Upanishads. He spent four months (Chāturmāsya Vrata) and proceeded to Vishnu Gaya where he offered oblations to all the creatures. And then he proceeded to Buddha Gaya where Lord Buddha attained Nirvāna. There he spent three days in meditation. His next trip was to Navadweep, the birth place of Lord Krishna Chaitanya. From here, he went to Calcutta.

In Calcutta, Velappa visited Kāli temple and proceeded to Puri Jagannātha Kshetra. He observed that there was no discrimination of caste and creed in giving alms and food to the pilgrims. He halted there for a week and proceeded towards Andhra Desha. He entered through Ganjam and reached Simhachalam and passing through forests he paid a visit to Bhadrachalam where he worshipped Sri Rāma, Lakshmana and Sīta and proceeded to Srisailam. There were many caves near the temple which were suitable for his meditation. The tribals known as Chenchus, daily provided milk and fruits to him. From Srisailam, he proceeded to Tirumala to worship Lord Venkateswara. While touring the length and breadth of Andhra Desha, Velappa realised the conspicuous absence of Ashrams giving shelter to the needy and the deserving people any where in the State. Velappa had a feeling that by and large the people of Andhra were lacking in the qualities of devotion, knowledge and renunciation. And it appeared to his mind that if a great pilgrim centre like Srisailam were to be situated in the North, what a glorious development it would have had! It is such feelings as these that Velappa had that were instrumental
for his establishment of ‘Vyāsa Ashram’. and other centres of learning in the State.

He visited Tirumala Hills where many devotees feel and worship the very presence of Lord Venkateswara. He visited Gogarbham cave, Pāpavināsanam and other sacred places in Tirumala Hills. When he was in the Gogarbha cave, the scenic beauty, the stream of fresh water attracted him very much.

He spent a whole day in Gogarbha cave in deep meditation being convinced that the spot filled with calm atmosphere is most conducive for practising penance. His mind being greatly illumined, he came to the decision that the particular spot is the right place for his successful yogic practises. This idea of settling at a calm and secluded place for undertaking penance has been there in his mind for a long time and the Gogarbha cave on Tirumala Hills fulfilled this ambition.

However, he first wanted to complete his pilgrimage. So he proceeded towards Arunachalam, Kanchipuram and Chidambaram, where he saw beautiful temples unlike in North India. But there are no Ashrams for Sādhus to stay and meditate. Chidambaram was the place where Pānini wrote his Grammar. Saint Nandanār, a devotee of Lord Shiva did penance and attained liberation. Velappa spent few days in reading grammar and meditation. Further, he proceeded to Sri Rangam, famous for the temple of Sri Ranganādha. He went to Palani Subrahmanyeswara temple. Here he opened one of the pot of holy water of Ganges which he brought from Triveni and performed Abhisheka (sprinkling of water on the presiding deity) to the Lord. In Palani, he was pleased with the distribution of food to the pilgrims by the rich philanthropists. From Palani he left for Madhura where Devi Meenakshi and Sundareswar were the principle deities. Hence
he reached Rameshwaram, the last and final place of his pilgrimage. With the another pot of Triveni water, he performed Abhisheka to Ramalingeswara thinking that his corporeal body was purified. As by this time, he had completed four famous pilgrim centres - Dwaraka, Badari, Jagannadh and Rameshwar, he had the pleasurable feeling that he had circumambulated mother India.

III

On one day at the age of 29, he started towards Tirumala Hills. On his way by foot, he visited Kurtalam, and Ghatikachalam. He visited the wonderful temple of Kālahastiswar and Devi Jñānaprasūnāmba. Ultimately he reached his cherished ideal cave of Gogarbha on the third week of December, 1913.

Having travelled on foot, throughout the country, he had a close understanding of the circumstances of the country. He realised the truth that the whole prestige of the country depended on Brahman knowledge as enunciated by the ancient Rishis and that it should be the sacred duty of the Sadhus to carry on this tradition uninterruptedly. He recalled to his mind a large number of patriots who had sacrificed everything for the freedom of this country at the beginning of this twentieth century. But he sincerely believed that this political freedom would not suffice. It is only when the country is enlightened by self-knowledge, true freedom will have been achieved. According to him, if freedom of the country is the means of Pravritti, the freedom of the self is the means of Nivritti. Therefore, it was his avowed opinion, that renouncers, sādhus, devotees and the like, should strive to attain the kingdom of the Self. Brahman knowledge is the primary means for the realisation of self-knowledge. This truth is proposed by Upanishads, Bhagavad Gītā and other
sacred works. The Swāmījī asks: What is the reason for the fall of Brahman knowledge which once had a glorious status? Unfortunately, the Swāmījī feels the caste system which was actually based on the quality of the self in ancient times, has taken a wrong route in course of time. During the middle ages, many interpolations in our Sāstrās further deteriorated our conditions. All such thoughts impressed in Velappa’s mind even while he was touring the country. Even at that time he came to a decision, to initiate revolutionary measures in philosophical thinking to turn the people’s mind towards liberation and to undertake welfare measures to improve the lot of people. He very much wished to show the people the path by which people could attain happiness in this world and in the world beyond. But the most important thing to be remembered here is that Velappa believed that only one who is himself liberated will be able to liberate others. Unless one attains perfect peace for himself and enjoys unalloyed Bliss, he is not competent to teach these matters to others and ask them to work for these ideals. This is the reason why he wanted to practise penance at Gogarbha cave.

Swāmījī determined to realise Brahman before starting any activity. While he was meditating, the following Sanskrit Sloka so spontaneously came to his mind:

Atīta Vairāgyam Akhanda Bōdhah :
Kadā nu me sidhyatu He, Dayālo,
Samādhi Yōgasya Parasya Nishthā
Sarvēshu Bhutēshu Samatva Buddhih :

O ! God, the manifestation of kindness, when will you bless me with extreme detachment, absolute truth, a perfect state of Samādhi, and a sense of equality towards all living beings?

The Swāmījī gave expression in later times that the above four objectives were the ideals of his life. It is a
well known fact that at the skirts of the forest, Vālmīki was overwhelmed with grief and uttered a Sloka (verse) of equal feet and of even measure when he saw a pair of Kraunchas dallying in amorous sports and singing in melodious notes were suddenly killed by a wicked fowler. Similarly whenever such instance occurs, Velappa used to express his experiences in the form of Slokas. Daily he obtained food by way of begging in the village of Tirumala. Sometimes, when he was immersed in meditation and was unable to go out for food, he would search for remainings and left over from the kitchen utensils of Sri Venkateswara temple. Sometimes he failed to get food even for two or three days. Many a time, he repented and thought this was the effect of his misbehaviour towards loving mother in his boyhood.

Thus many days and months passed. Because Swāmīji hailed from Malayāladesam, people not knowing his real name, started calling him as Malayālaswāmi. Even now, Swāmīji is known as Malayālaswāmi only. Gradually, many devotees thronged to see Malayālaswāmi with their woes. Whoever visited Lord Venkateswara’s temple visited Swāmīji also.

There were many water falls in the Tirumala Hills. Among them, Tumburu teertha, Sanakasananda, Ramakrishna, Pāpavināsanam, Kumāradhāra, and Vaikunta teertha were famous. He was absorbed in deep meditation in these secluded places. Tarigonda Venkamamba, a woman saint also did penance and attained liberation in Tumburu teertha. Swāmīji always chanted ‘OM’ as a means of liberation. It was the great ambition of the Swāmīji to rest himself on Pranava and identify himself with Brahman, the object of Pranava. In this stage of Upasana, the study of Gaudapāda Kārika of Māndūkya Upanishad, had immensely helped the Swāmīji
in his reflections on **Pranava**. Lord Krishna also taught Pranava in the eighth Chapter of Bhagavad Gītā. The ultimate truth taught by Kathopanishad is also this. This sound of Omkāra reverberates even now in the halls of Vyāsāshram and the affiliated institutions. All the publications of Sri Vyāsāshram, bear the symbol of Omkāra. He taught his devotees to liberate themselves by meditating on Pranava.

On the Northern side of Gogarha cave, there was a big mountain under which Swāmījī used to sit for his penance. Later on, a shed was constructed by devotees which is under the control of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, even now. While he was staying on Tirumala Hills, the Swāmījī initiated some reform movements for the first time. This refers to his decision to educate the children of beggars by preventing them from following their parents. For this, Swāmījī requested the temple trustee to start a night school for the children of beggars. The school was started with forty children. Two teachers were appointed to teach from 6 P.M. to 8 P.M. Meals was provided to the children from the temple Prasad. The conditions for admission were (1) Daily attendance (2) Being clean as far as possible (3) Byhearting daily lessons and (4) not indulging in smoking or inhaling ganjai. New cloths were distributed to them. But the experiment failed.

Further, Swāmījī started teaching Sanskrit to four children. He stipulated some conditions by offering them liberally all facilities like food, clothing, books and so on. These conditions are (1) They should never beg. (2) They should not to associate with the children of beggars. (3) They should keep their clothing and other belongings clean. (4) They should never speak falsehood. (5) They should have compassion towards all living beings. (6) They should treat all the visitors to the Ashram with due hospitality and so on. As these conditions were not observed properly, the
Swāmījī’s attempts proved in vain. But the Swāmījī still entertained a great determination to reform the poor and orphan children and improve their lot by offering them the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter and education. And this great dream of the Swāmījī could be fulfilled only after the establishment of ‘Vyāsa Āshramam’ in Yerpedu.

While on his pilgrimage, Swāmījī was pained to witness all over India that there was no proper guidance to the aspirants in the path of liberation. The aspirants who are in the path of knowing the self, lacked the essential qualities of devotion, righteousness, compassion towards fellow creatures, control over senses, restricted diet and above all, the spirit of non-attachment. The Swāmījī refers to some Pseudo-Vedāntins given to acts of sense pleasures and deceiving their followers with strange logical arguments in their support. Wearing saffron robes for them raises one to the status of Vedāntin. In their view, smoking of ganja leaf was treated as ‘Jnānapatri’. There were many traditionalists who firmly believed that women and Sudrās were not eligible for the practice of ‘Brahma Vidya’, Ormkāra japa and even the study of Sanskrit. Vedic knowledge thus remained a closed book and the Hindu generation remained ignorant of this great spiritual heritage. Sri Malayālaswāmi deeply grieved of the malice that afflicted the seekers of liberation, whose way of living resulted in a mockery of Vedānta, the very core and essence of Hindu philosophic thought.

It was in this background of prevailing situation in the country, the Swāmījī produced his precious work in Telugu entitled “Sushka Vedānta Tamo Bhāskaram” (True Knowledge) in 1919. This book has caused a flutter and revolution in the spiritual work among the aspirants and seekers of liberation as well as the laymen and paved the
way for enlightening them on the right path. This book is in the form of questions and answers in which Swāmījī condemned and destroyed the logical arguments and postulations of Pseudo-Sanātanists and false teachers and established what is practical Vedānta otherwise called ‘Anushṭhāna Vedānta’ dispelling the dark encrustations that gained across around the same. In a short time, this book in its original Telugu version has been well received by the Telugu people which immensely contributed for the spread of fame and popularity of Malayālaswāmi throughout Andhra. It has gone twelve editions so far in the Telugu version. Afterwards, the Swāmījī wrote “Sri Venkatesādi Pooja Pancharathnamāla” and “Dhyānāmritam”. Swāmījī is also said to have performed certain acts during this period bordering on the realm of miracles. It became usual practice for householders from distant places who visited Lord Venkateswara also pay a visit to Gogarbha cave. This place has also become another centre of pilgrimage in Tirumala Hills. Thus Malayālaswāmi became well known.

In Venkatagiri Taluk of Nellore District, Kotambedu Mutt was the first Ashram that was started after Swāmījī settled at Gogarbha cave. This is the first centre that the Swāmījī started for his teachings. The appearance of this young yogi of spiritual excellence soon attracted attention and people started flocking to him with one problem or the other.

Though immersed in writing books, giving discourses, and clearing the doubts of disciples, Swāmījī never neglected practising meditation. Nine years have passed since Swāmījī entered the Gograbha cave. He felt sad as he could not realise his objective viz., the attainment of eternal and unalloyed Bliss. He analysed the practices from the boyhood, his life, details of meditation, and every other things. He, after self-introspection, could not ascertain any reason for
this failure of self-realisation. However, he decided to pursue to attain self-realisation with intense spiritual concentration. At the moment, an inner voice said: All the hours, days and years of meditation should not count. Sixty minutes of complete concentration only counts as one hour of meditation. Such twenty-four hours counts a day. Unless and until there are twelve years of such full superconsciousness in one life or many births you cannot merge your consciousness and become one with the all-pervading Brahman. All the other years of Sādhana do not count. Swāmījī felt very happy at this revelation. Since then he continued his deep meditation for three years. Then he realised the meaning of “Aham Brahmasmi”. He attained “Bliss of Brahman”. He became a Jñānin. Swāmījī after attaining self-realisation, wished to spend the rest of his time to propagate Brahma Vidya to the aspirants and seekers of liberation.

IV

The book ‘Sri Venkatesa-adipooja Pancharathnamāla’ published by Swāmījī enabled everyone to perform the pooja of the Lord by himself. The revolutionary views of the Swāmījī incurred the wrath of the traditionalists. They started a movement among some sections of the people to drive the Swāmījī away from the Tirumala Hills. For his part, the Swāmījī himself was convinced that Tirumala Hills was not the proper place for carrying out his reform movements reflecting socialistic ideas. He made a move from Tirumala to Kasibugga teertham, a spot at the foot of the Yerpedu hills, near Srikalahasti, which he believed to be the most convenient place for the establishment of Sri Vyāsāshram. On 3-6-1926, Swāmījī came down the Hills and reached the place of his destination. The Jamindar of Srikalahasti by name Kumara Venkatalingamanāyanim garu gifted Swāmījī
with vast stretches of land for the establishment of the Ashram and other infrastructural facilities keeping in view the enormous potentialities of future growth and development.

In course of time, the devotees started visiting the Swāmījī in the Ashram. By and large, it was his devotees’ great respect and admiration for him coupled with their munificent contributions that were primarily responsible for the all round development of the Ashram in the later times. After the establishment of the Ashram, it was only just for two years that the Swāmījī had practiced curing the peoples’ diseases by way of herbs and incantations. From then on, he completely devoted his time and efforts to social reform movements and teaching philosophy and religion.

By then, ‘Ramakrishna Mutt’, and ‘Theosophical Society’ were already in existence and were carrying on great services in spiritualism. Such institutions were conspicuous by their absence in Andhra Desha, a vacuum the Swāmījī wanted to fill.

He wanted to carry on a constructive programme of spreading the message of Indian spiritualism. He also realised the absence of any journals meant for this purpose. This is the reason why he started ‘Yathārtha Bhārati’ a monthly journal in February, 1927. He wanted all learned men and women to contribute articles on the matters of Morality, Devotion, True-knowledge, Renunciation and Compassion towards all living beings. Great works written by the Swāmījī like ‘Swabodha Sudhākaram’, ‘Dharmasethuvu’, ‘Upadesāmritam’ (four parts), Dharmopanyāsamulu (four parts) etc. were published only after first appearing in the form of articles in the monthly journal ‘Yathārtha Bhārati’.

In 1926, the Swāmījī established the “Society for serving the cause of Sanātana Dharma (Sanātana Dharma Paripālana Sevāsamājam) for bringing activities within the reach of the common people. By this move the doctrines of Upanishads,
and the teachings of Bhagavad Gītā, were made easily accessible to the people. There arose a new awakening in the people living in remote areas as if they were excommunicated from receiving the wisdom of ancient Rishis. In these assemblies special importance was given for women. It is well known to us that for centuries women along with people belonging to Śūdra caste were considered unfit for receiving education. The Swāmījī made great efforts to rectify this mistake. The annual assemblies started in 1926 are continued till today. The Swāmījī availed his time in these assemblies to explain to the people the nature and implications of the concepts of Sanātana Dharma and Varnāshrama Dharmas. Along with the regular teachings on Bhagavad Gītā, the Swāmījī used to emphasize on the unity in diversity by his reconciliation of the apparently opposing claims of Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jñāna. He used to be equally emphatic on his pet-theory that all men and women possessing Sādhanā Chatushtaya had equal rights for the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. He had to repeatedly echo the slogan that having a great responsibility to protect the religion of the ancient Rishis. “Sanātana Dharma Paripālana Sevāsamājam” under the auspicious of which ten such assemblies were conducted, was redesignated as ‘Sanātana Vedānta Jñāna Sabha’. These Sanātana Vedānta Jñāna Assemblies effected unprecedented spiritual sentiment in the people. Thousands of people considered disqualified even to touch the sacred books of Bhagavad Gītā and the like, began to read and recite them.

Besides the conduct of Sanātana Vedānta Jñāna Assemblies, Omkāra Satra Yāgās, Saptāhās, Sādhumandalis and Chāturmāsya Vratās in different places were also conducted. The themes of these lectures used to be Pranava Upāsana, Patanjali Yoga Sūtras, the methods of Dhyāna, and the essential teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā.
Sāyam Varada Dās, Tattvānanda Swāmi and Sādhu Kutumbaiah were the three people who greatly helped the Swāmījī in the conduct of Sanātana Vedānta Jñāna Assemblies. Sāyam Varadadās and Tattvānda Swāmi were the people who worked in the freedom movement and even courted jail. Tattvānanda Swami who authored the work ‘Jñānāmritam’ had also translated the works of Swāmi Vivekānanda, Rāmatirtha and M.K.Gandhi. Tattvānandaswāmi was a man of great sacrifice who played a vital role in the social work for improving the lot of Harijans. When the Swāmījī visited Bandar, Gandhījī was staying in the residence of Pattabhi Sitārāmaiah as a guest. Sayam Varada Dās and Tattvananda Swāmi arranged the meeting between Gandhījī and Swāmījī. With the help of Tattvānanda Swāmi, the translator, the two great men discussed many spiritual matters. When Gandhījī replied that it was the responsibility of all the people to fight for the freedom of the country, Swāmījī intervened to say that while the Mahatma was striving for the political freedom of the country with truth and non-violence as his chief weapons, for his part he was striving for the attainment of the kingdom of self. Gandhījī greatly rejoiced over the many activities the Swāmījī had been doing in the service of the people.

The efforts the Swāmījī made for the spread and popularization of Sanskrit language are the most memorable among the many reformative activities that he had initiated in Andhra. Swāmījī felt that without knowing Sanskrit it was very difficult to understand the original texts and religious books relating to Indian Philosophy. Sanskrit is the mother for all languages in India. Till today, the daily prayers and Mantras are only in Sanskrit. Unless we have close acquaintance with that language, we cannot appreciate the greatness of our ancient Brahman knowledge. Many communities were prohibited from learning Sanskrit language.
After the advent of English schools, even the so called higher communities neglected Sanskrit. Sanskrit was discarded and called a dead language. The world recognised the greatness of Sanskrit language only after scholars like Maxmuller made intensive research in this language.

Swāmījī started a Sanskrit School in Vyāsāshram in 1928 in the name of ‘Arsha Vidyālayam’. Students were admitted irrespective of caste and creed. Some of them were provided with free food and accommodation. A separate school for girls was started in 1935. Even women who had no opportunities of learning Sanskrit when they were young started learning this language. It was Swāmījī’s avowed opinion that specially women should learn Sanskrit language. He also entertained the belief that women should acquaint themselves with Sanskrit besides English language in order that they reflect themselves as true symbols of Indian Culture. The Swāmījī established a ‘Kanyā Gurukulam’ in the Ashram meant exclusively for girls. The institution grew from strength to strength and evolved itself as a sacred institution in Andhra. With a view to spread Brahman knowledge in a constructive manner, the Swāmījī established a ‘School for Brahma Vidya’ (Brahma Vidyā Pāthasāla) in 1945. The Swāmījī had in his mind the Gītā statement “Adhyātma Vidya Vidyānām” (X-32) - Brahma Vidya is the best among all vidyas, which prompted the Swāmījī to establish this school. The students were taught the systems of the Indian Philosophy along with Srutis and Smṛritis. Besides regular students, all those who have come to stay in the Ashram after renunciation and inquisitive women also received Brahma Vidya.

Swāmījī extensively discussed Sanātana Dharma and the world religions. He worked for religious harmony and taught the people that hatred of other religions should be eschewed. The goal of all religions according to the Swāmījī, is essentially
the same. He understood the essence of all religions and pleaded for unified universal religion. After the morning and evening prayers were over, there used to be eight Jayagitikalu that were uttered in loud voice by all the devotees of Sri Vyāsāshramam, Yerpedu.

1. May the Religion of God be forestalled for ever.
2. May the Religion of Mercy pervade for ever.
3. May the Religion of Shānthi reign supreme for ever.
4. May the Religion of Truth shine for ever.
5. May the Religion of Dharma be restored for ever.
6. May the Religion of Rishis radiate for ever.
7. May the Religion of Liberty succeed for ever.
8. May the Religion of Wisdom spread for ever.

The Swāmījī has to be recognised more as a great social reformer who strove to drive away from the people’s minds the deep rooted evil traditions and superstitious beliefs than as a teacher who strived for the spread of Sanātana Vedānta along with Brahma Vidya. In almost all his writings are discernible not only his messages of spiritualism but also revolutionary teachings aimed at the objective that our social structure should, to start with, must undergo change and reformation. Like Sri Nārāyana Gurudev, the Swāmījī is also a great man who dedicated his life for the rejuvenation of the Indian social structure. He felt the phenomenon of racial difference essentially accounts for our country’s social weakening. It was Buddha who first fought against the Institution of caste. Following the foot steps of Buddha, the Swāmījī totally eliminated all caste considerations from his social activities.

He showed his sense of equality in practise when Harijans and Girijans were given equal status in his institutions and in his social activities without any sense of discriminations. Often times, he used to warn people who came to discuss
with them on matters of Sanātana Dharma, against the dangers of racial difference. He discusses at length the issues of social difference in his work on ‘Lokoddharakam’.

In his opinion, total eradication of untouchability cannot be achieved by merely blaming higher castes. He pleaded that Harijans for their part should strive to reform themselves in the matters of their food and other habits.

All the activities - social and spiritual - the Swāmījī undertook in the Ashram, which almost resembles the Ashrams of ancient Rishiś, were being successfully completed. A hundred branches all over the state of Adhra were started affiliated to the Ashram. In 1941, the Swāmījī established ‘Sri Vedavyāsa Printing Press’ at Chittoor. In the premises of ‘Srikrishna Gītāshram’ established at Proddatur, there are now different institutions very successfully running. They are, a Sanskrit College, in the name of the Swāmījī, a training Institute for pundits, and a Sanskrit High School. In the premises of the Vyāšāshram itself, many cottages were built, to facilitate the meditations of the devotees residing in the Ashram. Many buildings were also completed to meet the requirements of students, devotees, and occasional visitors. The messages of the Swāmījī conveyed through the ‘Yathārtha Bhārati’ reach the nook and corner of the State. Millions of people came into close contact with sacred works like Bhagavad Gītā. Even the works on Vedānta had become immensely popular.

With the advent of the year 1960, a beginning was made for the end of the great soul. For the next two and half years till his death, the Swāmījī had to live fighting with his diseases along with his teaching activities. Ultimately the end came on 12-7-1962.

‘Never hinder others’ efforts for spiritual development. If necessary, help them to the extent possible. Try to remove
any obstacles in the way of your own self-realisation. A heart filled with compassion is where God resides.” This is the great message of the Swāmīji.

Till to-date Sri Vyāsāshram situated as it is very close to the great pilgrim centres of Tirupati and Srikalahasti as illustrious centres of Srivaishnavism and Saivism respectively, shines as a glorious symbol of unity of all religions and a place of adoration for all strata of people.

More than 150 books on different aspects of philosophy have been published by Sri Vyāsāshram.

The Swāmīji published his magnum opus “Sūtravedānta Tamōbhāskaram” (Truc Knowledge) even while he was practising meditations in Gogarbla cave at Tirumala Hills. The Swāmīji’s subsequent writings commenced from the commencement of the monthly journal “Yathārtha Bhārati”.

The first part of his “Upadesāmritam” has been published in 1929 and the second of it was also published in 1930. In 1938 all the contributions of the Swāmīji published in “Yathārtha Bhārati” from 1926 to 1938, have been edited and published in a book form with the caption “Swabodha Sudhākaram”. Subsequently a book on “Omkāra” delineating on Pranavopāsana, has been published to reiterate the fact that everyone has a right to the chanting of ‘OM’.

Again, Swāmīji’s articles contributed to ‘Yathārtha Bhārati’ from 1933 to 1937, have been edited and published in the book form with the title “Dharmasethuuvu”. In 1941, the Swāmīji translated into Telugu along with notes ‘Devatāstotras’ and ‘Upanishad Mantrās’, and published a book under the caption “Stotra Manjari”. As per the traditions of Sri Vyāsāshram, a reading of these Stotras must precede reading of the Bhagavad Gītā. Latter, the Swāmīji published
a book entitled “Prasnottara Mānikya Maala” in the form of a dialogue.

In 1945, the Swāmīji published “Gītārdha Prakāsam”. This is Swāmīji’s translation of Bhagavad Gītā into Telugu, along with the individual meanings of words, notes and commentary. This was followed by his publication of “Moolamu Gītā”, “Tātparya Gītā, “Sthoolakshara Gītā”, “Mahā Bhagavad Gītā”. The Swāmīji also published “Gītāsayamu”, “Bhagavad Gītā Prabhāvamu”, “Gītāgamanamu”, “Bhagavad Gītā Ashtaadhyāyamu”, “Muktisopānamu” - all these relating to a critical discussion of different aspects of the philosophy of Bhagavad Gītā. Among the Sadguru’s works, the most popular were the already noted “Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram” and “Bhagavad Gītā Vyākhya”. Both these books have gone through several reprints.

In 1945, Swāmīji published “Bāla Yogini”. This is the life of a girl who sought truth and became a Sañyāsin. “Lōkoddrakamu” contains Swāmīji’s views on caste, and social reforms. In the same year, the Swāmīji published a small book, the title of which when rendered into English would be “Are women entitled to celibacy and renunciation?” In the same year, another booklet which when rendered into English would be “Is the sacrifice of the animal in Yajña justifiable,?” The third part of “Upadesāmritam” is also published in the same year. In 1946, Swāmīji published “Eshwara Kripa” a collection of Swāmīji’s lectures and after editing all his articles in the ‘Yathārtha Bhāratī’ contributed from 1938 to 1946. In the same year, a book on ‘Brahma Vidya’ was also published.

During 1947, 1948 and in 1949, he also published several books relating to duties of house-holder’s life, the impact of devotion on a teacher, the nature of liberation
and celibacy. In 1951, "Nārada Bhaktisūtras" with commentary was also published. In 1952, Śvāmīji published "Karma Siddhāntamu", "Chāturmāṣya Mahātmyamu", "Mukti Sopāna dinacharya" and "Jñānodaya Diary". In 1953, the fourth part of "Upadesāmritam" was also published.

There are more than forty Gītās like "Siva Gītā", "Ashtāvakra Gītā", "Uttara Gītā", "Brahma Gītā", "Ramana Gītā" etc. In 1954, Śvāmīji published a book in Sanskrit entitled "Sri Malayāla Yatindra Gītā," which contains all the teachings and ways of truth in the form of Gītā. Like Bhagavad Gītā, it has 18 Chapters with 1200 Slokas. In 1954, Śvāmīji published "Nirvighna Yogasiddhi". In 1955, he wrote a detailed commentary on Kathopanishad and got it published in the same year. Among the subsequent writings of the Śvāmīji, "Gunatrayamu - Gunatrayātītamu", "Prārabdha Karma" "Vairāgya Bōdhoparathulu", "Jivanmuki", "Pramādamu Nondakudu" are important.

Apart from all the above mentioned works written by the Śvāmīji, mention may be made of certain works edited and published by his disciples based on his lectures delivered at different places. "Omkāra Satrayāgamu", "Upadesa Rathnamulu", "Sri Maharshi Malayāla Sadguru Bodhāmritam" belong to this category. Also belong to this category the four volumes of his lectures on Dharma published under the caption "Dharmopanyāsamulu". They were published in 1949, 1953, 1960 and in 1961 respectively.

In addition to the above, the Śvāmīji got some ancient Sanskrit works translated into Telugu by his disciples and published them. The most important among them is "Yoga Vāsishtha" of Vālmiki. The printing of this great work alone took twenty years i.e., from 1936 to 1954. This was published under four parts. Other important work in this category is "Atmapurāṇa" written by Sri Sankarānandamuni. This was
translated into Telugu by Janārdhana Chaitanyaswāmi and published into two parts in 1946. He also got translated a Tamil work called “Vedānta Bālabūdhānu” into Telugu and published the same in 1946. In 1942, Svāmijī got translated another prominent Sanskrit work “Anubhūti Prakāsam” of Swāmi Vidyāranya into Telugu by Bankupalli Mallayya Sastri.

In 1946, he arranged for the translation of “Patanjali Yoga Sūtras” by Tiruvengalacharyulu and published it in the same year with his own foreword. In 1950, at the instance of the Svāmijī, Srinivasāchārya translated a Tamil work called “Mahā Bhagavad Gītā” into Telugu. In 1951, a Hindi work written by Rāhul Sānkrutāyān was got translated into Telugu by Sri Rāmakrishnānanda and published with the title “Buddha Charya”. Sivacharanam, who studied in the Ashram, also a disciple of Svāmijī, translated with commentary “Guru Gītā”, “Vieckachudamani”, “Sankaravijayamu”, “Nārada Parivraja Upanishad”, “Patanjali Yogasudhākaramu” etc.

Brahmachari Anandamohan now known as Sri Vidyā Prakāsananda Giri Swāmi, the Peethādhipati of “Sri Suka Brahmagram” of Srikalahasti, translated “Dharmapadam”. Sri Vidyānanda Giri Swāmi, the present Peethādhipati of Sri Vyāsāshram wrote “Vedāntahridayam”, and translated “Amritabindupanishad”. Many Sanskrit books and old books which were out of print were also reprinted by Sri Vyāsāshramam.
CHAPTER - I

SWĀMĪJI ON RELIGION AND HINDUISM

In the present Chapter, an effort is made to study and analyse the Swāmījī's views on the nature and functions of religion, and the real factors effecting religious differences between one religion and another as well as between the different sects of one and the same religion - expressed by him without any fear or favour in all his writings and discourses. It is true that the Swāmījī is an uncompromising advocate of the fundamental tenets of Hinduism. But he is by no means a Hindu fanatic. In fact he is one of the most outspoken critics of the Hindu Religion in recent times. In fact, his cherished ideal has been to purge Hinduism of all its impurities injected into it by the selfish and ignorant people and help it to regain its lost glory. The Swāmījī is a champion of the world religion which stands for the unity and dignity of humanity at large. For him, the essence of religion should be to unite and not to divide the people.

1. What is Religion?

Some people are of the view that for a happy living in this world religious knowledge may not be necessary and what is required is the improvement of arts which are the means of livelihood. The Swāmījī makes the following observations on such an attitude.

He defines religion as "that which explains the nature of God, the individual soul, the world, and the relation between them, and which sets the objectives of life, and the modes of realisation." Inquisitiveness to know these things is bound to occur in every human being. And this is also the point of fundamental distinction of man from the rest of the animals. Animals rest contented with the satisfaction of their physical
needs of sex, hunger and thirst. But man cannot. He begins to philosophize on the fundamental questions of life and universe. He begins to ask such questions as; how this world is created? Who is the author of this creation? What is its destiny? What is the goal of human life? And what are the means of realising it? The Swāmījī opines that a man's course of life and its ethical implications are decided by the attitudes he forms regarding the relation between him and the world. One who has no definite knowledge of Purushārthās (Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksha) and the means of their realisation, being blind to the goal of his life, can never lead a regulated and meaningful life. The ancient sages have evolved the best of the means by adopting which we can lead a good and successful life and attain the state of liberation by extricating ourselves from the cycle of births and deaths. The knowledge of this means they have conveyed to us in the form of Srutis and Smritis. As long as we remain immune to this rich heritage so long our tasks remain unaccomplished. For this reason Swāmījī felt that it was his sacred duty to teach and propagate in a lucid way, morality, devotion and true knowledge taught by the Vedās as the best means of extricating the people from the sea of Samsāra. He expressed his anguish at the phenomenon that in the world at large Viparīta Jñāna or perverted knowledge more than ignorance or Ajñāna was causing havoc. The wise people will not fail to understand that perverted knowledge relating to religious matters is the cause of all misunderstandings, quarrels and violence between human beings in the past and in the present. Each race has given its name and form to God who is one, omnipotent, and the manifestation of all knowledge and Bliss, and tried to make us believe that what it says alone is true, and what the other races say is false. The Swāmījī asks, is it not this kind of perverted attitudes that is the root cause
of hostile and inimical relations between Saivites and Vaishnavites, Hindus and Christians or between any two religions for that matter? Hence it is a good augury that we should all try to remove this kind of perverted knowledge among the people and work for harmony between religions. All the religions are one in their ultimate objectives. It may be that there may be minor differences in the means these different religions adopt in the realisation of their objectives. Does not religion mean removal of suffering and attainment of Bliss? He asks.²

The Swāmījī explains the root meaning of the word 'Matam' by referring to Pāṇini Grammar.³

**Matam:** "Mana Jnāne Bhaavekta Pratyayah": According to Swāmījī, 'Mata' may mean four things. They are, consent (Sammata), opinion (abhīprāya), knowledge (jnāna) and worship (archana). Primarily, 'Mata' means thought that is generated in the mind of an individual. There can be no two opinions on this. But some people express that their religion is the religion of God, and the religion of the Vedās. If Religion were to be the religion of God, there must be only one religion. But it does not appear to be so. The founders of the religions - Advaita, Visishtādvaita and Dvaita are the chief among the followers of the religion of the Vedās. The three great teachers have unequivocally declared that the essence and the truth of the Vedās constitute the content of each of this religions. If it were so, the Swāmījī expresses a genuine doubt as to how could each one of these teachers could determine that his own interpretation is the truth? We find around us so many people who call themselves Saivites and Vaishnavites and we are also aware of the areas of disagreement and difference between them. In view of the fact that the founders of these different faiths lived and taught at successive periods of history with
no opportunity for them to face each other, it is for us to determine which of these views is the truth.

We see everywhere around us people who conduct themselves having implicit faith in what the religious pro-pounders say. Each of the three religions of Vedānta makes us believe with authoritative evidences that its own viewpoint is the truth. There is no shortage of scriptural authenticity. There are innumerable scriptural evidences for all the three Schools of Vedānta. Nothing will be said regarding the Nāstikas or Atheists. Our concern must be with those people who are a kind of middle of the roaders, vacillating between theism and atheism. These people are in need of a new religion. The Swāmīji declares that Lord Krishna himself had preached his new religion long ago in his Gitā. This new religion is useful for the Āstikas, the Nāstikas and the third category of people referred to above. Hence, it is enough if we comprehend that the Āstikas and Nāstikas we are speaking about mean by religion whatever is generated in their minds. In such a case all problems and doubts will be dissolved. Then, they are not bound to believe that theirs is a religion of the Vedās or a theistic religion. Then, each one is free to workout his own liberation believing in any religion of Vedānta. But one thing the Swāmīji cautions about is that anything in one’s religion likely to wound the feelings of the followers of other sects should be abandoned. This should be the duty of the seekers after truth. This is also the sign of the possessors of the wealth of the Wisdom. This is also the duty of the truthful souls and men of justice.\(^4\)

If this were not so, they will also be targets of religious illusions. Now this will strengthen our conviction that religion means ‘whatever is born in our minds’. Just as the self-spring rain water acquires different tastes depending on the different types of earth it meets, so also, religions are many each reflecting the mental impressions of the individual or group
of individuals. God is that which is beyond the mind but which illumines it. When we reach this stage, we will be able to comprehend the differences between the religious propounders. That is the real Vedic religion. That is the Nectar, and that is the real Bliss. If there are still any other differences, we have to construe them as the mental impressions of the religious propounders. The Swāmījī tries to make us understand this idea by an illustration:

"Let us arrange glass pieces of different colours on a piece of iron sheet and place a candle in the night behind these pieces of glass. If we stand before the glasses, we will be able to view the candle illuminating with different hues."\(^5\)

This illustrates the crux of religion and the propounders of different religions. Then, we will be able to know that, that which is beyond the mind and is self-luminous is the Self and the Divine which is the manifestation of Truth. The Swāmījī refers to the third Sloka of thirteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā in this connection. "Know Me as the knower of the field in all fields, O! Bharata (Arjuna). The knowledge of the field and its knower, do I regard as true knowledge."\(^6\) He also refers to the fifty second Sloka of the second Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā. "When thy intelligence shall cross the turbidity of delusion, then shalt thou become indifferent to what has been heard and what is yet to be heard."\(^7\) Hence, the Swāmījī opines that the religion of Lord Krishna is the essence of all religions.

According to him if we reflect on the meaning of these two slokas of the Bhagavad Gītā, we will be able to have a view of the Religion of the Vedā, the religion of the God, and the religion of the Self only if we go beyond the mental phenomena. We will be able to clearly understand that all religions only relate to the mental and ideal phenomena.
We are all bound and remain dependents till we reach that stage. If we look at this statement from the stand point of mental impressions we will be gripped with fear. And the truth will be known if we look at it from the stand point of the Self. Hence he who desires to go along this path must remain fearless with the conviction that he is the real self which is the witness of the mind and thought. This is the reason why the Sruti teaches “Dvitiyādvai Bhayam Bhavati”⁹ (Assuredly it is from a second that fear arises).

The Swāmīji gives us a very comprehensive and illuminating definition of Sanātana.⁹ He says that Sanātana is that Transcendental state which is immune to any change and remains as divine and blissful surviving, as essentially the same in the midst of the changing states of past, present and future; creation, sustenance and destruction; waking, dreaming and sleeping; boy-hood, youth and old. And Sanātana Dharma is the means by which such a state of sanātana is realised. The duties of caste and the stages of life are creations of Māya. It is impossible for us to achieve unity in them. God’s incarnations, and the world teachers, did fail to bring all people under the shade of one religion and one caste. This is the reason why different religions and different societies came into existence. The Swāmīji dreams of one religion, and one caste on the earth. What is wanted is the religion of God, the religion of the Universe, the religion of peace and the religion of compassion. He prays for the establishment of the religion which teaches the unity of the self. The real religion which we have to take to is that which banishes all names and forms from the depths of the heart and makes us realise God in every soul. This is the religion which lies at the back of the minds of all the teachers of different religions. This is the state in which we can all live without enmity, strife and struggle. Sruti declares that one who fails to achieve this state can never be in a state of Peace.
The sense organs by themselves are impotent. The eye and the other sense organs, speech and the other activities of sense organs (Karmendriyas) are only inanimate relating to the five physical elements (Pancha bhutas). Since inanimate objects have no mobility they can never be active without aid of any moving things. It is common observation that by the activity of the moving potter's wheel, the immovable clay becomes the pot and the like. So also, immovable yarn become the cloth by the activity of the weaver. No perversions are visible in the senses of the physical body in the states of death, deep sleep, fainting etc. The eye is made up of fire. The ear is made up of ether. The tongue is made up of water. In the same way all the twenty four organs are made up of the five physical elements. Hence, it is not possible to say that the physical sense organs by themselves are capable of experiencing the sensuous pleasures. It is not also possible to say that the Supreme Self transcendental to the sense organs in experiencing the objects of sense. Sruti declares that the Supreme Self is unqualified, indeterminate, true of the form of knowledge, and eternal. No perversions should issue forth from a Brahman with no qualities. The Self of the nature of eternal Bliss, should not crave for ephemeral pleasures of sense. The physical senses by themselves are inactive. And the world is constituted of dualities: Night and day, sun and the moon, male and female, ablaze and rain, sweet and bitter, fire and water, praise and abuse, white and black, attraction and repulsion. All this is a fact of nature. The supreme Self, the basis of all these dualities is untouched by them. Sri Madhva stressed the truth of dualism to refute unqualified non-dualism and established the truth of the individual soul to experience the objects of sense pleasure. It is eight hundred years ago, the systems of Dvaita and Visishtādvaita were established. Dvaita appears to be relevant to these times.
Advaita philosophy worthy of being emulated by seers and saints met with several objections as the system fell on evil days being caught in the hands of mean professionals. But the Swāmījī is optimistic that the systems of Advaita is bound to progress. One who has realised the truth of Advaita can never waver. Hence, the distinction between the individual soul and God (Eshwara) holds good only at the empirical level and is an only illusion at the transcendental level. He illustrates his point thus. Just as the sun who reflects himself in good and bad objects alike, but is untouched by them, so also, if we can carefully reflect on the fact that all cravings after objects of pleasure only relate to the physical body and its senses, all duality is bound to cease. The Swāmījī declares that all distinction between Jīva and Eshwara vanishes when all limitations are removed consequent on a careful reflection on the truth that the Jīva is the reflection of impure Māya and Eshwara is the reflection of pure Māya. “Budbuda iva vārini” i.e., just as the waves, foam, bubbles and drops of water are not variant to the sea, so also, this perceptible physical body and the world is not different from the Self. Though the leaves, branches and the fruits appear to be different from the tree, are only a part of the tree. In reality, the Brahman is one. All other animate and inanimate objects are only illusory. According to the Swāmījī, the Bhagavad Gītā declares this experience of Brahman from Advaitic stand point is realisable only by the great and worthy saints in virtue of their great penance, meditation, Nishtha (devotedness), absolute control of the senses and also because of cessation of all mental modifications.¹⁰

In Swāmījī's view the great secret is that for anything to grow, duality is a must. No life can exist if there were to be only day time or only the night. The same is the case if there were to be rain all the time or it rains never.
Because of the existence of these dualities the world has evolved. We can grow only in the midst of praise and abuse, honour and humiliation. Hence, dualism is highly useful. He wants us to believe this as the unquestionable truth. All the Upanishads propose the truth of dualism of opposites. It is very difficult for those with the love of physical body to practise the philosophy of unqualified Brahman. The Lord declares in the Bhakti Yoga of Bhagavad Gītā, that those who have no restraint of the senses, internal and external purity and the wealth of Sādhana Chatusththaya (four-fold means) have no competence to practise the philosophy of Nirguna Brahman.¹¹

Hence, the need of the hour is the courage to love all religions which means equality of all religions. If we fail to raise to the occasion, we can never have the competency to work for the welfare of the world and to work out for our own liberation. This does not necessarily mean that we should maintain equality in our social activities like marriages and in our habits of food and drinking. All such activities must be left to likes and dislikes of the people. Here unity means to see that there is the absence of jealousy and enmity.

The Swāmījī enlists a plurality of reasons for the emergence of the newer and newer religions in the world.¹² They are (1) lack of the divine qualities found in the early propounders in those who have succeeded in them in course of times; (2) not devoting enough time for the practice of Brahmanishta; (3) lacking the qualities of truth, compassion and duty; (4) participation to a greater extent in the worldly affairs and (5) gradual diminishing of the best values of each religion. The later religious thinkers have not made any attempts to strengthen the divine values of truth, righteousness, compassion, detachment, devotion and
knowledge. Though they could not amend the state which is beyond the mind, they succeeded in amending the qualities of nature within the reach of the mind. The Śwāmījī says that just as amendments to the constitution were effected now and then to suit the changing times, so also, revolutionary changes were brought about in different religions relevant to the changing times. And this will also be the truth of the times to come. And this process will go on to the final dissolution of creation.

The Śwāmījī says that in the physical world, religion is like a ship full of dualities in the sea of Samsāra, carrying the seekers to the shore of Liberation. This is so because, the followers of Sāmkhya, Yoga, Saivism, Vaishnavism, and the like though conduct themselves in a way unique to them, all are realising one and the self-same God. Some devotees are immersed in Krishna cult, and some other devotees are liberated from Māya by their devotion to Śri Rāma. Some others have become enlightened by devotion to Sīva. Some others have attained liberation by devotion to Nārāyana. Some others have became divine by devotion to Devi (Śri Vidya). Still some others have freed themselves from the three qualities of nature by devotion to Śri Dattatreyaa. Similarly, Knowledge (Jñāna), Nishkāma Karma or disinterested action and reflection of the self have also proved as effective means of liberation. Some people have attained Brahmanhood only by reflection of Brahman. All these facts are perceptible in the Śāstras. Whatever the means, the objective is the dispelling of all Ajnāna. The Śwāmījī anticipates a possible question in this regard: which among all those mentioned above is the easiest? The Śwāmījī answers that the means founded on detachment, sincere devotion, compassion, steadfastness in truth, Brahmanishtha, is the easiest. This is the means to the divine. This, the Śwāmījī says is his religion. It is true to say that there can never be liberation by means of Karma or action.
The Swāmījī elucidates the crux of ‘world religion’ as a belief in the identification of the inner soul with the Supreme Soul transcending the limitations of the body, the mind and the Antahkarana (Inner equipment) of all the individual souls.\textsuperscript{14}

That form of knowledge is the religion of God. The God of religion is that which unites the individual with itself. Just as the sun dispels all darkness, so also, in this state of the identity of the self with Brahman, all impressions of the objects of sense, will totally disappear with no trace of them behind. The practisers can realise this Supreme state by ceaseless Swaswarupānusandhāna (a constant attempt to live up to one’s own Real Nature).\textsuperscript{15}

The Swāmījī founded “Sanātana Dharma Sevā Samāj” (Society for serving the cause of Sanātana Dharma) with the firm belief that it is only by renovating the ancient religion of the Rishis, the cause of the Indian subcontinent can be served. The avowed objective of the society was to increase the number of Brahmachārins and Brahanishthas who can be pressed into service to teach and enlighten the people of the world at large. The Swāmījī also felt the need for founding Ashrams at different places to impart the education of Sanskrit language and to impart the ancient tradition of Rishis. Among the objectives of these Ashrams was also included the need for making the Brahmanishthas experts in the philosophy of Vedānta. This the Swāmījī declares was the \textit{summum bonum} of his life. When we reflect on the life and activities of the ancient seers, we can observe the same ideas and ideals. Despite their deep and abiding involvement in philosophical reflections, the Rishis never lagged behind in their concern for social and material well-being of the people. The Swāmījī feels such should be the ideal of the present generation of the Sādhus.\textsuperscript{16}
The Śvāmījī always reflected the same ideals in and through all his activities and teachings. It goes to the Śvāmījī's credit that he organised thirty six assemblies for propagating knowledge of Vedānta at different places in the country. In all these assemblies the Śvāmījī made it very clear that the doors and windows of these societies were always kept open for people with detachment, peace-loving men of compassion and believers of God, to whatever religion they belonged, to offer prayers in accordance with their respective religions.

He exhorts the members of the society to spare no efforts to spread the message of universal love and purity. He also wants to purify in souls of the people by teaching sacred Upanishads and Yoga Sutras and imparting their philosophical implications to them. The members of the society have the total right to study all the Sāstrās that God has given to us and to practice all the means of realising God.17

2. From the Human to the Divine

The Śvāmījī has an unflinching faith in the dignity of human personality. He believes that the human can rise to the divine. In this connection, he draws our attention to the statement of Manusmriti: “Tapasā Kilbisham hanti, vidyayā amrita masnute” - Practice of penance destroys all evils. By the practice of Brahma Vidya, nectar realised.18 It is said that in Yoga Sāstra that just as the poisonous elements of Arsenic compound, Sulphur and so on, are destroyed by subjecting them to high temperature, giving rise to life saving medical powder, so also, by the constant practice of Prānāyāma and meditation, one can become a pure manifestation of power after destroying all sensuous desires. It is well known that Buddha is an incarnation of Vishnu. Till he became the Buddha, or the enlightened, he was called only Siddhartha in his householder’s stage or
Grihasthāsram. After abandoning all worldly attachments; Siddhartha took to penance in a place called Buddha-Gaya and worked out all the three qualities of nature. Siddhartha now became the Buddha. Thereafter, the people of the world began to worship the idol of Lord Buddha. Buddha is deified and worshipped in the form of idols and pictures. This should be comprehended as an instance of ‘God assuming the human form and man becoming God’. The seekers after liberation should understand the teaching of the Gītā that when the Supreme Self associates itself with the three qualities of nature, it becomes a mere self and when the individual self extricates itself from the three qualities of nature it evolves into the Supreme Self. Great effort is needed by the individual soul to become Supreme Power (Śiva), in the same way as a sculptor has to exert himself a great deal on a piece of stone to shape it into an idol. This is the reason why it is said that liberation is not for the lazy but for the Sohamparās.19

The Śvāmīji categorically asserts that all great souls worthy of being worshipped by the world are certainly those free from the qualities of nature and at any time in the history of the world no one associated with these qualities has ever been an object of worship.20 It is common knowledge that people possessing with mean qualities are treated as nothing short of animals. All those who have a desire to evolve themselves as great personalities worthy of emulation and worship should always bear this truth in mind. Sankara is considered by the people as an incarnation of God. Sankara was not considered as a world teacher or as a great prophet at the time of his childhood and days of studentship. This great and divine person became Sankarāchārya only after abandoning all worldly attachments and took initiation from Govinda Bhagavatpāda on the banks of the river Narmada, thereafter he practised great penance and purified himself
from the qualities of nature and then he was considered as Jagadguru or a world teacher.

Now the Swāmīji proceeds to cite the case of Jesus Chirst in further evidence of his great assertion that man becomes God and God manifesting himself in human form. Christ was born to the parentage of Mariya and Joseph. In the beginning he used to serve as a shephard and a carpenter. At that time, nobody ever dreamt of or could perceive the potentialities in him to become a son of God or a great world prophet. People began to adore Christ as an incarnation only after he could annihilate the mundane attributes of the self and earn for himself the qualities of God by ceaseless practice of penance in a lonely place soon after his being baptised by one called John. In course of time, Churches were constructed and Christ was worshipped as a manifestation of God.

In the same fashion, Holy Prophet Muhammed Nabi was born to Abdullah and Ameena parents. During his boyhood he was never considered as a prophet nor could people visualise the future prophet in him. He began his life as a clerk in the house of Khadizah. He later married Hazarath Khadizah herself. After a brief period of family life, he took to renunciation and practised penance on the hills of Heron for a decade and a half, and became a saint after completely annihilating all the qualities of nature in him. Then, people began to worship Muhammed uttering his teachings considering him as a messenger of God. This is a case of a Self purification by the practice of penance.

The Swāmīji also refers the founder of Sikhism - Gurunanak and interprets his life as an another instance of the evolution of man into godhood. Nānak was born to the parents of Triptadevi and Kāludu. Nānak also led family life for sometime before renouncing this world. He
also practised penance in a lonely place and freed himself of the Avatāra of Vishnu. From this time, he earned for himself the title of ‘GURU’ and people began to call him “Gurunānak”. This led the people to construct temples for him and worship him by installing idols and pictures.

Even Rāmakrishna was neither recognised as great nor worshipped as a Superhuman being in his early days of boyhood and during the time of Poojāriship (reverential observer) in the Kāli temple. He rose to the heights of the Divinc only after his practise of penance at Dakshineswar, resulting in the annihilation of the qualities of Prakriti. Now it is well known that Sri Rāmakrishna exercised a tremendous influence on the people of the world by his divinity and great humanism. He is adored as a human being and worshipped as God.

The Swāmījī now illustrates his view point by his most popular example of Mahatma Gandhi, who exercised the greatest influence on the spiritual, political, social, religious and moral and economic scene of contemporary India. Even Gandhi who became so great a leader in his days was an ordinary human being, to start with. Like any ordinary mortal, he was wedded to Kasturbai and bore children through her and led the usual house-holder’s life. He was merely called Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the name his parents gave him. Gandhi became the Mahatma or the great soul only when he renounced the family attachments and so intensely involved himself in the thick and thin of the freedom struggle to extricate the millions of Indians from the foreign yoke. During all this period, Gandhi never failed to study the Bhagavad Gītā and chant ‘Rāma nāma’. Now it is common knowledge that Gandhiji is revered and worshipped and is almost deified a few decades after his martyrdom. Gandhiji’s instance can also be considered as God’s descendance in
the human form and the human evolution in the stage of the divine. Swāmījī hastens to point out that it is true not only of men but also of women. He instances the names of Sārada Devi, wife of Sri Rāmakrishna, Kusuma Kumāri, wife of Sri Haranātha Baba and Kasturbai, wife of Mahatma Gandhi. Were not these great women mentioned above idolized and worshipped? Asks the Swāmījī. All the men and women mentioned above, belong to Brahmin and non-Brahmin communities as well.

The Swāmījī anticipates an objection from the Vedāntins: Has ever the Supreme Self become an individual soul, a silver a shell, a thread a serpent, and an inanimate animate? The Vedāntins contend the Self is ever a Supreme Soul and never becomes an individual soul. Jīva is only an illusion. Hence, they contend that it is enough if the self is realised by means of Jnāna or true knowledge consisting of the three stages of Sravana, Manana and Nididhyāsana (The hearing, concentration and meditation). The Swāmījī spells out that all this contention by some Vedāntins is itself an illusion. And this illusion is dubbed by as Jivatva by the Sāstras. And for the ground on which Sravana, Manana and Nididhyāsana are evolved for the removal of such an illusion, is called tapas. And in the absence of this tapas, Sravana, Manana and Nididhyāsana fall to the ground. The Swāmījī exhorts that everyone should understand that overcoming such an illusion itself amounts to absence of individual egoism and realisation of Brahmanhood. According to him, this is the reason why the Sāstras unambiguously declare that he who possesses the wealth of four-fold means of liberation or Sādhana Chatusththaya Sampatti is alone qualified to carry out reflections of Brahman. It is also precisely for this reason that Sankara wrote his ‘Atma Bodha’ describing the qualifications of the person who deserves the teachings of the Self.
Sri Vyāsa in the opening Sūtra of his ‘Brahma Sūtras’ says “Athāto Brahma Jīnāsa.”²³ Now, therefore, the enquiry into Brahman. He says that only after the realisation of Sama, Dama etc., one ought to undertake reflections of Brahman. The Swāmījī says that there are innumerable sources of authority for this. Attainment of Godhead, presupposes dissolution of the human nature. In the same manner, attainment of Sivatva or Supreme Power presupposes abandonment of Selfhood. This means divinity can be achieved only by a total sacrifice of the individual self. If only the seed sprouts perfect, it can evolve into a healthy tree. The tree which flourishes with branches, leaves, flowers and fruits is already pre-existent in the seed. But only on sprouting of the seed, the potential tree evolves into an actual one. In the same fashion, it must be known for definite that as long as you do not submit yourself to the Lord, so long you remain an ordinary human being and cannot realise the Brahman within you. The Self which is of the nature of being atomic in nature and susceptible to birth and death, can realise God only on his total and absolute surrender to Him. This is the purpose of surrender to God. The Swāmījī exhorts that you ought not to stop till you attain the Supreme Self of eternal Bliss despite all the ephemeral and earthly benefits that may accrue to you, in the same way as rain waters ceaselessly flow till they join the sea despite the different stages of evolution they attain the form of streams and rivers in their course. Sounding like Swāmi Vivekananda, the Swāmījī make a clarion call - ‘do not stop, march forward without looking back’.²⁴ It is not enough if you walk forward, run forward. For those who undertake ceaseless meditation, with absolute and unconditional surrender to God, the distinctions between the dawn and the dusk, the auspicious and inauspicious, places of purity and impurity and taking a bath or avoidance of it do not simply exist. The individual
soul is subject to the sufferings of birth, death, aging and disease, only till he realises the absolute transcendental Self. Once he realises this state of his being one with the Supreme Self, he evolves himself into an infinite sea of Bliss. This is the real purpose of the acquisition of knowledge of Brahman and the realisation of Brahman itself.

3. Religion: A Phenomenon of Alternative Faiths

The Swāmījī is an uncompromising advocate of the view that no religion or for that matter anyone of the different sects of a religion is absolute. In his opinion, religion is an evolving process. There is not one religion. There are many religions. And even one religion does not remain essentially identical in the course of its evolution. The birth of every new religion presupposes its dissatisfaction with the existing religion or religions and an eagerness to redeem the people keeping in its view the people's needs in tune with the times and their mental equipment. In a sense, religion is a phenomenon of alternative faiths. Before we touch upon this vital aspect of the Swāmījī's conception of religion, let us first briefly refer to his idea of the role of faith in religion.

The Swāmījī explains the role and significance of faith in religion. He says that man should have unwavering faith in all his actions that he does, the mantras he utters, the Śāstras he studies and in the sentences he speaks. All these activities are of any consequences only in so far as these are founded on an absolute and unqualified belief. It is said that there is divine power and the power to destroy all sins in the Hindu Gāyatri and other mantras. Similarly, all sins and evils vanish by regular study of sacred works like Bhagavad Gītā. This belief is based on several authorities. The Swāmījī regrets that rare are the people who have unflinching faith in those Pramāṇa Vākyas or statements
of authority. The Swāmījī refers to the people who asks such questions as: If fire has a real power should it not be capable of burning all types of fuel? If medicine has divine power, should it not cure any type of disease? The Swāmījī says such people are merely exposing their ignorance. Such people are only aware of the ordinary fire burning the timber, but are ignorant of the heat of electricity or fire capable of producing high temperature. Is it not by melting the stones that iron and steel are produced? Is it not by melting the clay that bangles and glasses are produced? Similarly there are doctors who are capable of curing great diseases like leprosy and tuberculosis. Medicines to cure those dreadful diseases have been discovered.

According to him these sceptics are lacking in faith in the mantras like Gāyatri, Sri Rāma and Srimannarāyana and the sacred books like Bhagavad Gītā which have the divine power to make a saint out of a sinner. If there were to be really such a power, why not should we believe that the mantras like Gāyatri are really capable of making saints out of sinners? It is due to this lack of faith, the Swāmījī declares that it is instrumental for so many Hindus converting themselves into Buddhism or Christianity or Islam. These religionists entertain great faith in purifying these converted people however sinful they are by means of prayers and imparting the culture of their respective religions. It is this great faith that is the cause of encouraging conversions into their religion and reforming them by offering prayers for the removal of their sins. All the Hindus converted into other religions are treated as their own brothers and sisters by the people of those religions. This is evidenced in actual practice also. In the same way, the people of Arya Samāj are taking the Hindu Pundits also into their fold. But there is one thing to be observed regarding the bonafides of those religionists who are encouraging these religious conversions.
That is like this. Just as a diseased person must refrain from indulging in things which caused him such a disease, he must also observe all dietary restrictions. In the same fashion, the people encouraging religious conversions have a two-fold task in respect of the people who were converted. They must see to it that these people not only bid good-by for their evil antecedents, but also imbibe the new culture of their adopted religion. It is only when this two-fold task is successfully carried out, one can really become pure. Mere purification of the physical body is not enough for religious conversion. What is greater is a mental modification and a purification of the self. Let it be understood that this is the truth of all types of religious conversions.

The following discussion would show that the Swāmījī substantiates the thesis with special reference to the different sects of Hinduism and the revolutionary trends of Hinduism in contemporary India.

Some religions have a beginning. It must be accepted that they are of more recent origin than religions which have no beginning. The religions known to history have their respective propounders and the period of their existence is recorded. There is no evidence historical or otherwise, as to when, Hinduism had its beginning. Hinduism, also known as the way of the Veda, is still alive by the strength of the practice of Anushthāna by its followers even in the absence of any committed propagators. Sāmkhya system is also of a very ancient origin. Eventhough we find in Sāmkhya system more number of Rishis and men of enlightenment than in Buddhism and Jainism, we really come across their idols or stories or stanzas propagating their philosophy. A close and careful review of our philosophical literature, will reveal to us that there are more references to Sāmkhya system than to Buddhism and Jainism.
Buddhism arose by condemning the Vedic religion. Jainism emerged by reflecting on Buddhism. In the same fashion, each religious propounder founded his own religion by condemning the current religion of his times. One can discern the characteristics peculiar to each of the Hindu religious sects of Saivism and Vaishnavism. While Vaishnavism evolves a qualified form (Saguna murthy) to Eshwara or the Lord, Saivism is satisfied with a Linga standing as a symbol of Eshwara.

Buddhism and Jainism have revolted against the Vedic authority accepted by Hinduism. In spite of this, Buddhism and Jainism had a vast following. What really attracted the people is the great experience of the great Achāryās. Truly speaking, the founders of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity and others were not opposed to the Vedic Religion. All these propounders were great Theists. Only the Nāstikas should be said to be really opposed to Vedic Religion. Of course, there is a view that Buddhism is a Nāstika system. The Swāmījī declares that such a view is wrong. It is so because, there is non-difference between Truth and God. Both are mutually exchangeable terms. The meaning of truth is none-else than an eternal object for all the times - past, present and future. Secondly, it is the religion of the Rishis that compassion is the same as God and the heart of compassion is really the seat of God. Thirdly, there is renunciation. In the absence of renunciation, there are no truth and compassion. The Swāmījī in this context refers to ‘Amarakōsha’ where Nirvāna is given as a synonym for Mōksha of Hinduism. The term ‘Nirvāna’ is found in the course of Upanishads and also Bhagavad gītā. Yogavasishtha consists of a major section named after Nirvāna. The truth is that ‘Nirvāna’ enunciated by Buddhism, is one of Asthika, and not of Nāstika. Even the Sāstras declare that Buddha is an Avatāra or incarnation of Sri Vishnu.
The Swāmījī observes people’s strength of mind, intellectual capacities, the potency of the senses, and righteous disposition vary in degree in tune with the times. He also observes that religions effect necessary modification to suit the mental development of the people and worthy of adoption in practice consistent with the times. If religions were to be rigid, and static, they cannot afford to redeem their respective followers. All these mental dispositions are only consequences of God’s wishes.

Sankara, Rāmanuja and Madhva are respectively the traditional religious founders of Advaita, Visishtādvaita, and Dvaita systems which are the important religious sects of Hinduism in the Indian sub-continent. The three teachers have founded religious Mutts in the different parts of the country. The shades of all religions of the world except those of Atheism may be observed in these three religions.

Advaita teaches the philosophy of one ultimate reality namely Brahman. Advaita is also called the religion of Knowledge. Visishtādvaita is called the religion of worship of God since it teaches the purification of the individual soul. This is the reason why ‘Prapatti’ is said to be the ultimate destiny in the system. Visishtādvaita is also called Sree Śānpradāya (Sree Tradition) and philosophical tradition (Adhyātma Śānpradāya). Dvaita concentrates more on the teachings of austerity, caste and the stages of life and devotion. Dvaita is called the religion of Tattva vādi (Debate of Tattva) because of its teachings on the purification of the body and senses. This is called religion of perfect knowledge (Poorna Prajña) or religion of Madhva. There are differences of opinion between these three schools of Vedānta in regard to the nature of individual soul and Supreme Soul. But all the three schools are unanimous in respect of their faith regarding Vedic religion, in their attitudes to Upanishads, Sruti and Purānas, in their respect for devotion (Bhakti),
positive mental attitude (Sraddha) and renunciation (Vairāgya); in their belief in the efficacy of penance (Tapas), meditation (Dhyāna), Yoga and ardent devotion (Nishtha). All the three schools are one in accepting the divine qualities of truth, compassion, kindness, detachment and devotion. According to them, liberation is impossible in the absence of all the qualities stated above.

Prasthāna Traya forms the basis for the three systems of Vedānta. Prasthāna traya means Upanishads, Brahma Sūtras and Bhagavad Gītā. Swāmījī refers to the common knowledge that the three great teachers - Sankara, Rāmānuja and Madhva have written their respective Bhāshyas on Prasthānatraya. The Swāmījī also refers to the common belief that a dialogue took place between Sankara and Vyāsa, the author of Brahma Sūtras and the latter’s impression that Sankara Bhāsyā is the true commentary of Prasthāna traya and Advaita is the highest truth.\(^{30}\)

In a similar fashion, it is told that goddess Sri Sārada of Srinagar seems to have appeared and blessed ‘Sri Bhāshya’ of Sri Rāmānuja as expounding the highest truth and Visishthādvaita is the only correct interpretation of Prasthāna traya. It is also told that Lord Varadarāja Swāmi as having expressed that ‘Sri Bhāshya’ is the only truth. Though Rāmanuja is preceded by so many traditional expounders of Visishthādvaita or qualified monism, the credit of founding (Sāmpradāya Sthāpanāchāryulu) the tradition of Visishthādvaita goes to Sri Rāmanuja.

In respect of Dvaita philosophy also there is a similar belief. It is said that when Madhva presented his Dvaita works on Brahmasūtras and Bhagavad Gītā to Vyāsa at Badari-kāshrama, the latter seems to have expressed that the philosophy of dualism was his religion and the real import of his Brahmasūtras and that which brings out the truth
of the Vedās. The Swāmīji feels that Krishna Dvaipāyana might have expressed his view that the people of different times understand the true meaning of the Vedānta depending on the mental maturity of the people in tune with the times. He feels there is nothing wrong in such a view. Just as a man passes through the changing stages of boyhood, youth and old age. Just as the habits of food and discipline vary, just as man passes through the different stages of life, so also, there is a corresponding decrease in peoples' intellectual abilities, spiritual power, physical strength, sense of rightousness, power of knowledge with the emergence of the epoch of Kali. The religious propounders might have prescribed religious observances so as to be amenable for practice by the people in keeping with their level of awareness and enlightenment. Just as rivers retain their identity only upto the points of their joining the sea and become one with the sea loosing their names and forms as well, religious traditions and Upāsanas retain their identity only upto the point of realisation of God. Once God is realised all these loose their names and forms. Where are truth and divine righteousness, there is liberation.

Swāmīji's opinion that the means of liberation differs for each epoch is already decided by Manu Smriti. Sāstras prescribed different means of realisation for different epochs: Penance for Krita Yuga, Yoga for Treta Yuga, Pooja and Archana (worship and chanting the name of the Lord) for Dvāpara Yuga, and chanting of names (Nāma Sankīrtana) for Kali Yuga. But some Smritis have mentioned Jñāna (knowledge) for Krita Yuga, Yajña (sacrificial fire) for Treta Yuga, Archana for Dvāpara, and alms giving for Kali Yuga as the proper means of realisation. From this it may be informed that this must be the reason for Krishna-Dvaipāyana's acceptance of all the three interpretations of Advaita, Viśishṭadvaita and Dvaita of
Vedānta. It may also be understood that seers who because of the supernatral powers to foresee a long future could have easily visualised the three interpretations as relevant to different times. The philosophy of Advaita could occur only to men of supersensuous powers. Many of the Sāstras unanimously declare that the existence of idols and their worship by the people are predominantly due to the materialistic outlook of the people and their failure to comprehend the knowledge of the means of God-realisation. The Swāmīji summarises the whole discussion and expresses the crux of it all in the following sentences. The Veda has three Kāndas and they are Jñāna, Upāsana and Karma Kānda. Sankara, Rāmanuja and Madhva have interpreted the Brahmasūtras in such a way as to serve the cause of Jñāna, Upāsana and Karma respectively. It is well known to all people that Jñāna, Upāsana and Karma are worthy of emulation by the people depending on their intellectual development. And that is the reason why all the three interpretations of Vedānta are true and necessary.

Swāmīji makes a very significant observation regarding the great founders of the different philosophical schools of Vedānta.33 He observes that Sri Sankara, Sri Rāmanuja, Sri Madhva and Srikrishna Chaitanya, despite their great contributions to religion or the different shades of Vedāntic religion have done nothing or little in respect of social reforms. The Swāmīji was at a loss to understand as to why Sankara, Rāmanuja and Madhva despite their awareness of works in social reforms like Smritis, have failed to contribute their might to this important aspect of human society. The Swāmīji goes further and expresses his deep sense of anguish as to how blind beliefs and superstitions are tolerated or went unnoticed by such men of comprehensive outlook and personifications of knowledge. The Swāmīji himself hazards a possible reason for this lacuna on the part of these great
personalities. That is this: In those days in the jurisdiction of the kings, who ruled the different parts of India also included matters concerning caste, and stages of life. For this reason, these religious founders might have not felt then any necessity to bestow their thought on social reforms. And therefore, such a thinking on their part might have suited the times. The Swâmi ji consoles himself by saying that, all said and done the temper of the times and the psychological disposition of the people might have partly contributed to such a state of affairs. But we find that Buddha, Christ and Muhammad and others have contributed both to the religious and social reforms.

Sri Râjarâm Mohan Roy, the founder of Brahma Samâj, and Sri Dayânanda Saraswathi, the founder of Arya Samâj, are the front ranking among the founders of modern religious and social reformers. Their lives and activities indicate that they were more concerned with social reforms than with religious reforms. The Swâmi ji points out that there are innumerable fabricated works in India opposing the progress of the people. These spurious writers began to make people believe that their works were creation of god and the insights of the great seers. And they also began to dub those who did not fall in their line as Nâsthikas making them subjects of punishments by the kings. The Swâmi ji firmly believes that this was instrumental for the degeneration of this country. Both these founders of the modern religions Sri Râjarâm Mohan Roy and Sri Dayânanda Saraswathi, the Swâmi ji says, made a profound study and research in all religious texts dating from Rig Veda, and Manu Smrîti till today.34 They also made an extensive survey of Smrîti and Sriti which were sources of inspiration for the innovation of new religions. They also acquainted themselves very closely with all the religious texts of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Both these great men spared no efforts to sow in the hearts
of men the seeds of truth compassion, righteousness and peace also to uproot ritualism and all superstitions illogically associated with religion from their minds. The essence of their teachings consists in exposing the emptiness of Karma Kānda and exhorting the people to live in a state of peace and calm and cultivate the divine qualities of truth, peace, kindness, detachment, devotion and the like in order to make themselves worthy of God’s grace. The Swāmījī opines that Sri Dayānanda is unquestionably unrivalled as a religious critic. According to Arya Samāj, Eshwara is formless. Incarnations are not of Eshwara. But all the incarnations are men of infinite knowledge and are possessed of divine powers in extensive measures. They were great men who scaled the heights of individual souls. Arya Samāj believes as true everything conforming to the Mantra portions of Upanishads and the like. This new religion also advocates that there is no need for any blind belief in Vedās and other Sāstras. It insists that every man should perceive after truth by exercising his intellectual power. People attain status only in virtue of guna and karma. The Swāmījī refers to the sincerity of the followers of Arya Samāj where he makes a reference to hundreds of them stationed in the Gurukula at Haridwar, who after completing study of the Vedās have taken to Brahmacharya are meditating on God in pursuit of the discovery of truth. They are also inspired to teach and propagate truth and righteousness. In all these references of the Swāmījī to the essential teachings of Arya Samāj and the honesty and sincerity of its followers we may understand how profoundly the Swāmījī came to under the influence of the new religion. It goes without saying and the Swāmījī’s establishment of ‘Sri Vyāsāshram’ at Yerpedu owes in no small measure to the professions and practices of Swāmi Dayānanda.

The Swāmījī anticipates a question by some people as to whether the religions already in existence would answer
for the pleasures of this world and the world beyond. In trying to answer this, Swāmījī makes a counter question: Are the scientists satisfied with the discovery of the secrets of nature already made? If they are satisfied and are in no mood to make any more, the Swāmījī asks, how could the great change between the present and the thousand years past be possible? Astonishing discoveries were made in physics and chemistry and many more are in the offing. The Swāmījī believes in infinite potentialities of Prakriti which can be unravelled by the exercise of human intellect. Similarly the world was never satisfied with advocacies of Advaita and Visishtādvaita. The Swamiji asks: Why did Madhva labour to found the religion of Dvaita? Why did Srikrishna Chaitanya, Vallabhācharya, Gurunānak, Dayānanda Saraswathi etc. take great pains to establish their respective new religions? He asks further. Has not these new religions served the cause of the people? The Swāmījī also warns that with these establishments of the process of founding new religions has not ceased. Many such more are in the offings.36

From all this the Swāmījī said above he wants us to comprehend the fact that all the great religious founders of the past like Buddha, Christ, and the like were never blind or uncritical believers of the texts of their preceding religious founders as ultimate authority and orders of God. But they were men of extra-ordinary self-effort and deserved the grace of God for their supreme sacrifice to serve the cause of the people. The Swāmījī exhorts that we all ought to follow their footsteps. Only by such self-effort, we may discover the light of divine knowledge. By this, the Swāmījī hastens to warn that this fact, should not lead us to the impression that we should be born as an incarnation of God or as a great seer. All the religious founders referred to above were only ordinary mortals when they were born. They rose to great heights by sincere prayers, unwavering
faith and ardent devotion. There is also the power of God pervading in all these activities. It is enough to if you enlighten yourself. The Swāmījī says that just as a spark of fire can evolve itself a great flame when fed with a lot of fuel, so also, by the constant practice and sincere devotion, we can arrive at the great flame of knowledge.

4. On Religious Differences

We now turn to a very fascinating aspect of Swāmījī’s reflection on Religion. This concerns his inquiry into a very significant question: What are the religious differences due to? Or to put it in a more straight forward way: Have the differences between different religions or for that matter between different sects of one and the same religion, any substance? The following analysis of the Swāmījī’s thoughts will show his explanation on the issue of religious differences including religious symbolism and ritualism is perfectly consistent with his fundamental stand on the nature of religion itself. Hinduism wants every Indian to be the manifestation of the divine. There is a crying need for great men having self-respect, divine knowledge, kindness and sense of brotherhood to come forward and teach the people that what constitutes the essence of religion is not the garments that we put on or the type of braid you maintain or any such kind of external appearance, but devotion to God, disciplined way of life, forbearance of the difficulties encountered in the path of righteousness. All the external features are only creations of our desires. A devotee of Siva feels supremely sacred if he could get at the temple of Siva. But a devotee of Vishnu will look at this as a symbol of sin. A devotee of Vishnu will consider a visit to a Vishnu temple and His grace as highly blessed. All such differences are only the differences of the desire. Nothing else. Muslim will look at both these devotees and their activities
as simply those of superstitions. All the followers of Islam in their turn will treat their visit to Mosque and the presence of anything related to Islam as expressions of Divine grace.\textsuperscript{37}

In a similar way the Christians will consider a visit to the Church and the sight of the idol of Christ as removal of sin and as the way to Heaven. But the Vaishnavites and Saivites would keep themselves at arms length from these things. If by any chance they get at these, they feel like taking a bath to purify themselves. Likewise, the Muslims would keep the Hindu temples and idols of God, so venerable to Hindus as mean and impure. The Swâmîjî asks, are not all these mere differences of Sankalpa? The Swâmîjî now turns to explain even the distinctions of caste are only distinctions of Sankalpa. On a careful reflection, all the so called people said to belong to different castes, are all human beings. Because of their long standing association and discharge of their respective duties, the feeling that they are of this or that caste has become implanted in their minds. The Swâmîjî refers to the possibility of intermingling of people belonging to different religious sects. For instance, he says when a Saivite begins to practice Vaishnavism, instantly develops in himself devotion to Vishnu and great respect for the Vaishnavites. The same can be said of a Vaishnavite attempting to practice the religion of Saivism. The result is, there is a dwindling of their devotion and respect for their own religious sects. By extension of the same logic, a similar fate is awaited for those who are indulging in religious conversion be it from Hinduism to Christianity or vice-versa.\textsuperscript{38} This is a clear indication that Swâmîjî is a ruthless critic of the phenomenon of religious conversion in contemporary times. All these in Swâmîjî’s view have no substance and are merely mental dispositions.
The Swāmījī refers to another important phenomenon which is also according to him is a case of mental difference. A Panchama, as long as he remains a Hindu and has great faith in Hindu gods, is treated as an untouchable. But the moment he ceases to be a Hindu, and takes himself to Islam or Christianity, is no more considered an untouchable. The Swāmījī cannot help himself to arrive at the conclusion that Hinduism is a religion of sin and Islam and Christianity are sacred religions. The Panchama, who is no more considered as an untouchable in his new home pleased himself as greatly purified, that he is one among the human race and that he has a right to participate in the accomplishment of worldly actions and duties. How is this great change in him possible? He answers that this is achieved by a proper mental disposition.

Let us now turn to the Swāmījī’s scathing criticism of the mentors of the Hinduism and cautions that Hindu religion is bound to meet its grave sooner than expected if a radical change is not brought about in their minds. He substantiates his charge by the following facts. He points out that even among the Panchamas, there are a sizable member of them who keep themselves clear by regular baths, and observe strictly all Hindu religious practices in their way of life. Despite all this, they are considered as impure and untouchable and are forced to quit Hinduism. They are now free to take to alcohols and even cow meat, considered as most sinful. But the moment, they are admitted into the new religion, say Islam or Christianity, by ‘Sunnit’ (circumcision) or by ‘Baptism’ respectively, they feel themselves highly sacred. The Swāmījī asks is not such an attitude an illusion of the mind?

Similarly the Panchama who changes to Arya Samāj or Brahma Samāj will be honoured as an Arya Brahmin
or as a sacred follower of the religion of Brahma Samāj. He then will turn and say that the Hindus are unaryans and are not constant meditators of Brahman. How is this change on his part is possible? The Swāmījī asserts that this is due to mental determination. At the time of his being admitted into Arya Samāj he is made to undergo the process of purification. He is asked to give up drinking and meat-eating. He is asked to recite the Vedic stanzas and Gāyatri Mantra and is made to wear a sacred thread (Yajnopavīta). There is the possibility of these acts of purification being instrumental for his mental modification. In Swāmījī's opinion, the same cannot be said of the religions of Islam and Christianity. What purificatory steps have these religions to implement on the occasion of religious conversions? He asks. It is just faith.

He goes a step further and declares that even the practice of consistence by a Brahmacharin, the enjoyment of worldly pleasures by the house-holder, the practice of penance by the forest-dweller, leading of the life of peace, kindness and compassion by an ascetic; are all the manifestations of this mental difference. The Swāmījī observes that the essential teachings of Jñānavāsishtha speak out this evolution of the mind. The Swāmījī illustrates this by taking a down to earth example. A mother undertakes to clean the faeces of her own child with no sense of disgust but can never treat in the same spirit the faeces of other children. What is this due to? In and by themselves both are equally impure. What makes the difference is the mother's mental disposition. The Swāmījī also alludes to the another instance to stress his point. Is not a person who once considered his householder's life with his own wise as the best, treating the same as sinful consequent on his acquisition of true knowledge and practice of renunciation? The man disillusioned by the pleasures of sense, considers even the
woman of low caste as divine. The same can be said of a woman also. One person perceives the whole world as filled with God. Another person looks at the world as inanimate, and looks at God as an Antaryāmi (Inner Ruler). A still another person treats this world as the manifestation of ignorance, and impure. All these attitudes are nothing but manifestations of mental differences. But there is the invisible law of the Lord. That is “Yadbhāvam Tat bhavati” - ‘As you think it, it will be like that’. This holds good as a Vedic injunction to all persons. As long as you want some slaves under you, so long you have to be a slave under others. The moment you treat all your slaves as your own equals, you will also be treated as their equals by those who have treated you so far as their slave.

According to the Swāmījī, men of enlightenment ought to read the Upanishads. You can never arrive at the truth if you study the fabricated Smritis and the Purānas. This is not to deny the existence of so many sacred things and teachings of morality in them. But the point is they also contain a lot of spurious things. By the law of “Swan and Milk” men of discrimination ought to distinguish between good and evil. There stands a great obstacle in our efforts to have a correct understanding of the Sāstras. That is this. We do not have authentic information as to the correct timing of the Sastras and also their authors. It is unfortunate that even some books written in even recent times pass for having been written in the name of the ancient Rishis and Seers. When once this is exposed, people begin to loose faith in even the real Sāstras, as they fail to distinguish between the real and the spurious. Rare are the people who exert self-effort in these matters. Many people take the past as dead and buried. The Swāmījī feels that it is not in the fitness of man’s nature to disbelieve in what is known by perception and to fall back on the authority
of Sabda. The Swāmījī observes that though the Purānas contain some objectionable portion in these matters, the contents enunciated in ancient Vedic mantras, Upanishads, Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali are testified as true even by men of modern science.

The Swāmījī now turns his attention to the gap between professions and practices of religious propounders. He says that if there is at least one among a thousand religious teachers who really means what he says and does what he means, he would not only liberate himself but also helps the liberation of this world. He would have attracted thousands of followers. The Swāmījī says words without practice are like flowers in the sky. They are like mirages. He declares the religion which takes cognizance of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in its consideration of the classification of people and which gives primary importance to truth, kindness, devotion, brotherhood and service to the people, is the religion in the real sense of the term. The Swāmījī exhorts people to abandon any religion which falls short of or contradictory to these ideals. The sooner you abandon the better it is. Religions should really strive to the all round development of the people and progress of the people. What hinders these and divides people are no religions. Such things are not religious but irreligious. The order of the day is such that people are carried away by the people without much reflection and carried away by anything that goes in the name of religion. The Swāmījī expresses his anguish in the existence of so many sects of Hinduism like Sāmkhya, Yoga, Advaita, Visishtadvaita, Dvaita etc. He says there is no substance in their differences. These differences are nothing but reflections of the mind. For instance, one considers worship of the idols as an act of merit and is a means to the realisation of God. Another one considers the same as an act of sin, and diverts you from the path
of God-realisation. One considers Yoga as a means of liberation. But some other considers service of the people is real means of liberation and this is given the name of Karma Yoga. Some one considers devotion as real means of liberation and this is given the name of Bhakti Yoga. But still another considers renunciation as the path of liberation. Some others consider leading a house-holder’s life is the real path of liberation. Similarly different people repose faiths in different religious sects like Saivism, Vaishnavism and so on, as real paths to liberation. Each substantiates his stand point by appeal to the same Sruti, Smriti, Purānas, Itihāsas, Yuktī and Anubhāva and Pramānas. Buddhism, Islamism and Christianity also stake their own claims as the real teachings of the truth. Swāmījī expresses his surprise by saying as to who can say what the true religion is? He tries to explain his stand point by the following analogy. Cloud water by itself is absolutely pure. But when it falls on the ground, it assumes different colours and tastes depending on the quality of the clay it falls on. So also, a religion which in its true nature, is of the form of truth, kindness and so on, becomes impure when it is associated with the mental differences of the individual with whom it is associated. The Swāmījī wants us to understand that this is the secret of all religions. If it were not so, how can the religion of God which is essentially the same can express itself in different ways? This is the cause of the birth of so many religions.

The Swāmījī says that an enlightened man can never fail to comprehend the fact that all these different religions are nothing but the different manifestations of the mental differences of the individuals. He expresses his firm conviction that liberation is awaiting all those who are kind to all the living creatures, to all those who have renounced the worldly objects and to all the enlightened people. It does not matter
to which religion or country they belong and in whatever stage of life they are male or female. This alone is the truth and all other things are only manifestations of individual differences.\textsuperscript{47}

The Swāmījī now turns to the mutual relation between the religion and its place. He says that religion is like a piece of art and the place is like the canvas. It is only when the canvas is clean, it is possible to draw a picture on it. The Swāmījī brings in another simile to bring out this relation. He says religion is like the vital breath and the place is like the body. It is only when the self and the body are sound, can life be happy. There is no happiness if there is mental agony. Similarly there is also no happiness, if the body suffers some ailment.

The Swāmījī now takes us on to some reflections on God.\textsuperscript{48} He draws our attention to the fact that there is no unanimous opinion regarding God. The different religious propounders are creating different conceptions of God. To illustrate: In South India, of ancient times, they used to apply a single vertical tilaka to the idol of Srimannārārayana. In later times, Srivaishnavas of Tengala sect used to apply two white vertical lines above the peetha. This is known as Tirumānn. Vedānta Desika and other Vaishnavas who belong to Vadagala sect of Vaishnavism removed the peetha and retained only the two white vertical lines. And they also effected a change in the colour of the vertical tilaka. All these differences persist till today and it is common knowledge that in most of the temples, the Vishnu idols go without any application of Tilaka. According to Madhvas, the people belonging to Vyasaraśya and Raghavendra Swāmī Mutts, application of tilaka is a must and they are applied beginning with from the bottom of the nose leading to the forehead. Some of these restricted to the upper portion of
the nose. The Madhvas never applied tiruchoorna. They apply choorna with brown colour. They follow the same practice even in the case of the idols of Lord Vishnu. There were some similarities between the followers of Sri Chaitanya and the followers of Vallabha school in respect of the application of wearing tilaka. The Swâmîjî now asks as to how to judge which of these methods is right and which is wrong? He says that we need not entertain any doubt whether God had all these forms. The God appears himself to everyone in the form in which he is worshipped. That is, as you wish Him to be, so He appears."

Even among the Sanyâsins belonging to the three schools of Vedânta, there are these differences. The Tengalites though they wear saffron robes have not abandoned the Sikha and Yajñopavita at the time renunciation. They also carry Tridanda. Some of them carry only Dvi-danda. Still others hold only Eka-danda abandoning Sikha and Yajñopavita. Each tries to adduce innumerable sources of authorities for his own practices. And each thinks that his own is the best and the purest. On careful reflection, says the Swâmîjî, all these differences hold no substance except that they are all reflections of mental differences. The Swâmîjî also refers to some peculiar differences in respect of conducting Yajña or sacrificial fire. For instance, the Madhvas and Tengalas makes use of idol made up of flour in the performance of Yajña. But Smârthas and Vadagalites offer animal sacrifice. And even this is authenticated by them. The widows in Madhvas, Smârthas, and in Vadagala sects, are subjected to tonsure. But there is no such a practice in Tengala sect. The Swâmîjî also refers to practice of ‘Sathi’ in ancient days and its discontinuation later due to the social reforms introduced by the British rulers. In ancient times, there used to be animal sacrifices and even the sacrifice of human beings while performing the Yajñas. They used to claim
Vedic authority for such sacrifices. The Swāmījī points out that all these blind and superstitious beliefs found their grave with the advancement of times and enlightenment of the people.

The Swāmījī points out that to the extent we give prominence to the ritualistic part of religion, to that extent the sense of brotherhood will be lacking between us. Adherence to ritualism may even result in man becoming more and more cruel. The religious propounders are forgetting the importance of prayer and penance and giving undue importance to symbolism are entering into fruitless debates and discussions amongst themselves. The Swāmījī says the need of the hour is Anushthāna or disciplined practice which is bound to result in the grace of God. He exhorts that no matter which religion you take to, we ought to cherish the ideals of brotherhood, unity and sense of love and affection. The Swāmījī points out that there is nothing wrong if you follow any religion and its own symbolism. But it should not be construed as its ultimate end. He also points out that each religion, each stage of life, and each caste, is not worth its salt if it lacks in a disciplined practice of the ideals associated with it. It even leads to sin.

The Swāmījī throws more light on the evils of religious symbolism. He says that because of the religious rituals, the people are removed far from the path of liberation. Because of ritualism, religions are fast becoming emptied of god-consciousness, self-consciousness and divine power. This is the reason why people are becoming sceptical and are not making any efforts to acquire the qualities of truth, righteousness, peace, detachment and the like. They are also not practising yoga and meditation. That is why religion has lost its life and is reduced to the level of lifeless matter. Religion in general and Hinduism in particular have become
victims of this symbolic disease. Despite the existence of many ancient works containing so many sacred ideas and thoughts, the number of people practising them or making others practising them is slowly dwindling.

The Swâmîjî asserts that in India the propounders of Hinduism and the ancient anchorites have done immeasurable service in respect of philosophical investigations. Therefore, it has been their avowed objective to remove the sufferings of the people by initiating them to god-consciousness. They were never concerned themselves with the development of physical sciences. The Swâmîjî pays glowing tributes to Max Muller and other western Sanskrit scholars whose dedicated and profound researches have made the world in the last two centuries realise the importance of Sanskrit language and its contributions. The Swâmîjî says that great souls with qualities of divine knowledge, renunciation, truthfulness, kindness towards all living beings, power of penance, and sense of sacrifice are found in Indian sub-continent in large numbers, and very rarely outside this country. The Swâmîjî has the audacity to ask which religion in the world other than Hinduism, whose essential teachings consist of devotion to God, kindness and renunciation in a greater measure? Can there be any religion other than Hinduism which like oasis in the desert which gives succour to the thirsty? But he admits that Hinduism is in a state of slumber. It is only in the Upanishads, in the Manu Smriti, and in Bhagavad Gîtâ. It is found nowhere in practice and therefore the power of Hinduism is slowly dwindling. The crying need of the hour is the appearance of men of truth, men of renunciation, men and women practising celibacy, to awake up Hinduism from its dogmatic slumber.
5. An Analysis of the Nature of Mind

The present section on Swāmījī’s conception of Mind is specifically included as a part of the present chapter in as much as it provides the psychological justification for his conception of religion and other important issues concerning it, forming the content of the preceding section.

Though the mind is formless, it assumes the form of anything that it apprehends. Though the mind is not perceptible to the gross sense of sight (Sthūla Drishti), it can be known by the subtle sense of sight (Sūkshma Drishti). We understand that the mind is constituted of the atoms of the five physical elements and its tanmātrās as said in the Panchikarana theory. That is the reason why it is said that it can be known by the subtle sense of sight (Sūkshma Drishti). Subtle sense of sight (Sūkshma drishti), subtle knowledge (Sūkshma Jñāna), and subtle intellect (Sūkshma Buddhi) are the synonyms of mind. Enlightenment is necessary to control the mind and to follow its movements. Just as an external object is amenable either to be lifted or moved from one place to another, so also, we have the power to restrain the mind to motivate it to act, and to fix it on any object of our choice. Just as the objects in the outside world are external to us, so also, mind also becomes perceptible at the time of enlightenment. It is well nigh impossible to win over the senses and to restrain the mind until such state of enlightenment is realised. Such an enlightenment should be preceded by peace and purity of the sense organs. According to the Swāmījī the science of yoga came into existence to realise this objective of securing peace for and purity of the mind. By and large, for the common people the mind evolves itself in the form of ideas. This is like any object or a place or a person dear to your heart presenting itself so nearly and clearly to you though existing far from
you. Men or women deeply in love with the opposite sex even when removed far from each other, could clearly perceive each other's movements as if in a mirror. This is the experience of even ordinary people. Just as the photo film imprints on itself the images of the original, so also, impressions are formed in their mind in accordance with the thoughts of the objects perceived. No photograph is possible if the mirror in front of the camera is closed. The mind expresses itself through the sense organs. If we have total control on such sense organs and the mind, then the mind could no more carry the objects of the senses to the self. This is the result of controlling the mind. Therefore, a highly successful yogin or a devotee filled with god-consciousness thinks of only God without allowing any objects of sense into his heart, his mind is able to assume the form of the divine.

The sun is reflecting the rays on the whole areas covering the forests, mountains and rivers. We know that none of these things are in the sun. The thing which causes light is certainly different from the thing on which the light is reflected. The self whose nature it is to illumine the objects is illuminating all the mental impressions. But there are no mental modifications (Mano-vrittis) in the self. But as we have identified ourselves with the body, mind and intellect we are creating a tripartite distinction of the self as the knower, the doer and the experiencer. Under the spell of ignorance, we attribute these qualities as really belonging to the self. In the absence of sense organs, the mind cannot function and it is also true that in the absence of any direction from the intellect, the mind cannot act. The intellect in its turn has no existence without the presence of consciousness of its master, namely the self. To illustrate this point, Gaudapāda in his 'Māndūkya kārika' has taken the example of the pot-space. The moment a pot is produced, pot-space
is created and the moment the pot is destroyed, we think the pot-space is also destroyed. In reality neither pot-space is created nor is it destroyed. The creation and the destruction of the pot do not in any way affect the eternal space. Similarly neither the birth nor death of the self is a reality. All the impure ideas of dualism are only reflection of the mind and never belong to the self. All such things which appear themselves present to the self are only mental impressions. The sun illumines the sea by his rays and is in no way affected by the sea whether it remains calm or in a disturbed state. The world which is qualified by plurality of objects is only the creation of our mind. The idea of the world is rooted in the illusion of the mind. According to Gaudapāda this is only a fallacy or an error. What is Gaudapāda’s idea in saying that this world-of-movable and immovable things is only a mental picture? The Swāmījī says in the Berkelian way that this world does not exist when the mind is absent. This is our common experience. For instance when a person is deeply immersed in his personal problems or with matters of his immediate surroundings he becomes completely oblivious of any other things even if they happen in his immediate presence. The Swāmījī turns a subjective idealist when he says that it is common knowledge that when the mind does not attend to nothing exists. It is suffice to know that the mind is the meeting point of all the sense organs. He suggests that the mind must be brought under absolute control by practice of deep meditations. The process of controlling the mind must be gradual. By using discriminative knowledge, the mind must be purged of its impressions. The mind thus brought under control enables us to reach philosophical culmination. The Swāmījī reminds us of the yoga declaration “Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah” Yoga is the cessation of the modifications of chitta.
The Swamiji illustrates the nature of the mind further by saying it is formless in the same way in which melted copper has no form. Just as different forms came into existence as when a sculptor desires to make out of the same metal an idol of Rama, Krishna, Eshwara, Hanuman, Lakshmi and the like, so also, the original state of mind is formless but assumes different forms when it associates itself with the objects of the world. In this connection, the Swamiji refers to a mantra culled from the Amritabindūpanishad “Mana eva manushyānām kāranaṃ bandha Mokshayoh”.56 ‘Which means that the mind is the cause of man’s bondage and liberation as well.’ He also refers to the Gītā statement:

“Ye yathā mām prapadyante
Tāmstathaiva Bhajāmyaham”57

The Lord says “as men approach me, so do I accept them.” God meets every aspirant with favour and grants to each of his heart’s desire. He does not extinguish the hope of any but helps all hopes to grow according to their nature. The Gītā does not speak of this or that form of religion but speaks of the impulse which is expressed in all forms of the desire to find God and understand our relation to Him.

The Swāmījī says that the speed at which the mind moves is amazing and immeasurable. It is like a machine, with power capable of moving upward, downward and sideways. It can make man supremely powerful if it is meditated on with self-consciousness and directed upwards to begin with. On the contrary, it can throw man into the depths of an abyss and reduce him to the level of an animal, if it is allowed to concern itself with the distinctions of race, caste, sex, and pleasures of the physical body. On the contrary, it can reduce man to the level of animal which
is directed towards the objects of sensual pleasures. The Swāmījī reminds us that the entire sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita discusses the nature of the mind. In the 35th Sloka, Krishna says ("Asamsayam Mahā Bāhō manō durnigraham chalam") that it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind and it is possible by constant practice and yoga. In Swāmījī’s view the essence of Lord Krishna’s teaching is that the mind must be centred in the self. He does not teach that the mind must be centred in this or that God. Anything perishes in the place in which it has born. As the mind is born in the self it must be dissolved in it only. As long as ignorance lasts so long the mind lasts. When ignorance is dispelled the mind also disappears. The Swāmījī also refers to Pathanjali’s statement “Abhyaśa vairāgyābhyam tad nirodhah”. They are restrained by practice and desirelessness.

The Swāmījī says removal of long standing past impressions is as difficult as uprooting the trees with well settled roots. In his view even caste system has come to stay only due to long standing impressions on the part of the people that they belong to this or that caste. Hindus converted into Islam a long time back are now firmly convinced that they are Muslims. The same can be said to people converted from anyone religion to another. The Swāmījī says that a lot of discriminative knowledge is necessary in order to extricate oneself from such deep rooted impressions. In the absence of such discriminative knowledge, one is apt to think that it is a sin or unrighteous act to deviate himself from the usual path and regain his original status. All this means to say all man-made changes are but creations of the mind. None however great, is exempt from this. The Swāmījī goes even to the extent of saying that even the Upanishadic teaching ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ or ‘I am Brahman’ is also a mental form. Even the Vedāntic teaching that
the individual self is a manifestation of Absolute Self is also a product of the mind. It is equally a product of mind to say that this individual soul is a sufferer, a dependent and a sinner. The Swāmījī says that all the above teachings represent one or the other of the three Schools of Vedānta namely, Advaita, Visishtādvaita and Dvaita.

The Swāmījī concludes by saying that we are involved in a great vicious circle. He tries to make us understand the circularity involved through a beautiful analogy. Just as an infinite number of water-bearing clouds evolving out of the sea rain on the ground and again join the sea by way of lakes, streams and rivers, so also, the individual selves due to a beginningless ignorance get separated from the Absolute Self and finally identify themselves with it i.e., the Supreme Soul by means of the philosophical inquiry into the nature of Brahman. Just as the infinite number of water-bearing clouds which maintain their individual differences are essentially identical before their origination and after raining, so also, the millions of creatures are essentially manifestations of God before their creation and after death. We all ought to meditate on our individual souls as really expressions of the Supreme Self.

The aspirants to begin with should practice meditation on the Self which is a witness to the body, the senses and the like of the world as really an expression of the Supreme Self. That is real meditation. The practice of meditation must be continued in such a way that the Dhyāna itself becomes Dhyeya or the object of inquiry. It must be followed by the practice of the idea of a perfect Brahman, which stands for the unity of the seer and the seen. It is a stage of Absolute non-duality. That is the perfect state of God-realisation. This is Power (Sivam), Bliss (Ananda), Nectar (Amritam) and Non-duality (Advaita).
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CHAPTER - II
SWĀMĪJĪ ON THE DOCTRINE OF KARMA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The Doctrine of Karma and the several problems surrounding this fundamental Hindu doctrine occupy a pivotal place in the writings and discourses of the Swāmījī. We all admit that the doctrine of karma is a difficult problem to explain and still more difficult to answer the problems that arise in order to make it consistent and acceptable. Lord Krishna has himself proclaimed in Gītā that it is difficult to understand the intricacies and indefinite extent and shape of Karma (Action), as it is so complicated, intricate, zigzag, unfathomable, dynamic, inscrutable and mysterious because the life is such. The trial of (karma) action is jagged and intractable.

The Swāmījī deals with the problem of karma with utmost authority and explains the externality and universality of the doctrine with such clarity and conviction that he can be considered as one of the finest exponents of this basic Hindu doctrine in contemporary Indian thought.

1. The Nature and Kinds of Karma

The Swāmījī invariably referred to the ‘doctrine of Karma’ in almost all his writings. Apart from these occasional references, he also published an exclusive work on “Karma Siddhānta” (The Doctrine of Karma). In the article entitled “Karma Rahasya” (The Secret of Karma) forming part of his published work “Dharma Sethuvu” (The Bridge of Righteousness), the Swāmījī took great pains to remove all doubts in the minds of the people relating to ‘karma kānda’ (rituals) substantiating the Sāstric studies on the subject with his own deep personal experiences. Elucidating the secret of karma, the Swāmījī said that it is only a rare few that
conduct themselves in a righteous way knowing the true import of karma. Those who failed to see the secret are those overcome by illusions.

The explanation of the secret of karma according to the Swāmijī, only relates to Brahmanishthas and does not say anything about either karma kānda or the house-holders practising karmas. The results of performing the duties of karma are uniformly the same to all people. The secret of karma relates to those reflecting on Brahman being in the state of karma kānda and also those reflecting on Brahman being in any one of the four stages of life. Some people may think that the duties of karma relate only to the house-holders, and not to those who are practising Sanyāsa and the enlightened people. This kind of illusion is possible because they have failed to understand the true import of the secret of karma. Perhaps one may not be wrong in saying that the Yathis and the enlightened may not be aware of the duties of house-holders’s life but it is certainly wrong to say that they are not aware of the duties that they ought to perform as Yathis and the enlightened. If it were not so, the Sāstras would not have ordained the Yathi Dharmas and Jñāna Dharmas. The Sāstras declare that nobody can escape the law of karma. The Vairāgya Prakarana of Yogavāsishtha, has clearly pointed out that even the Lord Srimannarāyana has to take the incarnations of Rāma and Krishna and undergo all the difficulties only due to the inevitable law of karma.

The Swāmijī says that the seventeenth Sloka of the fourth Chapter of Bhagavad Gita unequivocally points out that all people should learn from the enlightened teachers and study of the Sāstras the true philosophy of the three states of karma - action, inaction, and absence of action, prohibited actions (Nishiddha karmas), actions to be
performed (Vihita karmas) and motivated actions (Kāmya karmas) are contained in the three fold actions mentioned above. In addition to these, sinful actions, meritorious and mixed actions are also contained in the above karmatraya. The Lord has also explained the stable state of the enlightened devoid of all karmas and such a state of mind cannot be comprehended even by the best of intellectuals by their own faculties of the mind. This is so because, different individuals have different kinds of Buddhi in accordance with their own past impressions. A careful examination of the Sāstras also points out these defects. Sāstras are innumerable. Everything has the authority of the Sastras. Even then we do not attain the state of stability. The only course open to us is to follow the path of the great souls of Brahmanishthas. They are also bound by duty. Even they have no stability.

So, what is to be done now? Asks the Swāmīji. The only thing that we can do is to reconcile the three i.e., those who do not follow the path of righteousness, do not practice truth speaking, and do not win the senses, can never become great souls. We can get all our problems solved by accepting the truth of the sacred Upanishadic statements that we ought to cultivate truth, righteousness, compassion and so on. None can be called a Mahātma or a great soul who does not satisfy any of the three requirements stated above. It is because of lack of such discriminative knowledge, Brahmanishthas (aspirants) have fallen on evil days. The Swāmīji points out that the Brahmanishthas suffer from two defects: The first one is that the Brahmanishthas are lacking in penance, the yogic power and the related qualities of control of senses, compassion and the like. The second one is that even those few are under the grip of the teachings of the pseudo-Vedāntin that seeing, hearing, smelling and touching are the natural
qualities of the sense organs even before the state which is absolutely devoid of past impressions is realised that even if the impressions in the Antahkarana (inner equipment) are not removed, they do not touch the witness self and that even if they are associated with all the impurities of the world, the self is not tainted by these. It is therefore, very essential that all those aspirants seeking liberation to set right the two wheels of the chariot viz., Acharana and Antithāna. According to the Swāmījī, all the Vedānta Sāstras unequivocally and unambiguously, declared that Nishtha must be continued ceaselessly till the state which is absolute devoid of past impressions occurs, till Nivritti is realised and till the direct vision of the Brahman is easily achieved.

One thing is definitely known and that is, no one can by self-effort extricate himself from the clutches of karma. And the Swāmījī is also of opinion that even others’ efforts are not strong enough to remove the effects of karma. By this, the Swāmījī does not mean that one should not attempt to work out his own karma. Everyone should try to realise a state devoid of all karmas, while the Sruti (Scriptures) has declared that the law of karma is inescapable, any teaching that one should try to work out his own karma, may not appear to carry conviction. But one should not become sceptical. The secret is this: Every man should by a strong and determined will should conduct himself in such a way that he should never allow himself a party for any sinful actions, and unrighteous deeds.

But doubt may arise as to how the results of actions already done can be annihilated? Swāmījī answers that there can be no escape from reaping the consequences of the past actions, but the only thing is that after paying off for these actions we should remain determined not to commit any such sinful deeds in future. It is only then that we
shall be able to enjoy the purity of Bliss resulting from truthful duties just as we enjoy the appearance of the sun-shine on the disappearance of the night. And this would create all possible conditions quite conducive for the practice of Brahmanishtha. Even the sense organs of the physical body and the impressions of the mind becomes purified. The senses will be attuned to the performance of the righteousness. If on the other hand one were to become a victim of fatalism and feel that no human effort is needed to work out past karmas, he will be destined to revolve himself in the cycle of births and deaths and ultimately thrown into the sea of darkness not knowing the way out.

The Swāmījī proceeds to reveal the secret of karma in greater detail. According to Swāmījī, it is only those who actually have Aparōksha Jñāna or those who attained Nirvikalpa Samādhi who are qualified even to think that there is something like Prārabdha karma or action of pre-destination. But those seeking liberation and those who are practising Yoga and those seeking true knowledge are not competent in this regard. The best of the Sāstras advocate that we should always endeavour to proceed from Pravritti to Nivritti. The Vedānta teaches that they should not waver in the performance of the Vratas.

The Swāmījī now proceeds to explain the three kinds of karma: (1) Agami (Impending actions i.e., relating to future times), (2) Sanchita (Accumulated actions) and (3) Prārabdha (Pre-destination). Prārabdha karma means the reaping of the results of actions done in a past life. This is inevitable. It evolves itself in the form of pains and pleasure. The Prārabdha karma ceases only after the experience of its results. Even after enlightenment, Prārabdha continues to exists till the physical body perishes. Action done in
ignorance is like an arrow let off from the bow. Sanchita karmas (accumulated actions) are like arrows in the quiver.\textsuperscript{10}

All our pleasure and pains, riches and poverty, praises and abuses, respect and humiliation, health and disease, are the result of Prārabdha karma and not of the present actions. The present actions will be the cause of the future lot. The Swāmījī used to say that all that is said above (regarding Prārabdha karma) applies only to the enlightened who have become freed after extinguishing all past karmas and have become immune to all sensuous pleasures and does not apply to the common people.

It is accepted by all that Prārabdha karmas become extinct only after being actually experienced. But the question arises as to why not all the cruel deeds, acts of violence and unrighteous acts also be treated as those of Prārabdha karma? To this, the Swāmījī answers as follows:

Those who are practising brahmanishtha, must try to make the world understand the secret of karma. The essence of karma is to awaken them and to enlighten them on the true knowledge of the Self. Inquisitiveness about Brahman occurs only when the self becomes pure after extinguishing all sins and gaining a real strength of the performance of the righteous deeds. It is only then the people give up all prohibited acts and always try to perform only duties prescribed by the Sāstras (Vihita karmas). Even such righteous duties must be performed without desiring the fruits of such actions. They must be dedicated to God. It is only then pure inquisitiveness of Brahman takes place.\textsuperscript{11} Subhēcha or inquisitiveness of Brahman will never occur under the weight of sinful deeds. True interest in the acquisition of right knowledge occurs only when by a constant performance of actions with a sense of dedicating their fruits to the
Lord will gradually result in the annihilation of *tamas, rajas* and the dominance of *sattva guna*. Even then, God cannot be realised if *visuddha guna* is not totally attained. When one has all the qualities of *tamas, rajas* and *sattva* and *visuddha gunas*, the same qualities manifest themself in human actions through the sense organs. This is so because the effect cannot be different from the cause. The state of realisation of Pure Brahman (*Suddha Brahma Sākshātkāra*) is pervaded by *Siva, Ananda* and *Amrita*. The *Swāmījī* asserts that just as heat cannot generate from the Moon, and cold from the Sun, and bitter from sugar, so also, sinful deeds and unrighteous acts cannot proceed from the people possessing pure knowledge, righteous character and also who are the personifications of *Dharma*. According to the *Swāmījī*, the secret of karma is implicit in the following statements:

1. What you do for others, some others will do the same for you.
2. What you say about others, some others will say the same about you.
3. What you give to others, some others will give the same for you.
4. What you think about others, some others will think of the same about you.

The *Swāmījī* used to repeatedly say that those who take these truths to heart will find themselves always blessed.

The *Swāmījī* reminds us of the *Gītā* teaching that the relations of our unborn nature and its fateful compulsion are regulated by the Divine who dwells in our hearts and guides and constrains our development. If that were so how are we to say that these living beings have got any freedom to act by any of their self-effort. Hence, if the Lord were
responsible for all the good and bad actions of all the living beings, what responsibility have these individual souls for their actions? As an appendix to this question, the Swāmījī refers to the Gītā’s sixteenth Sloka of eighteenth Chapter:

Ishwaras sarvabhūtānām hrddeserjuna tisthati,
Bṛhmaśyan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūdhāni māyayā.

“The Lord abides in the hearts of all beings, O; Arjuna, causing them to turn round by His power as if they were mounted on a machine.”

The Spirit that rules the cosmos, the Lord who presides over the evolution of the cosmic plan, is seated also in the heart of every being and will not let him rest.

The Swāmījī refers to the explanation of the commentators for the above Sloka. Sankara comments that the term ‘Bṛhmaśyan’ connotes that the Lord is guiding all the living beings to act in accordance with their respective past actions being Himself witness to all this. Sri Rāmānuja also has commented on this sloka in very much the same fashion. And this is the reason why the word ‘Māyā’ is used by the Lord. The word ‘Māya’ is another name for the general state of the three qualities (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). Hence, the Lord is a witness to the actions done by all individuals in accordance with the presence of the predominance of one quality over the others in their nature. This means, that the Lord is responsible for all the actions of the individual as per their good and evil in the cycle of life and death. If it were not so, God only is responsible for all the merits and demerits, good and bad actions, and the individual souls themselves could not be responsible for this. What then is the reason for all our pleasure and sorrows which certainly appear quite distinct. The Swāmījī makes this point clear by an analogy. For instance, when we make use of instruments like a revolver or a bomb
to kill the people, who are to be punished? Is it the instrument that is to be punished and not the person who kills them by using it? The answer is self-evident. Hence the individual souls have to reap the heaven and hell in conformity with their merits and demerits. Otherwise, the Vedās and the Śāstras which prescribe obligatory duties become in vain. The Swāmījī also refers to the following Slokas of the Bhagavad Gītā.

Nādatte kasya cit pāpam nacaiva sukrutam vibhuh,
Ajnanenāvritam jnānam tēna muhyanti jantavah.

“The all pervading spirit does not take on the sin or the merit of any. Wisdom is enveloped by ignorance, thereby creatures are bewildered.”

Jnānenatu tadajñānam Yeshām nāsitam ātmanah,
Tesham ādityavat Jnanam Prakāsayati tat param.

“But for those in whom ignorance is destroyed by wisdom lights up the Supreme Self like the Sun.”

The Swāmījī points out that the Lord does not own the responsibility for the merits and demerits of the individual actions. Knowledge is concealed by ignorance. Hence, the individual suffers under the delusion that he is the agent of the action. The self above the ego is not touched by sin or merit, by joy or sorrow. It is the witness of all. From the Sloka, we also understand the following implications. Firstly, the Lord is not indiscriminately blessing one and cursing another. Secondly, all the good and bad actions are done only in strict conformity with their past merits and demerits. Thirdly, the individual under the spell of ignorance fails to know the truth and keeps himself in a perpetual suffering. We are likely to become sceptical regarding the efficacy of all the righteous acts like Bhajans, prayers, meditation, alms-giving, chanting and worship and so on. By performing these, ignorance will be dispelled and true
knowledge arises just as a good medicine will cure a disease. The statement of the Bhagavad Gītā “Teshām Aadityavat Jñānam” Wisdom lights up the Supreme Self like the Sun means according to the Swāmījī, when enlightenment occurs it is very much like the rising of the morning Sun revealing all the secrets of karma and rendering the realisation of the ultimate reality easily accessible.

The results of the actions of the millions of the living beings are various because those actions themselves are of many kinds. The same meaning as when we say that good positions and bad positions are assigned to the people by the kings is to be applied here. Again, the same law that obtains in the case of Beejāmkura Nyāya (as we sow so we reap) also applies here. According to Swāmījī this is the reason why the Veda declares that the Lord is the witness Self, the dispenser of the results of all karmas, and the manifestation of the truth.

The Swāmījī addresses humanity at large to understand the larger dimensions that karma will assume despite its diminutive size in the beginning. Even intellectuals fail to understand this. We know that mosquitoes and bees though diminutive in size the poison they contain is very dangerous. So also, the actions though appear simple when they are done become very serious and severe in course of time. This is like a banian seed which is very minute evolves itself into a huge banian tree.\(^{15}\)

As long as the sins last so long we are confronted with obstacles. The Swāmījī is firmly convinced that the stock of sins can be annihilated only by chanting Pranava or any other divine Mantra with absolute and unqualified faith in God.\(^{16}\) The chanting must be accomplished by viewing every mantra as possessing divine powers, and by uttering every seed letter (Beejākshara) in such a way that each letter reflects itself in the depths of the heart.
When all the sins accrued from evil actions are worked out by the practise of dhyāna, japa and tapa, the mind becomes pure. The Swāmījī reminds us of the utterance of the great Rishis that it is only the mind freed of all its impurities that is capable of acquiring true knowledge. This means that those who chant Divya mantra, with the divine thoughts, will lead to the termination of their sins. Purity and impurity are both natural qualities. But pure actions will destroy sinful actions, in the same way as used cloths can be cleaned by the use of some detergent. It is only then pure self-knowledge can takes place.17

Those who lack the teachings of Vedānta, may doubt the efficacy of the fire of knowledge to burn actions of both merit and demerit. It is doubted whether even good deeds can be destroyed. Is it not for the acquisition of merit that we are doing good actions? The Swāmījī opines that even good actions done with desire for the fruits thereof, are acting as the cause for rebirth. It is only by performing actions with no desire for fruits (Nishkāma karma) birthlessness can be realised. When man attains some level of purity, avoids doing evil and does good actions with a desire. When he progresses in the levels of purity, he is able to perform actions with no desire for the fruits of actions and does good actions with a sense of dedication to Eshwara. When he reaches the highest level of purity the self becomes pure. All actions consequently done with absolute dedication to God, will prevent any future birth. All great souls act in this way.18 But unfortunately some people who are ignorant of the true teachings of the Vedānta, are advocating that even good actions must not be performed on the ground that one must take another life at least to reap the fruits of those actions. In Swāmīji’s view, this is a dangerous position resulting from their lack of true knowledge.
2. The Seed and Sprout Theory (Beejāmkura Nyāya)

For one who cannot have a realisation of God before the Atman leaves the physical body, is awaiting a physical body in the next life consistent with the impressions he cultivates in his mind \(^{19}\) at the time of leaving the physical body. The Swāmījī refers to the statement of the Kathopanishad which is very relevant in the present context. According to Kathopanishad, one should endeavour in the present life itself to attain an enlightened state of Self which is devoid of all attachment to objects of sense. This means the Swāmījī says, the future birth is already taking shape in the Atman of the present physical body.\(^{20}\) The enlightened self is able to appreciate such questions as whether there is future life or not, and if there is future birth what kind of birth it will be. If we are now lethargic and fail to understand the (future) creation that is taking a shape in the self, we stand to loose for ever the opportunity of effecting any change. The present physical body and the consequent happiness and sorrow, knowledge and ignorance are all due to the impressions of the past life. It is very much in our hands either to work for birthlessness or another future birth. It is certain that the caste, the time, the parentage and so on of our future birth will be strictly determined by the impressions or ideas, or qualities cultivated in the mind in the present birth. When once this is decided, we have no other alternative except to reap the consequences of our present dispositions in the future birth. That is, if the mind contains Sattva or Rajas or Tamas or a mixture of them or is devoid of any of these qualities or ideas about the belief in God or non-existence of God, the future birth will follow suit. For a mind which is devoid of any of these qualities, but in whom the knowledge of God manifests itself, true knowledge of Brahman or Mōksha occurs.\(^{21}\) This is true.
The Swāmījī proceeds to vouch for the authenticity of seed-sprout theory by referring to the authority of *Sruti* and *Smriti*. To think that I am rich, I am this body, I am happy, I am suffering, I am the king, I am a pundit, I am Brahmin, I am a Sanyāsin, and all such expressions of egoism are the results of *Avidya*. I am not the body and none of the qualities stated above can be predicated of me. As soon as the knowledge arises the realisation that I am the manifestation of Brahman and I am not a house-holder arises. All the glands of ignorance will be destroyed while this very physical body is still alive. With the passing away of all the glands of ignorance, also go all the impressions rooted in the glands of ignorance and the mortal man becomes immortal. This according to the Swāmīji is also the teaching of the Upanishads.

The Swāmījī now refers to in this connection, the close relation between the divine knowledge of the Vedās and the religious thinker. Vedānta or the knowledge contained in the Vedas and all statements speaking of Eswhara and knowledge mean the same. This is like nectar. And all religious thinkers have declared that the doers who experience this will attain liberation, freed from the cycle of births and deaths. It is very rare to find any religious propounder whose mind is absolutely pure. That is to say, rare are the religious propounders who sincerely wish for the ultimate success of truth without allowing any kind of vicious thoughts in their minds. They perceive only those ideas embedded in religious thought and in the decisions of God. Such a perception they pass on to the world, or publish it in the form of books. But each religious thinker is able to manifest in his works only one aspect God i.e., His infinite power. If it were not so, they do not deserve to be called religious propounders. It is difficult for anybody to realise the truth. We are aware that in the Kathopanishad, Yama teaches
Nachiketa, that even gods including Brahma were not able to decide on the ultimate truth. All the religious propounders were aware of this difficulty and hence many religions and many faiths.

The Swāmījī describes God’s knowledge as the rain bearing clouds in the sky. Depending on the nature of the soil, the water rained from such clouds, becomes either sweet or saline or salty or something else. It is clear from this that the religious teachings of their respective propounders, reflect the impressions of their minds. It is these impressions that are called by the collective name ‘culture’. Culture has its roots in the practice of Acharana, Anusthāna and Abhyāsa (Scrupulously following religious principles and also practising of them) of the pārśī life. But they are all immersed in God’s consciousness. Otherwise, they would not have become so great. In the manner of Taptāyo nyayam’ all the heat in iron is due to fire. And the knowledge of God is like an illumination. Just as illumination reflected in glasses of different colour appears in different colours, so also, religious knowledge reflects differently in different persons in tune with their inner impressions.26 There is no doubt about it. They are free from the qualities of Prakriti (Nature) - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, the pure thought is over and above the gunatraya. All religious propounders belong to this category.

The Swāmījī feels immensely sorry for the plight of the people who have forgotten their own essential nature and are identifying themselves with all the material and worldly objects and thereby reducing themselves to the level of animals having lost all discriminative knowledge. All these people are like sleeping lions. If they were instructed in the true nature of the self they will be able to acquire divine knowledge which helps them lead a successful life here and liberation hereafter.
3. Mind and Karma

The Swāmījī refers to ‘Amrita Bindūpanishad’ according to which Mind is of two kinds - pure and impure. Impure mind is associated with the ideas of desires for objects of sense. Pure mind is free from all ideas of desire. In this Upanishad, it is proved that it is in the impure mind that these defects of sensuous desires are present. By applying these criteria, we can assess for ourselves whether our minds are totally free from these sensuous desires. The Upanishad also makes it very clear that the mind devoid of desires for objects, is the cause of liberation. It is also made abundantly clear in this Upanishad, that the reason offered to the view that liberation is possible only for the mind which has attained a state of desirelessness is also the reason stating that one seeking liberation must always endeavour to free his mind from all objects of sense.\(^{27}\)

The reflecting minds can appreciate the inner meaning of the view that the mind is the primary and the causal factor of Karma. Inference or Anumāna is the Pramāna which is the most efficient in establishing the law of cause and effect. For instance, inference is the knowledge of fire by perceiving smoke. In the same manner by perceiving the effect the cause can be inferred. It is possible to infer the seed by knowing the fruit and the flower. Just as there can be no fruit opposed to the nature of the seed, so also, by knowing the mental and the sensuous dispositions of a person, we can infer their causal factors of past impressions or Karma. The term Samskāra (culture), Vāsana (past impressions), Karma (action), Swabhāva (nature) and Sankalpa (desire) are all synonymous. The Swāmījī says that all these terms have to be understood as meaning that the self having done good actions will have the nature of doing only good actions and the self having done sinful
actions will have the nature doing only wicked actions in the present life. Just as fruits with different tastes like sweet, acidic, and bitter emanate respectively from seeds having these natures, so also, the essential nature of the different souls is also in strict accordance with their past actions. If the souls have all the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas their actions also will be in accordance with these three qualities. The souls devoid of all these three qualities will have self-knowledge, devotion to God, detached outlook towards sensuous objects. They will always try to enlighten people on these. We see all around in our day to day life people speaking like this: His karma (past actions) is like this. And therefore, he has such nature. It is for this reason, that the ancients have declared “Janavākyam kartavyam” (People’s word is the law). We have to know it for definite that purity of mind or purity of thoughts can be effected only by the purification of past actions or karma. It is for this reason that all Vedic teachings declared with one voice that purification of karma is the first essential step in the process of realisation.

Sankara in his ‘Vedānta Dīnḍima’ declares that it is possible to achieve Antahkarana Suddhi by means of Nishkāma karma, concentration of mind by means of Upāsana and liberation by the realisation of the knowledge of Brahman. The Swāmījī points out that it is implicit in the teaching of Sankara, the purity of Self (Self-knowledge) is possible only by performing the virtuous act of selfless action (Nishkāma karma). He feels that this is the reason why that the Vedās are classified into Karma, Upāsana and Jnāna Kāndas.

Sankara in his work on “Aparokṣhānubhūti (Direct Experience) declares that the wealth of four-fold means (Sādhana Chatushtaya) can be realised by the people by
means of practising Dharma, consistent with their Anushthāna, by penance and by the grace of God. If it were not so, God would have to be attributed with the evil of discrimination. If on the other hand, Karma were to be considered supreme, then, there is no chance of attributing discrimination to God. The Sāstras have unequivocally announced that Eshwara is one who assigns the fruits of the respective actions of the millions of the living creatures. Sruti also confirms that Eshwara who is the dispenser of the fruits of all our actions and who is also the author of the cause of all our actions as Parabrahman. The Swāmīji points out that by this it can be theorised that the Jivas have the free will to act, and Eshwara is the dispenser of the fruits of actions. It is for this reason that the Sāstras have unanimously established that God is free from all evil and that He is manifestation of truth and above all discrimination towards living beings.30 Once this is accepted, all such questions as to why God creates one as the enlightened and another as the ignorant, one as healthy and another as the diseased, and one as a Yogi and another as Bhogi, do not simply arise. It has to be comprehended that penance, righteousness and devotion to God are the casual factors for the purification of self and it is karma that is instrumental for the practise of these three virtues.

The Swāmīji feels that some great devoted souls may regret as to why they have not been able to render service to humanity, not able to establish great institutions, and accomplish great works and so on. But we have to understand such capacities are only given to a chosen few. Others have to rest contented with the feeling that God has destined them like this and they should strive to get themselves liberated within this life itself. The inner meaning of this is that ‘Prakriti’ is the original cause of all these creation. That is, he who has won over ‘Prakriti’ or one who has mastered Prakriti
or one who has freed himself of all the influences of Prakriti, will have the experience of (Supreme Self). All souls are eligible to achieve this highest status. All people irrespective of caste, sex and age can attain this divine status should only they strive for it, with pure Antahkarana. They will also be able to acquire all powers accruing from such a status, in the same way as an employee who occupies a particular position will get all the powers of that post whatever be his caste or creed, man or woman, to whichever area or country one hails from. All the activities of such great divine souls are accomplished by Prakriti itself. This phenomenon is also called the Mother of the Divine (Jaganmātha), Parāsakti, Power of Siva (Sivasakti), Māya of Vishnu (Vishnu Māya), grace of God (Bhagavat krupa). The Prakriti always stands as an obstacle to the Jīva as a wall. Just as wall is built of several stones, so also, karma of the individual is constituted of all the impressions of his past life. It is the responsibility of all souls of absorbed contemplation of the Supreme Spirit (Brahma Nishtha) to remove the influences of this karma.

According to the Swāmījī there is also another meaning for the statement that Mind is the Principal factor in the performance of actions. All these worlds, despite their being the manifestation of Eshwara, because of the tremendous impact of the willed thoughts of the mind become the phenomenal world, the individual souls, as the qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas, as the states of life and death and as the innumerable obstacles, of samsāra. When once all these defects are removed as a consequence of purifying the mind by practising the contemplated meditation of Dhyāna and Jñāna; by entering into the contemplation of Brahman, and by Sravana (by listening to the scriptures), Manana (by reflecting on their truths) and Nididhyāsana (removal of all doubts), the Jīva or the individual soul will have the
feeling that "I am a pure form of Siva's nature" and that he will attain the feeling that he has failed to realise these truths being till now under the influence of Māya.\textsuperscript{33} He will also get enlightened that the world appears as real because of the influence of Māya and ignorance. It is only when such ignorance is removed they will have the real knowledge that Brahman alone is real and that the world is an appearance of Brahman.

Swāmījī throws further light on the nature of the mind. Truly speaking, there is no object like mind. Mind is nothing but a collective name of sensual pleasures, qualities, impressions, tendencies, desires, ignorance and Māya. When all these leave the self, there is no mind. When all these are present, the self is robbed off its luminosity and is driven into darkness.\textsuperscript{34} The Swāmījī tries to make this point intelligible by means of an analogy. Really speaking there is no object like cloud. Clouds are formed by the combination of vapour generated by the heat of the sun, air and electricity. When the clouds melt by contacting cool winds, and rain, they simply disappear. Just as these temporary clouds eclipse the sun from our vision, so also, the mind eclipses the true nature of the self.\textsuperscript{35} The Swāmījī refers here, to the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad relating to mind.

Kāmāḥ samkalp vīcīkṣā, svadhā svadha dhrtrī
dhrtrī hriḥ dhir bhīr ityetaḥ sarvam mana ēva

"Desire, determination, doubt, faith, lack of faith, steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shyness, intellect, fear, all this is truly mind."\textsuperscript{36}

The Swāmījī explaining the significance of the doctrine of karma, tries to dispel the view of some teachers that the mind is the principle factor and tries to establish the primacy of ‘karma'. He admits that there is a school of thought, which believes that mind is primary. But he wants
not only to prove that such a view is tenable only to the enlightened and liberated souls, but also to establish that for all the ordinary people, karma theory alone holds good. The Swāmīji says it is to establish these truths, that he wrote this book on “Karma Siddhānta”. He also says that it has to be admitted that the present will power of those believing in the primacy of mind is the result of the Tapas, Yoga, Mantra and Japa, they accomplished in the past. This is the inner meaning of the sentences declaring that mind is the instrument and that mind is primary. It is these doctrinal differences, relating to the primacy of mind and karma that is chiefly responsible for the emergence of so many new religions and new ways of thinking and living. Both the views referred to are equally popular and important. The Swāmīji admits that he is not against the view that mind is important and instrumental in the performance of human actions. His only objection is that this does not hold good to all people indiscriminately. The reason is

Yadhā sankalpay edyōgi yōga yuktō jītēndriyah,
Tat tadevō tadhāpnōti bhāva evātra kāranam.

“The Yogi who has won over the senses is able to get by the mere will of it. For him, the will is enough.”

The Yogi who is freed from all attachments, who has attained the state of Samādhi, who has attained the purity of Antahkarana, is a spiritual sage (Siddha purusha) to him anything comes anywhere by the mere will of it. It is only in the case of such people the view that mind is more fundamental than karma, holds good. Many spiritual sages (Siddha purushas) like Sri Sankara, Vemana, etc. have amply demonstrated this fact. And it should be admitted that in the case of all other ordinary mortals the theory that karma is more primary than mind holds good.
In all the Vedāntic teachings, the doctrine of karma is implicit. The Swāmījī says that since there are not many thinkers to make this teaching explicit, and intelligible to the world, the present conception may appear queer. Some traditionalists of certain faiths boast of whatever they start as modern as absolutely new and unknown to others till now, not found in the Vedās and has eluded the grasp of even great sages like Vyāsa and Sankara and so on. They are also guilty of accusing great sages like Vyāsa, Vālmīki, Kapila, and so on as imperfect. The underlying fact of all these types of talk seems to be in Swāmījī's opinion is nothing but inciting the people for religious conversion. All experts in Vedā are quite aware that there is nothing not found in the Vedās.

The Swāmījī exhorts people to understand the truth of the self through Karma Yoga and to strive for the realisation with the proofs provided by Smṛiti and Sṛiti. He expresses his agony for the sorry state of affairs, that even some intellectuals have no love for Vedānta Śāstras and Brahma Vidya, due to the failure of the aspirants for liberation to enlighten the people on the secret of karma. The Judge may pass death sentence on the guilty. This is acceptable to the world. This is because this authority is vested in him in virtue of his office. But if an ordinary citizen orders his men to kill another, he will be arrested and imprisoned.39 The secret of karma is also on these similar lines. While, even, the ascetics, the teachers, the devotees, and the renounced, themselves have failed to see through the secret of karma, many people posing themselves an enlightened, are going on teaching that mind is more important than karma. This has resulted not only in the decadence of knowledge of Vedānta, but also in our failure to raise to the status of heights of the ancient Rishis.
4. Proofs for the existence of three kinds of Karma

The three kinds of karmas - Agāmi (Impending actions), Sanchita (Accumulated actions) and Prārabdha (Pre-destination) are associated with every individual soul. The Swāmījī states that the Sāstra ordaines that there is no escape for the individual soul except to reap the consequences of Prārabdha karma, Sanchita karma wears off as soon as philosophical enlightenment occurs to the soul and Agāmi, which divides itself into two, results in accruing merits for the virtuous and demerits for the sinner.

(1) Agāmi karma (Impending actions i.e., relating to future times) means actions done in the present and they will produce the results in the future times. Hence, man if he were to be cautious in the present, can modify the fruits to occur in the future. As he sows now so he reaps after.

(2) Sanchita karma (Accumulated actions) is like an arrow in the quiver. It occurs in the present as a Prarabdha Karma.

(3) Prārabdha karma (Pre-destination) means the present experience of the results of all actions done in the previous births. There is no escape from the experience of this kind of karma. Even great souls do experience some Klesa karmas on the eve of their leaving their mortal body because of the inevitability of Prārabdha karma, which is the result of their actions done over several previous lives.

Elucidating the implications of Prārabdha karma, the Swāmījī says that for instance we are aware that Sri Rāmakrishna Pramahamsa died of cancer throat. Sri Nārāyana Guru, Ramana Maharshi, Aurobindo, also left their mortal
bodies because of one or the other of dreadful diseases. But it must be understood that for all these great souls, this mattered little or nothing when compared to the Supreme Bliss they enjoyed because of the virtue of their enlightenment. In the view of all these great souls, this phenomenon is nothing but the remains of Prārabdha karma. The Swāmījī places Jesus Christ also in the same category. Despite his leaving the body because of crucifixion, Christ was filled with divine thoughts and spiritual Bliss. At the time of his being crucified, he was ridiculed by his enemies by saying that if he were to be the son of God, why not God, his Father could not come to his rescue. On hearing this the Christ replied his Father would surely come to his rescue, if only he willed it, but he says that he did not choose to do so as he believed that anything happens as only willed by God. The Swāmījī tries to show here that even Christ’s crucifixion is also a case of the inevitability of Prārabdha karma.40

Mahatma Gandhi, eventhough he was shot dead by three bullets of his assaasin, uttered Rāma Nāma thrice before he breathed his last. He never exhibited even the slightest sign of any pain or suffering on his face. Swāmījī says, even now are we coming across great souls of the Prārabdha karma, as being questioned on his present suffering, physical or mental.

From all these, it can be concluded that Prārabdha karma is inevitable and inescapable and every one has to experience its results at sometime or other. It is interesting to note that the Malayālaswāmi, himself left his mortal body by some serious ailments.

Human beings desire the fruits of good actions, but do not care to do good actions. Nobody wishes for suffering or the results of evil actions. And they deliberately do the
sinful actions. According to Yoga Vāsishtha, the actions both of merits and demerits are the pure and impure forms of Prakriti (Nature). Just as wet and dry fuel can be put to flames, so also, good and evil actions performed over several past lives can be reduced to ashes by the fire of yoga. Just as a hill pervaded by fire is not a fitting place for birds and animals to inhabit, so also, the qualities of nature can never touch the great soul illuminated by the Brahmajnāna. A careful observation of this fact, will reveal a secret. It is easily known that there can be no wild fire in a hill on which herds and birds, snakes and animals are known to inhabit. In a similar way, we can know that a soul filled with desires of sense is not yet lit by the fire of Jñāna. And a great soul enjoying the Supreme Bliss as a consequence of Brahmajnāna cultivates a sense of detachment towards all objects of sense.

Swāmījī expresses the following view with regard to Prārabdha karma. For him, Prārabdha means whatever happens to the great souls, be it happiness or suffering, health or disease, who constantly experience the Bliss of God-consciousness having renounced all actions and overcome all attachments and have become absolutely inactive. In other words, he, like a python experiences all pleasures and pains that come to him on their own accord and feels contented and satisfied. And in the case of an enlightened soul, there is absolutely no chance of his being associated with any vices, or any desires of sense. This is so because Jñāna or true knowledge is the result of great merits emerging from the performance of penance, ardent devotion, charity and meditation on the divine and there is no any short cut for this.

The Swāmījī says that a doubt may well arise as to how a Jñānin becomes a vicious character while his
Prārabdha karma is grounded on act of virtue and merit like penance, ardent devotion, meditation and charity. Is not Prārabdha, the experience of the results of previous actions? Does not the seed-sprout theory holds good here? If you plant a coconut tree, can we have a mango fruit from it? Can the offspring of a cow be a tiger? In the same fashion, the tendency of Jñānin must be towards the performance of acts of virtue and piety and not towards impure, mean and sinful acts. In this connection, the swāmījī refers to the Gītā statement “Bahūnām janmanām antē Jñānavānmaṁ prapadyate” - “At the end of many lives, the man of wisdom resorts to Me, knowing that the Supreme is all that is” i.e., the aspirant gradually evolves through yogic practices, selfless service, devotion and constant meditation in many births and ultimately attains the Inner Self.42

The theory that the mind tends towards objects of sense because of the influence of Prārabdha is wrong.

5. Swamiji’s views on Karmatraya

Actions are of three kinds i.e., Impending actions (Agāmi), Accumulated actions (Sanchita) and Predestination (Prārabdha). Prārabdha wears off after experiencing of its results. Sanchita can be worked out by the acquisition of knowledge. Referring to great contemporary yogins, some of whom are wedded to Brahmanishtha and some others immersed in Tapōnishtha, the Swāmījī asks as to how in the case of these great souls the Agāmi karma can be annihilated.43

Of the Jīvanmuktas, some constantly live in penance and meditation and some others experience prārabdha karma remaining as witness selves. Even the practice of penance and meditation is not aimed at any results. This is because they are able to live in penance and meditation due to the
impressions of their past lives. Even the Sāstras declare that true knowledge is the result of the power of penance and meditation practised in and through successive previous lives. Hence, the remains of **Sanchita karma** may result in the form of **Tapas**. All **karmas** or the results of karmas come to cease the moment true knowledge is attained. All talk of action and its result, the subject and the experience, ‘You’ and ‘I’ is illusory. The moment he realises his own true nature (as Brahman) he will have an assured cognition that he is the manifestation of eternal and truly pure consciousness. At that very moment, he also realises for himself as to how he could be subjected to karma having never been born at all. He will also come to be aware of the problem as to how he who never happens to be a doer would come to experience the result of karma. Knowledge means removal of illusion. Just as a man overcomes the fear of a snake after ascertaining for himself that he only mistook a rope for a snake, so also, the person who on the realisation of the true nature of the self, overcomes illusion of his state of ignorance that he was the subject, individual self, the knower, the experiencer and so on and frees himself from the shackles of **Prarabdha**. And this fact he alone knows and others are not aware of it. The enlightened person is above all pleasure and pains though others may entertain the feeling that he is also subject to them as long as he retains the physical body.⁴⁴ The Swāmījī asks as to how could a **Jñānin** who transcends the three kinds of physical body be subjected to the bodily pleasures and pains? The Swāmījī illustrates this idea by an interesting analogy. Just as a ripe coconut is least affected even if it falls down from a tall tree so also a **Jīvanmukta** is least affected by physical pains. For all outward purposes the **Jīvanmukta** appears to have the same physical body as that of any ordinary mortal, but he is never affected by teachings
of love and hatred. This truth one has to experience for himself and can never be understood by others. Hence, the karma of the enlightened is supposed to illustrate the law of ‘Dhagdhapata’ or the ‘law of the burnt-cloth’. This means the Jīvanmukta retains his body just as a paper or a thread of a piece of cloth even after burning still remains its shape. But the paper or the cloth so burnt, will not serve any purpose. Similarly, a Jñānin has really no pains or pleasures eventhough he appears to have them as far as others are concerned. This fact is explained in the Sāstras as follows:

The predestined effects of this birth cease to exist when they are experienced now. The accumulated effects of destiny are dispelled by the sight of knowledge; and the two kinds of future destiny, as the result of present thoughts and present actions, are exhausted by the external reactions of friendship and hatred to which one is liable says ‘Sivatatwa Jñānam’. The twenty second Sloka of the Nādabindupanishad adds:

Tatva jñānodaya oordhvaṃ prārabdhāṃ naeva vidyate,
Itaram dvitayam karma tadveshi priyavādhibhibhiḥ:

“Just as all the dream objects disappear as soon as we become awake, on the realisation of the truth, all the physical body and its associates become non-existent. The remaining Karmas called merit and demerit belong to those who love and to those who hate respectively. Hence this means there is no Prārabdha karma.”

Further, the twenty third Sloka of Nādabindūpanishad says:

Karma janmāntarīyam yat prārabdham iti kīrtitam,
Tat tu janmāntara abhavat pumsāḥ naeva asti karhichit:

“Prārabdha karma means actions done in the past life. Inasmuch there is no future birth to the man of knowledge
that destiny which is called prārabdha - the effects which have to be gone through from the beginning of the present existence has no effect on him.”

The Swāmījī reveals the secret of karma as follows: As we continue to experience the results of karma, the stock of karma gets slowly reduced. This holds good with regard to evil actions. On the other hand, every deliberate act of virtue increases the stock of punya or merit.46

6. Nishkāma Karma

Karmanyevā dhikārasthe mā phaleshu kadācana,
Mā karma phala hetur bhūrma te sangōstvakarmanī.

“To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction.”47

According to the Swāmījī the prefix ‘Mā’ which is used thrice in the course of the Sloka is the foundation for dis-interested action. In view of the fact that the Lord by laying down this foundational Sloka on Karma Yoga in the second Chapter of the Gītā, followed by the description of the characteristics of a Sthitaprajñā (stable in intelligence), it is very clear to us that the sthitaprajñata can only be attained by the practice of this kind of Nishkāma Karma. Not only this. It should also be known that one should not cease to practice Nishkāma Karma even after attaining the state of Sthithaprajna.

The Swāmījī says that even those who are practising yoga must perform actions for the good of other living beings with renouncing all the results of those actions. A tāmasic person acts for his own benefits; a rājasic person acts for the sake of his name and fame; and a sāttvik one acts neither for his own interest nor for his self aggrandizement, but feels highly gratified by the idea of having accomplished
a good action. He points out despite the good nature of sattva guna, there is a difficulty associated with it i.e., a sāttvik person is likely to subject himself to a feeling of dissatisfaction of not having accomplished his actions well. That is why the Gītā instructs, in the fourteenth Chapter of Gunatraya Vībhāga Yoga, that the gunas including sattva are causes of bondage. Here, Lord Krishna explained the characteristics of the Liberated Soul or the soul who transcends the limitations of the three gunās. The Lord used the explanation “Siddhyā siddyoh samo bhūtva samatvam yoga uchyate” (Abandoning attachment, with our even mind is called Yoga). One who acts from such a state will never be bound.

The Lord teaches “Yogah karmasu kausalam” which means, the excellence of yoga consists in seeing to it that one acts but is never bound by the results of his actions. Hence, only such an expert is competent to practice karma yoga. All others are bound. All actions done for the good of other living beings can never cause bondage. Only action done with desire causes bondage. Hence, one who acts with no desire for the fruits there of will attain the Moksha, the highest Purushārtha. Sankara says Karma decides the Guna. The mind behaves true to the nature of the Guna. The senses perform virtue or vice in accordance with the nature of the mind. Hence, in Swāmījī’s view it has to be understood that purity of mind follows from the purity of action and purity of senses subject to the purity of the mind.

The above teaching according to the Swāmījī not only refutes the view of those who hold that mind is the most important and yield themselves to sensuous pleasures but also strengthens the doctrine that karma is most important. Though it is true that the view that the mind is most important
finds expression at certain places, mind is instrumental only for the performance of actions relating to the body and the sense organs. On a deeper investigation, the truth that mind behaves only in accordance with karma, may be comprehended. Hence, only a change in karma can bring about a change in mind. People go only to the extent of understanding that mind is the cause for all the activities of the sense organs. The seeker after truth on a deeper and deeper inquiry will understand that karma is the cause of mind, and trics to modify the nature of karma. This is the truth.\(^{53}\) If it were not so, we will not be able to get an answer to the question as to why mind is a composition of the qualities of good and bad. This is the reason why the Gītā says, ‘Indriyānāṃ Manaschāsmī’\(^{54}\) (Of the senses I am mind). This is also the reason why at certain other places in the Gītā we find a statement ‘Gahanā Karmanō gatiḥ’\(^{55}\) (Hard to understand the way of action) and “Kavayopyatra mōhitah” (What is action? What is inaction? - as to this even the wise are bewildered).

A closer probe into the matter will not fail us to realise the fact that mind is the effect and karma is the cause though it appears on an occasion or to that mind is the cause and karma is effect.

The Swāmījī refers to some people who are of the opinion the Nishkāma karma means only actions done either to satisfy the God or for the sake of other living beings. Karma means actions done by the Karanas. Karanas is the collective name for Karmendriyas, Jnānendriyas, the physical body, and the four constituents of Antahkaranas (mind, intellect, chitta and ego). The prayers made by speech, reflections done by the chitta, modifications done by Buddhi (intellect) are all included in karma. That which is transcendental to the senses is the substance of Brahman
i.e., the nature of the Self. This does not act. This is eternally pure luminosity and that is the object of knowledge. This is the highest of all objects of knowledge. If it were not known, all knowledge is useless. All objects known are perishable. Brahman or the ultimate Self is imperishable. This is the reason why it is said that it is very difficult to know it. Those who reflect on the mind, who know with the intellect and who pray by speech must do so without any desire for the fruits of their actions. Every Brahmanishtha must understand this philosophy. And it is only then Nishkāma Karma Yoga will have been achieved.\textsuperscript{56}

According to the Swāmījī, in the Sloka of the Bhagavad Gītā:

Niyatam kuru karma tvam karma jyāyo hyakarmanah,
Sarirayārapi ca te na prasidhyed akarmanah.

"Do thou they allotted work, for action is better than inaction even the maintenance of thy physical life cannot be effected without action."\textsuperscript{57}

The Lord teaches the crux of the Gītā, in such a lucid way even the illiterate can understand. This is the truth we understand from actual experience. People with education, anushthāna, and tapas are leading a happy life. In the same way people who do some job or who are pre-occupied with some work are also leading a happy life. But even Sadhus who are not educated are struggling for existence even for minimum needs of life food and clothing. Similarly beggars and vagabonds are also suffering for want of food and shelter. All this is well known to people. It is also a matter of our day today experience people who are wedded to Anushthāna like karma and yoga are certainly happy in emperical life, though we are no aware of what is in store for them from the transcendental point of view. The point is, how can people who are not happy in empirical
life can aspire for transcendental happiness? Is it not certainly a better proposition to be at least happy by being active rather than being denied of both by being totally inactive? It is for this reason the Swāmījī says that the Lord expresses “Sarirayātrā pi ca te na prasidhyed akarmanah”\(^{58}\)

He also says that many people express the doubt as to how we can act with absolutely no motive or idea of obtaining some result or other of actions that we so perform?\(^{59}\) He says that the Lord Himself has cleared this doubt. Just as one who has no self-knowledge, performs actions with attachment and with a desire for the result of his actions, so also, one who has self-knowledge must act with no attachment and with no desire for the fruits of actions. Though the two kinds of actions appear to be the same for all outward purposes, they do not mean the same thing. One is acting with concentrating on the truth of the statement of the Guru and the Commandment of the Lord. The other is acting with egoism and selfishness. And therefore, the first one is becoming god-conscious and the second one is becoming ignorant. He who asserts ‘the karma does not touch me, I have no desire for the results of actions, will never be bound by karmas’. The incarnations of Rāma and Krishna perform ever so many deeds, but were never bound by those actions. Because they were filled with God-consciousness. All their actions were meant for setting the world right, and never meant for themselves. The karmayogin must observe that he attains such a status. Any evil action either willed or spoken or actually performed can be annihilated only by a good action willed or spoken or actually performed respectively.

If the result of karma is inevitable and inescapable, the question arises as to why we should perform a good action, and should strive for enlightenment with the intention
of working out the results of past actions? By the very statement that the result of karma is inevitable it is implied that the result of good action and the result of enlightened action are bound to be experienced by the subject. Therefore, all acts of devotion will certainly effect their meritorious results. All Śāstras of 'Karma Kānda' teaching actions like self-inflictment of pain and suffering and the like will be meaningless. Swāmījī says that this is the reason why Lord Krishna says 'Gahanā Karmanō Gatiḥ'⁶⁰ According to some religious thinkers, good actions produce good results and evil actions produce evil results and the individual has to necessarily experience these respective results. According to certain other thinkers, the performance of good actions will annihilate the results of bad actions. According to the author of the Gita, the results of good or bad action can never bind the performance of Nishkāma Karma or dis-interested action. Hence, the Gītā says 'Niyatasya tu sanyāsah karma no no papadyate' - "Verily the renunciation of any duty that ought to be done is not right."⁶¹ According to Brahmajñānins those who are liberated in this life itself, being freed from the fetters of karma, attain the eternal bliss of liberation. According to these statements of the Vedānta, only Jīvanmuktas are capable of attaining this highest bliss and for all others it is an impossible task. We can discern here the crux of karma. Those who are not Jīvanmuktas, but pretend to be so are certainly bound by the results of karma. This is the cause of most of the dangers in the present world. The body and the senses and the pleasures and pains of thought, word and deed are not very much perceptible in their countenance. Just as the stars and the moon which are ever luminous but appear so only in the night and pale into insignificance by the rise of the morning sun, so also the klesas (afflictions) of the body and the senses can never make their impact in the presence
of the luminosity of the *Brahmajñāna* and the Bliss of Brahman.  

And there is another secret of karma i.e., karma may be said to be either inescapable or that which can be avoided. It is only the inescapable and inevitable karmas which inflict pain and suffering on all people including the jñānānir or the enlightened soul. The avoidable karmas which are of very general nature can be annihilated by the performance of virtuous and righteous actions like penance and meditation. The results of the inevitable karmas are in the form of the curses of the great Rishis. And the results of all the preventable or avoidable karmas can be easily worked out by inflicting punishment, on one self and by practicing *dhyāna* and *yoga*. But for serious acts of crimes like murders only death sentence can meet the ends of justice. The *Swāmī* gives an interesting illustration to understand a distinction between unavoidable and avoidable karmas. Suppose we conduct a statistical analysis of the patients that are admitted in a general hospital and who are eventually cured and those who succumb. We usually find that ninety per cent of the people get cured and go back, and only the remaining ten per cent are fatal cases. So also, ninety per cent of the karmas are avoidable karmas and only ten per cent of them are unavoidable.  

The *Swāmī* states that the Sāstra also says that the present diseases and the infirmities are the results of evil actions done in the past life. Therefore, the prescription of medicine, the performance of alms giving, *japa*, *homa* and *devata-archana*, are recommended to appease these evils. Nectar and poison both are products of earth. However, nectar destroys the effects of poison. Both these are in the human body. But poison effects death and Nectar effects deathlessness. Similarly, truth and falsity are also qualities of Nature. However, falsity creates pain and truth creates pleasure.
The Swāmījī refers to the Gītā fourth Sloka of fifth Chapter in this context:

Sāmkhya yogau prthag bālāh pravadanti na panditah,
Ekamapyasthitah samyag ubhayōr vindate phalam.

"The ignorant or those with childish mentality distinguish between Yoga of renunciation of action, and Yoga of renunciation in action. But philosophers never say this. Any one who practises any of these in its true spirit is bound to attain the realisation."

What according to the Swāmījī is understood from the above sloka is that whether one is leading a house-holder’s life or the life of renunciation, there is no question of high or low. The only thing is that one should perform the duties accruing from the respective stage of life that one is leading in their true spirit.

In pursuit of the purification of theirselves even the yogins are practising karma yoga, in thought, word, deed, and senses, with absolutely no desire for the fruits thereof. It is needless to say that the general list of aspirants for Moksha, the seekers of knowledge should also practice Nishkāma Karma. If we closely observe the three kinds of penance i.e., physical, vocal and mental as mentioned in Chapter XVII, Slokas of 14, 15 and 16 in the Bhagavad Gītā, one can attain purity of thought, word and deed. That is the reason why the Lord used the expression as "Atma Suddhaye". The practisers of Nishkāma Karma attain the purity of self, and those who do not practise it never attain the purity of the self. In the same manner, Yoganishthas by performing disinterested actions are realising the state of liberation. Those who perform actions with a desire for the results of their actions, are bound by samsāra. The term ‘Naishtika’ means the attainment of Mukti or Liberation which is the goal of Brahmanishtha.
In the same way in Sloka twelve of the Chapter XII in the Bhagavad Gītā, the Lord explains knowledge resulting from listening to the sacred scriptures is better than the practices not associated with discriminative knowledge. And Dhyāna associated with on philosophical wisdom is better than the knowledge resulting from listening to the sacred scriptures. But the performance of disinterested action is better than Dhyāna associated with philosophical knowledge. By acting in a disinterested way, one can attain peace of mind and finally Uparathī (aversion from the disturbing actions). Hence, it can be understood that peace of mind can be attained only by sacrificing the results of actions, and disinterested action is the most important of all. It is often asked that if even great souls are bound by the fetters of karma, who then is competent to attain liberation - a state devoid of all karmas which means freedom of all karmas. The Swāmīji says there need be no such doubt. Here is the vital point of karma. All karmas are performed by mind; by speech and by body. The mind, speech and body are also experiencing the results of actions. This is true. For people who realise that the self is the witness, the self is not the subject. And the people who know that the self is eternal, pure, self-luminous, Bliss, Nectar, Power and who realised their identity with the self are not bound by good or evil actions. But even such people have no escape from experiencing the results of actions done by mind, speech and body. This is the inner meaning. Just as the merits and demerits of the cloths that one wears are no part of one's own nature, so also, all the pains and pleasures, health and disease, the subtle, the gross and the causal bodies in which the self resides.65
7. Karma and Gunatraya Vibhāga

The fourteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā entitled "Gunatraya Vibhāga Yoga" is so called because it seeks to explain the essential nature of the qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas and the nature of the pure knowledge of the Self. It is called Yoga because, the individual soul being freed from the three qualities of Prakriti (Nature) gets identified itself with the Supreme Soul. The Swāmījī insists that practisers of Nishkāma Karma should study 'Karma Yoga', the practisers of 'Dhyāna Yoga' should study sixth Chapter 'Atmasamayamana Yoga', the practisers of Devotion should study twelfth Chapter 'Bhakti Yoga' and the practisers of 'Jnāna Yoga' should study the fourteenth Chapter 'Gunatraya Vibhāga Yoga'. He states that a careful study of this 'Gunatraya Vibhāga Yoga' will reveal the nature of the Self in its association with sattva, rajas and tamas, the destiny of the self when freed from the body at the time of its association with the three gunas, and the physical body the self assumes when it takes the future birth. In the same fashion, it also reveals the nature of the liberated self being freed from the three qualities.

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three products of Nature (Prakriti). Prakriti binds the self by the physical body in the presence of even one of the three qualities. This negates liberation. Even Sattva being the product of nature is also causing bondage. The predominant presence of anyone of these qualities in any individual makes one think that what it does is just. In Swāmījī's view it is said to be a very difficult effort to understand the nature of the three qualities and strain not to yield to their influence. Just as a person wearing glasses of a particular colour looks at the world so coloured, so also, the person is likely to view the world in accordance with the nature of the
predominant quality present in them. For instance, one in whom, there is a predominance of sattva, looks at everything as of the nature of sattva. The food he eats, the sentence he speaks and the action he does, all appear to be Sattvik. In one who attains the state of Turiya, which is the state of absolute truth, there are no qualities at all. But even here some qualities of the body remain to be sattvik. But the self which becomes pure will be experiencing god-consciousness. But the reason why the body continues to be sattvik is that there is nothing in all the fourteen worlds other than the three qualities. One in whom there is the predominance of tamas, will take only tamasic food and associates himself with people of similar quality. Even the books and papers he reads are only in tune with this. When he enters into rajoguna, he gets interested into rajasic food, friends, clothing, books, replacing earlier men and matters of tamasic nature. He ceases to interest himself even in his people of tamasic nature and tamasic food. Again, when he attains sattvik nature in virtue of certain merits, he dissociates himself from both rajas and tamas and gets himself interested in sattvik food, the life of simplicity, friendship with people of sattvik nature and reading the books enlightening on the knowledge of God. In sattvik state, he goes to the extent of relinquishing all his relations even with his own kith and kin. He will also give up the food he used to take giving strength to the physical body and instead he opts for in the present state food amenable to strengthen his powers of the self and purity of Antahkarana. At the time of getting himself liberated while still being in the physical body he will always be immersed in the thoughts of Brahman being freed from all objects of sense and being contented with whatever he gets in times of need.
The Swāmījī states that even though the true nature of the Self is one of self-luminosity, it looses its identity for the time being, because of past karmas. Just as the self-same light appears, in different shades when obstructed by glasses of different hues, so also, the heart of the individual soul undergoes changes due to the mixture of good and bad actions. And the individual soul attains knowledge consistent with these changes. This is very well explained by Patanjali in his ‘Yoga Sūtras’. The Swāmījī exhorts that life is short and there is so much to be achieved and anyone could only ill-afford to waste his precious time.

The Swāmījī also asks us to remember the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā in this connection:

Gunān etān atitya trīn dehi deha samudbhavan,  
Janmamṛtyujarā duḥkhair vimuktō mrtam asnute.

“When the embodied soul rises above these three modes that spring from the body, it is freed from birth, death, old age and pain and attains life eternal.”

In the Sloka, the Swāmījī says it is very clearly said that “Gunān etān atitya” which means that he who transcends the three gunas and the goodness becomes absolute and attain the status of Brahman. The doctrine of Nishkāma karma propounds that one ought to perform acts of righteousness dedicating the results of those actions to Eshwara. The last Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is named as ‘Moksha Sanyāsa Yoga’. The general meaning of this title is that one should renounce to attain Moksha. There is also another meaning for this. That is, even Moksha should be renounced. Here Sanyāsa means renunciation of everything. Some people interpret this as meaning not as renunciation of action, but renunciation in action. The real meaning is to remain a real sacrificer (Thyāgi) by renouncing all relations. There after in order to attain the status of
Jīvanmukta devoid of all Prakriti, one should renounce all actions, and all relations and lead a life of seclusion meditating on Brahman.\textsuperscript{70}

Another special meaning is that renunciation is taken in such a comprehensive sense as to include even Moksha. When one succeeds in fulfilling the obligations taught in upto seventeen chapters, he will reach a state in which even the desire for Moksha ceases. The mention of the expressions of Bhavadgītāsu, Upanishatsu, Brahmavidyāyām ... at the end of each Chapter, is expressive of the fact that the word ‘Upanishad’ means the end of the Vedās. These Upanishads teach about Brahman alone. Hence the desire for Moksha is not mentioned as the ultimate and in the Bhagavad Gītā. In Swāmījī’s view, it has therefore to be understood that Lord krishna, must have taught that one should attain Moksha either in the sense of Ubhayarūpa or in the sense of Niya tattvārdha bōdha.\textsuperscript{71} From this it follows that the real teaching of the Gītā is Sanyāsa of the form of renunciation of everything.

‘Naishkarmya Siddhi’ (Renunciation through Supreme state transcending all work) which is to be attained by the performance of Nishkāma Karma with purity of self can never be attained by one who does not perform Nishkāma karma.\textsuperscript{72} It only occurs to his mind that body culture is the most important and it never occurs to his mind that the devotion is the most important. A tāmasic person being ignorant of his own obligations fails to do his duties. A rājasic person despite the knowledge of his obligations fails to perform them because of lack of patience or egoism. A sāttvik person who knows his duties with all patience and humility performs all of them. This is the real distinction between Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (Goodness, Passion and Dullness). It is only a Sāttvik who can get liberation. A Rājasic person has at best a desire for Moksha. And a Tāmasic person is ignorant of Moksha.
Being the sacrificer of the results of his actions, a Sāttvik person will never cease to perform his actions even if they are heavy. He is not bound even by the performance of auspicious actions, because it is indeed impossible for any embodied being to abstain from work altogether. So, 'Yastukarma phalatyāgī' - he who gives up the fruits of action, he is said to be relinquisher Thyāgi or Sanyāsin.

The Swāmījī refers to the eighteenth Chapter as the finest exposition of the vital implication of karma. The substance of this is that the respective senses performing good and bad actions have themselves to reap the fruits of those good and bad actions. The self being the witness does not experience them. Hence the body itself has to reap the results of the good and bad actions which it has done. The same holds good to all other senses and mind. He who knows that he is the witness, he is self-luminous, he is the manifestation of Supreme Bliss, can alone be said to be the knower of the true philosophy of Vedānta.

Referring to 49th Sloka of the same chapter, the Swāmījī says that the term "Naishkarmya" means the state of transcending all work. It is not a complete withdrawal from all work. Such a quietism is not possible so long as we live in the body. The Gītā insists on inner renunciation. As the ego and nature are akin, the liberated soul becoming Brahman, the pure self described as silent, calm, inactive, acts in the world of Prakriti, knowing what the latter is.

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CHAPTER - III

SWĀMĪJĪ'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

The greatest contribution of the Śwāmījī consists in his reinterpretation of the fundamental traditional concepts of Indian philosophy and Religion to suit the demands of social justice and equality of all human beings. He does these with a view to effect the awakening of social consciousness with emphasis on the dignity of human personality. He wanted to bring about a social revolution not by any kind of force or coercion but by the means of a right understanding of the classical concepts of the Hindu thought.

In the present chapter, an earnest attempt is made to bring out the full implications of the Śwāmījī’s interpretations and clarifications of the concept of Varnāshrama Dharmas, Sanātana Dharma, Vegetarianism, Women Education and Remarriage. One could perceive manifest humanism as the underlying current of these interpretations and also the Śwāmījī’s anxiety to make these concepts relevant to the changing times so as to make them socially acceptable imperatives. A man of wide ranging vision and foresight, the Śwāmījī visualized the course of events to come and took upon himself a stupendous task of enlightening the true connotation of these basic concepts of Indian thought in the manner of Śwāmī Vivekānanda and Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa and did everything in his capacity to carry these ideas to the millions of the masses of India.

The Śwāmījī was by no means an absolutist or a puritan for he never said what all the Sāstras, Purānas or the epics said is true for ever irrespective of the material conditions and the changing needs of the people. Nor could Śwāmījī be dubbed a revolutionary in the sense that he wanted to find fault with every concept of the Indian tradition as passed on to us. Śwāmījī’s contribution actually lies in striking a
golden mean between the extreme of absolutism and relativism. What all he does is to erase some of the misconceptions and misunderstandings that have been woven around these concepts by interested people to serve their own sectarian causes and communal interests. His was the cherished ideal that there could be no greater cause than to serve the down trodden physically, psychologically and also spiritually. His was the ideal of establishing better human relations, securing greater justice to the less fortunate lot of the masses of the country, ensuring equitable justice to all classes of people regardless of sex, caste or community.

1. Swāmījī on Varna Dharmas

Swāmījī in his books like “Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram”, “Lokoddhārakam”, and “Prasnottara Mānikya Māla” severely criticised the present caste system in India and expressed his opinion on the subject. According to him, the concept of caste is something which necessarily refers to Indian people only.

The Swāmījī says that we are aware of the fact that the Indian philosophical tradition or the Sanātana Dharma which has been handed down to us by the ancient sages is known as Anushthātha Chatushtaya or the four-fold-practice. This consists of (1) the way of Selfless action (Nishkāma karma), (2) the way of Devotion (Bhakti), (3) the way of Meditation (Dhyāna) and (4) the way of Knowledge (Jñāna). Just as the governance of the mundane world has four branches of the Executive, the Judiciary, the Military and the Bureaucracy, so also, the observance of the divine rule has its four-fold method. It is only with the awareness of this four-fold practice, the great temples were constructed with four towers, on all four gates. Even as the damage done to one pillar would shake the foundation of a mandapa structure and the injury to one leg would
prevent free movement of the cow, so does the negligence of any one in the Anushthāna Chatushtaya cause obstruction in the realm of self-realisation. We also find that among the Hindu scriptures, the Vedās which hold a pre-eminent place in the earliest record of Indian culture and civilization are four in number. (1) Rig Veda, (2) Yajur Veda, (3) Śāma Veda and (4) Adharva Veda. This knowledge was visualized by the ancient Indian Rishis, as a result of their austerity and penance. Similarly the traditional division of the Vedās are made into four sections known as (1) Samhitas, (2) Brāhmaṇas, (3) Aranyakas and (4) Upanishads.

It is not surprising to find that the classification of the caste system or Varna Dharma in traditional Indian philosophy is found in terms of the four-fold division namely the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. The Bhagavad Gītā and other authoritative texts assure us that the four wings of Anushthāna Chatushtaya have all a common goal and yet enjoy an independent status each by itself. That is why, says the Śvāmījī, the scriptures have assigned a particular role to each of them, for the individual convenience of a particular devotee. The path of selfless action ensures mental purity; that of devotion presides over mental concentration; that of meditation leads to physical and mental self-control and that of knowledge to the acquisition of that, to which the three foregoing paths are but gradual stages.²

The Śvāmījī points out that here and there in the Sāstras, we come across references to the caste system based on the birth of the body and also according to the qualities of the individuals. When did these caste distinctions arise? For what purpose and introduced by whom? These are difficult questions for common man to answer. Among Rishis in the Vedic period this distinction does not appear. So many pramānas are there in the Sāstras to the effect that
there was no caste or creed in that period. It is useless to assert that God, the universal Father of all, made these distinctions. It is far from truth. If the creator wanted these distinctions, He should have used distinct signs to make the differences. But we find no such signs in the case of mankind. One animal is distinct from another in form, colour, physical feature and also in nature. So also, one bird is different from another. But man is the same everywhere. The organs of action and perception are the same for every individual. When we speak of distinctions, we ask for a sign or mark to determine the distinctions. Here the law of seed and sprout does not apply to the caste system. But at the same time, it must be remembered that there are distinctions among men according to qualities which they exhibit. Taking an example of a mango tree, if there are a hundred fruits, all are not of the same taste or colour of form. It means that the qualities are determined by the mixture of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in various proportions among all people.

The Swāmījī feels that no one had ever offered a correct explanation on the origin of race and differences between races. If we look into the History of the World, we understand that when Aryans crossed into India, they divided themselves into different classes and each class was given a particular work to do for the benefit of the whole community. The highly intelligent men with superior gifts of learning were asked to teach and guide others. Those who were strong in limb and dashing in spirit were allotted the task of self-defence and war. Those with mixed qualities were asked to carry on trade and commerce and increase the wealth of the country and those who were strong of limbs but had no special gifts were chosen to engage themselves in physical labour such as agriculture to produce food grains necessary for the survival of the society. This indeed was
a rational classification and there was no question of high or low, as all were engaged to work for the welfare of the community as a whole. But in long course of time, this meaningful classification developed into the hard bound caste system which has ruined the solidarity of the country.

Swāmījī observes that in the beginning there was a group of people or Sangha. In course of time, a Prophet or a great teacher takes birth and preaches his experiences or new thought about God, and those who believe the Prophet’s teachings would become the followers of that Prophet. Religious conversion was prevalent among them in those days. All the present races were formed like this. This opinion may be acceptable to all. When Jesus Christ was born, those who followed the preachings of Jesus and who joined his Sangha were called Christians. Similarly, after 600 A.C. Holy Prophet Muhammad was born and he gave his sermons to the contemporary tribes. Those who followed his teachings were called Muhammadans. Thus Christianity and Islamic religions emerged after the birth of Jesus Christ and Holy Prophet Muhammad respectively in the world. This is a universal truth. When we look into India, we observe that the followers of Jin became the Jains and those who followed the teachings of Lord Buddha became the Buddhists. Later on, the followers of Sri Sankara became the Advaitins. So also, Sikhism preached or founded by Gurunanak came into existence. Ramanuja’s Tengala Vaishnavism, Desikāchārya’s Vadagalalism also came into vogue. Madhvāchārya founded Dvaita philosophy, Aryā samāj was established by Dayānanda Saraswathi and Rājarām Mohan Roy founded Brahma samāj. At present all the existing castes or races are formulated in the same way.

The Swāmījī feels that at present, the issue of caste distinctions is politicized and different parties are taking
advantage of it to feather their own nests. The higher sections need not be pulled down but the weaker sections should be upgraded. The weaker sections have suffered much by want of proper education and poverty. Knowledge is universal. No one has exclusive right for it. No one has a right to deny others of the means of acquiring knowledge. The country is afflicted with large number of evils on account of the mechanical distinctions of caste on the basis of birth. The tendency to suppress or oppress the lower castes has given rise to caste hatred and divisive forces are shaking the very foundations of the country's solidarity.

If we were to interpret the word 'Varna' as mere colour we would be grievously erring, because today we see many a Brahmin of dark colour and many a Sudra of fair colour. So we have to equate 'Varna' with 'Guna' (Model quality). That is white represents 'Sattva', red denotes 'Rajas', black for 'Tamas', the mixture of these colours yellow represents the mixture of the three modes in the 'Vaisya'. So, the references should be only to qualities.\(^5\)

Sri Malayālaswāmi, in his sermons observes that it is wrong for the higher castes to take exclusive possession of religious and spiritual knowledge and keep it as a guarded treasure, while thousands of others are thirsting for it. As long as one thinks that he is superior to another, the divine equality before God and social equality before man would be in jeopardy\(^6\). Let all people share the light. Let the gates of the temple of knowledge be thrown open to all. Does the Sun make any distinctions in spreading his light? So, it is with knowledge - the progress of mankind towards higher and higher aims is the wish of the Lord. Knowledge is the fire. Whether men or women, Brāhmaṇa or Chandāla, if they offer their mind and senses as oblations in the fire of self-control, knowledge of Brahma will shine forth as
a big blaze. Those who carry out God’s wish are His true devotees. That is why all religions proclaim universal love and service as the highest spiritual ideal. Love and service to fellow beings is worship to God. This is emphatically stated in Gītā. “O: Arjuna, all beings are equal to Me. There is no one who is dear or not dearer to Me. Those who are attached to Me by their devotion, I dwell in them, and they in Me.” It means that the Lord does not make any distinctions of caste or sex or nationality, race etc. Devotion alone is the deciding fact. So, there is no caste distinction in God’s creation. It is made by man and they have become the most horrible dividing forces in the Universal race of mankind. According to the Swāmījī, the message of Gītā is open to all people without any prohibition whatsoever. The thirteenth Sloka of fourth Chapter, Jñāna Yoga:

Chāturvarnyam Mayā srustam Guna karma vibhāgasah;  
Tasya kartāramapimām Viddhya kartāra mavyayam;
and the third Sloka of fourteenth Chapter, Gunatraya Vibhāga Yoga:

Maṃayonir mahat Brahma tasmin garbhām dadhāmyaham,  
Sambhavat sarvabhumām tātō bhavati Bhārata.

reveal that according to the three modes of material nature and the work ascribed to them, the corresponding four divisions of human society were created by Him. He is therefore, the creator of the four divisions of the social order, beginning with the intelligent class of men, technically called the Brāhmaṇas, due to their being in the mode of goodness. Next is the administrative class, technically called the Kshatriyas due to their being situated in the mode of passion. The mercantile men, called the Vaisyas, are situated in the mixed modes of passion and ignorance, and the Śūdras
or the working class, are situated in the ignorant mode of material nature. In spite of His creating the four divisions of human society, Lord Krishna does not belong to any of these divisions, because He is not one of the conditional souls, a section of those who form human society. Human society is the same as the animal society but to elevate man from the animal status, the above mentioned divisions are created by Lord for the systematic development of consciousness. The tendency of a particular men towards work is determined by the modes of material nature he has acquired. Such symptoms of life according to different modes of material nature are described in the 41 Sloka of eighteenth Chapter Moksha Sanyāsa Yoga:

Brāhmaṇa Kṣhatriya Viśām Śūdrānāṃchā paramāparama,
Karmāṇi Pravībhaktānī Śrāvāṇa Prabhavairgunaih.

“Brāhmaṇas, Kṣhatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras are distinguished by their qualities of work, in accordance with the modes of nature.” So, the conclusion is that all pervasive Atman has no distinctions of caste or creed or rationality. The distinctions are only from the world point of view and are intended for the purpose of conveying the multifarious works of human society.

To a question relating to Purusha Śūkta,8 which implies that there is a descending order of creation where Brāhmaṇas are at the top and the Sudras at the bottom, the Swāmīji logically interpreted the Arya Samāj’s theory relating to this.9 The Vedās are the highest authority. Their validity cannot be questioned. But, there are differences in interpretations of Vedic pronouncements. According to our ancient tradition, there is nothing wrong to say that according to qualities, the different castes sprang from the different parts of the Virātpurusha. If it is so, down from the village officer to that of President, all are servants of the community. With
human intelligence and rational analysis the metaphysical and figurative language of the Vedās should be correctly understood. For instance, it is said that Brahma was born from the lotus which sprang from the naval of Nārāyana, and naval is the lower part. Is it right to say for that reason that Brahma is not a Brāhmaṇa. Again it is said that Ganga sprang from the feet of Vishnu, would it be right to say that Ganga is Śūdra for the reason. All these are self-contradictory and do not stand to reason.

According to the Swāmījī, mankind is made up of four classes of men, judged by the qualities of their conduct and character:

1. The man of ‘Sattva Guna’ who is mainly interested in realising God through practice of truth, non-violence, righteousness and penance and who is unaffected by both praise and blame, loss and gain, heat and cold is called a ‘Brāhmaṇa’ which etymologically means ‘he realised the Brahman’.

2. The ‘Kshatriya’ or a warrior with a combination of ‘Sattva’ and ‘Rajas’ who is prepared to give up his life in the defence of his honour and his country, who has the qualities of brave and self-sacrifice and who values good name more than life itself.

3. The ‘Vaiśya’ a merchant with a combination of ‘Rajas’ and ‘Tamas’ is one interested in agriculture and business with little devotion to God with a great deal of self-interest.

4. The ‘Śūdra’ or a man of ‘Tamas’ is a labourer who works for his living, regardless of the manner in which it is earned, and who has no great concern for renown or truth or knowledge.

The following is the most rationalistic interpretations of caste system by Sri Malayālaswāmi. Fairness indicates
Sattva, red - Rajas, darkness - Tamas. Those who possess sattva are Brahmanas whatever might be their birth. So also, those who possess rajoguna are Kshatriyas. Those who possess tamoguna are Sudras. This is the rational way of deciding the distinction of castes.

Śrīvatsa reminds us of Śrī Sankara’s interpretation of the sage Vyāsa’s view in his book “Sarva Siddhānta Sangraha” that the four classes of people are determined by the quality of their model nature. Śrīvatsa opined that there need be no difference of opinion if ‘caste’ is determined in this manner. Dharmasāstras like Mahābhārata admit the distinction of caste according to qualities and works. In each caste, there are the four castes according to predominance of one or the other of the three gunas. Vyasa prescribed Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna for the attainment of Liberation for the different castes.

Among the Brāhmaṇas, people act according to their inborn tendencies. Those whose actions are straightforward without deviations of thought and speech, who are mild and gentle, merciful and forgiving, full of kind feelings, and practising Vedic study and the pursuit of wisdom - they are Brāhmaṇas of the Brāhmin caste.

Abandoning their own duties as prescribed in the Śāstras, indulging in sensual pleasures forbidding and cruel, adventurous in spirit and with crimson complexion - these are the Kshatriyas of the Brāhmin caste. Abandoning their own duties as prescribed in the Śāstras, practising agriculture and cattle breeding, yellow in complexion - these are the Vaisyas of Brāhmana caste. Injuring other people, untruthful and superstitious, worshipping the lowest deities, doing every kind of work without distinctions, devoid of cleanliness and good tradition, dark in complexion - these are the Sudras of the Brāhmana caste.  

Similarly, in all the other three castes there are four types of Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras according
to their Gunas i.e., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. This is the right way of division of casteism as enunciated in the Vedic texts and also several Purānas like Mahābhārata, Manu Smriti, etc. Thus Swāmījī interpreted the present caste system in India.

These four classes of people have different methods of gaining salvation. This indeed, the Swāmījī says, is the secret of the Varna Dharma (the law of four classes of people). To sum up, those who indulging bodily comforts alone are Śūdras; swear by wealth alone are Vaisyas; those who live for worldly fame alone are Kshatriyas and those who live in the way of knowledge only are Brāhmaṇas. If we are accustomed to take mild vegetarian food, for a long time and by keeping the body clean and by practising meditation, study of holy books, we acquire purity of mind. Even the Śūdras can acquire these qualities by sincere observance of Śāstric injunctions. By self-discipline and devotion to God, by giving up meat-eating and practising meditation, they too can acquire divine qualities (Divya Sampada). Sāttvik food is of great importance in promoting inner purity and peace.

Swāmījī’s personal thoughts on caste system have been formulated by himself in the following statements:

1. Eventhough a man is born in the lower castes, if he possesses qualities like self-control, knowledge, generosity, and the pursuit of wisdom, I honour him as a great Brāhmaṇa.

2. Though a man is born in the Brāhmaṇa caste, if he is wicked and sinful, devoid of auspicious traditions and practices, I consider him no better than a Chandāla.

3. Eventhough a man is a house-holder, living with a large family, if he rises above sense pleasures and exhibits such qualities as knowledge, chastity and mercy, I regard him as a great Monk.
4. Eventhough a man has put on the Ochre robes and calls himself a Sanyāsin, if he is devoid of self-control, the austere meditation of Brahman, and subject to the lower tendencies of human nature, I consider him as an ignorant house-holder falling in the dirty water of Samsāra. That is my consideration.

5. No comment is needed to show that the knowledge of Brahman liberates everyone whatever may be the source of cause of this birth.¹³

2. On Asrama Dharmas

Since the Vedic period, Hindu thinkers i.e., the Upanishadic seers maintained that in order to attain the highest goal of life (sumnum bonum) is realised a well planed scheme is required which is both essential and worthwhile to the younger generation and useful to the society at large. As a result, the institution of Asrama Dharma and Chaturāsrama was evolved in the society, and it has its utility for a life or peace and happiness in this world and release from the everlasting cycle of birth and death and for attainment of liberation. The individual souls are in Avidya (Ignorance), and rotating in the wheel of samsāra (family life), owing to the inexorable law of karma without rest. So it has become imperative to find out ways and means to the attainment of true knowledge and to attain Mūksha or perfect Bliss. The awakening of exalted wisdom in man is the realisation of the ultimate wisdom which is the culmination of life.

For the advancement of the people in the society as a whole, the span of life is divided into four sub-periods namely, (i) Brahmacarya, (ii) Gārhasṭhya, (iii) Vānaprastha and (iv) Sanyāsa, assigning to each Asrama, certain obligations for spiritual growth one after another.
The word ‘Asrama’ is derived from the root ‘Sram’ which means to exert oneself or to do penance and hence it means a hermitage (Asram) i.e., a place where austerities are performed. The highest spiritual consciousness of human life is to be attained through the four āsramās of which has to direct his energies proportionately in four different stages and for the accomplishment of the ideal, the three of the four āsramas are devoted to the study of that ideal by the member of the society. “The institution of āsramas”, observed Bokil, “in individual life of the castes in the national” life made a great advance over the past, so far as organic progress was concerned. The person had a place in the nation as a whole and was bound to do certain duties for it; but at the same time he was free to work for his own spiritual upliftment.”

S.Radhakrishnan observed the Hindu system of Asramas “according to which everyone of the twice-born towards the close of his life must renounce the world and adopt the homeless life and the ascetic’s garb has had great influence on the Indian mind. Though in intension, certain classes were not eligible to become monks, in practice, monks were recruited from all castes.”

The Swāmījī observes that in section twenty three of the second Chapter of Chāndogya Upanishad, we have an account of the four-fold division of human life. Of these Asramas, the Grihasthāsrama or the life of the married house-holder, the Vānaprasthāsrama or that of the wandering hermit or forest-dweller, the Brahmacharyāsrama or that of the bachelor student and the last is the Sanyāsāsrama or the life of renunciation or the ascetic. We may notice here that the order of enumeration as it stands in the Chāndogya is not the conventional order admitted by all authorities of Dharma Sāstras. The correct enumeration of the four orders of human life is found in certain Upanishads, Dharma Sāstras and Smritis texts. For example, Jābhopanishad
describes the interrelation of the four stages of life as follows: “On completion of Brahmacharya or studentship one should become house-holder, on termination of house-holder’s stage, one should retire to the forest i.e., to the Vānaprastha which leads to the ultimate Sanyāsa (Pravraja).

(i) Brahmacharya:

According to Swāmījī, Brahmacharya is of three kinds: (i) Gross (Sthula). (ii) Minute (Sūkshma) and (iii) Causal (Kārana).  

(i) Gross Celibacy - Physical purification
(ii) Minute Celibacy - Mental peace or purification
(iii) Causal Celibacy - Purification of soul

The causal celibacy is so called because it is only on the attainment of purification of the self causes responsible for the creation of the physical body will be annihilated. He also makes another three fold classification of Celibacy: (1) Naishtika, (2) Gārhasthya and (3) Vaidhura.

(1) Naishtika :- The celibacy practised from cradle to the grave without any errors is called Naishtika. The outstanding examples of this kind of celibacy are Sri Suka, Hanumanth and Bhūshma.

(2) Gārhasthya :- The celibacy practised strictly according to the rules of dharma and the sexual activities indulged in the permitted periods is called Grihastha Brahmacharya. This kind of celibacy is illustrated by Sri Rāma, Sri Janaka etc.

(3) Vaidhura :- The celibacy practised by any house-holder either after the death of his wife or even while she is alive due to a detached outlook towards the sexual pleasure is called Vaidhura. Yājñavalkya, and Viswāmitra illustrate this.
Swāmījī makes still another tripartite classification of celibacy: Mānasika, (Mental), Kayika (Physical) and Vāchika (Verbal).

1. Mental celibacy is illustrated by a person whose mind is completely devoid of all or any sexual impulses.

2. Physical celibacy is explained as one which shuns any physical contacts.

3. Verbal celibacy is illustrated by a person in whose talks there never figures any reference to desires.

Those who wish to enjoy the good things of life here or in the other world, should practice the vow of celibacy. Celibacy does not mean that a man should remain unmarried. Even the house-holders can practice the vow of celibacy by strictly following the rules and regulations of family life as prescribed by the Śāstras. The Śāstras have determined the days when the house-holder could join his wife. Certain days are prohibited. The union of the husband and wife is intended, not for the gratification of the sexual impulse, but for bringing forth progeny who would continue his line. Children born to such disciplined parents are healthy and wise. They acquire the hereditary qualities of their parents like devotion to God, courage in the midst of difficulties, and spiritual knowledge. After the prescribed season is over the husband should look upon his wife as the mother. After the child is born, he should keep away from his wife, till the child gives up mother’s milk. These are more or less hygienic principles, sanctified by the Dharma Śāstras. It is needless to say that sickly parents ought to practice celibacy as a duty. Otherwise, the children born to them will be sickly and do not live long. A raw seed cannot bring forth a healthy plant.

According to the Swāmījī, in contemporary times, Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa, Sri Dayānanda Saraswati, Sri Vivekānanda, Sri Rāmatīrtha, Sri Nārayāna Guru of Kerala,
Sri Ramana Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi, practised celibacy as a sacred vow, and made explicit the value of practising celibacy to the mankind. Sulabha Yogini, and Gārgi, the women saints of Mahābhārata and Chāndogyanopanishad respectively were the classical examples or celibacy among women. Sri Śārada Devi is an outstanding example of recent times.\(^{19}\)

In Śwāmījī’s opinion, celibacy is the fundamental pre-condition for spiritual illumination. “Brahmacharya prathisthāyam vīryalābhah”\(^{20}\) - Continence being confirmed, vigour is obtained. Patanjali also said it is the means by which man achieves the four-fold aim of life - Dharma, Artha, kāma and Moksha. First (Dharma) is the law of righteousness. Then comes Artha (wealth) and prosperity implying that they should be acquired only through righteous means. The third is (Kāma) fulfilment of desires. The law of righteousness also conditions this aspect of life which covers the largest area of human activity. The fourth and the last is Moksha or Liberation from the cycle of birth and death. That is the summum bonum of human life and destiny.

According to Manu Smriti, by the mystic power of Brahmacharya - longevity, light, strength, vital energy, prosperity, fame, the merit of good works, devotion to God are acquired by man. “Manu Smriti”, “Bhavishyat Purāna”, “Gautama Dharma Sūtras” are the famous ancient books explaining the value of celibacy.\(^{21}\)

(ii) Gārhasthāya:

The house-holder’s life is of three states (1) Divine, (2) Humanistic and (3) Demonic.

(1) Those parents who teach their children about the difficulties in Samsāra (married life) and about three obstacles in the life (i.e., present obstacle, past obstacle and future obstacle) and turn them towards
self-realisation, self-remembrance, and self-consciousness, leading them to universal emancipation, are called Divine parents.

(2) Those are the most ideal parents who teach their children about truth and righteousness in order that they successfully carry out the duties of the house-holder stage of life and arrange for them ideal partners in life to enable them lead a happy matrimonial life and also instruct them to cultivate devotion to God, and extend hospitality to the guests.

(3) Those parents who teach their children about the mundane world instead of catering sober sustenance for manifestation of dormant divinity in human existence indulge in titillation of senses and passion. Such light entertainment from parents leads children to deviation, deception, deterioration and destruction of values in the society. Such parents are called demonic parents.

According to Manu, just as life breath is essential to the life of all creatures, so also, house-holder is necessary for the support of those who belong to other three orders i.e., Brahmachārin, forest dweller, and Sanyāsin. All these three orders are offspring of the house-holder life. So, the house-holder’s life is extolled as the most useful stage of life, because, the house-holder who is true to his duty, who is pure and unattached and who earns his livelihood in just and honourable manner. Sruti and Smritis also stressed that the house-holder stage is the exalted stage among the other four stages of life.

Leading the house-holder’s life itself, one can cultivate the purity of self and attain true knowledge by listening to the philosophy of Vedānta from a competent teacher and then, if necessary, one can take to renunciation. If on the other hand, one takes to Sānyasa, without attaining the
purity of self, the stage of renunciation is ruined. The Swāmīji hastened to remind us of the warning of the Sāstras that outward practices like wearing of saffron robes and tonsuring of the head are no part of true renunciation.

Even while he was practising penance in Gogarbeta cave, Swāmīji recognised the significance of the House-holder stage of life and later on he wrote a book on “Gruhasthā-srama Dharmas” with a view to supplement the existing literature and to inform and enlighten those who seek knowledge and information.

If only house-holder’s life is purified, then only good and healthy progeny is possible. In the world, valient leaders, magnanimous persons, versatile geniuses, highly talented persons, saints, seers, prophets, and the sons of immortality (Amritasya putrah) are all the products of the house-holder’s stage of life. In future too, virile, holy and persons of chaste will be born to the house-holders themselves. So, if the house-holder stage is perfect, then only the other three stages of life shall become pure. Therefore, the house-holders should always endeavour to lead a righteous life so as to make house-holder’s life itself a glorious one.

What is the way and how to produce virtuous generation? To this production of good progeny, perfect and sanctified parents must be needed. Then only this affair will become success. Here Swāmīji mentions that there is a “Panchāgni Vidya” as specified in Chāndōgyōpanishad particularly to the benefit of house-holders for seeking fair progeny. In Manu Smriti also, among eight kinds of marriage bondages, there are three types of marriage functions which are most popular and familiar in the mankind. Those are (1) Daiva, (2) Brāhma and (3) Prājāpathya. The pupil born from the other types of marriages have not been considered as good breads.
The Swāmīji reminds us of what Dr. Annie Besant, the founder of 'Theosophical Society', said in this connection: The parents willing to have good progeny must themselves be righteous, must be worshippers of the Lord, and must be kind towards all. And those in heaven, are too anxious to be born to the sacred parentage in order that they acquire divine knowledge in the present epoch and therefore all fathers and mothers willing to give birth to the redeemers of the world and the wealthy in divine knowledge must practice righteous conduct and scrupulously follow the daily duties prescribed by the Theosophical Society. The Swāmīji was convinced of the truth in what Annie Besant said when he reflected to 'Panchāgni Vidya' in 'Chāndögyöpānishad' which he was prompted to refer on hearing Annie Besant’s words. Even the people of Arya Samāj, with their modern outlook considered this type of marriage as sacred. The followers of Arya Samāj and Sikhs consider the bonds of marriage as highly sacred. Manu Smriti also places marriage in high esteem.

The Swāmīji says that there are two methods which are in vogue in modern times. They are the methods of "The Theosophical Society" started by Dr. Annie Besant and "The Divine Life Society" founded by Dr. Sivānanda Saraswathi.

In addition to the above, Swāmīji contemplates on the formulation of a third one which he thinks might be appropriately designated as "The Divine Birth Society" as a means of serving the human interests. Ardent house-holders should endeavour to translate this into a reality. A wealthy future depends on a healthy posterity. This is not a difficult task for the disciplined house-holders. Swāmīji prescribed the following rules to be observed by the members of the Divine Birth Society. They are:
1. House-hold celibacy
2. Vow on Mantra
3. Non-covetousness (Aparigraha)
4. Regulated food at regulated intervals

Such a food must be one and out of one’s own efforts in a righteous way. It is not enough if the food stuff is pure, the means of earning it also must be a truthful one. Those who have failed to practice this hitherto, must at least make beginning from now on. Abstinence from sex contact, mild and moderate food, control of breath, all these purify the body and specially its nervous system. By impure food, the mind becomes impure, and in the impure mind, knowledge which is based on Dharma does not shine.

In the sixth Chapter of fourth Brähmanaka of Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad, the real form of “Panchāgni Vidya” was precisely determined. In this Upanishad, the method of divine birth was discussed in the form of Yajña. Keeping the above aims in his mind, Swāmīji established the Ashram school in the Vyāsāshramam in which boys and girls have been admitted for education. In this school, separate classes were conducted for boys and girls. Swāmīji emphasized that a well established organisation and well trained executives are very necessary. Till the completion of education and yogic practices, children could not be sent to their homes. If needed, parents may visit the Ashram to see their children.

This is the code of conduct prescribed by the Swāmīji for the members of “The Divine Birth Society”. Sri Vyāsāshramam which was founded by the Swāmīji with these objectives in mind, has been training right from its inception till today, boys and girls, house-holders, sanyāsins, to serve the programmes aimed at the betterment of the world.

(iii) Vānaprastha:
After the age of fifty years, a house-holder is to retire to the forest with his wife relinquishing home and pass all day in meditating on God. After completing the period of house-holder life, a person is expected to enter into his third stage of life. He is to lead a life of non-attachment and self-control. In the forest he should subsist on wild fruits and roots and should not resort to begging. He should practise hard austerities and should devote all his time to spiritual pursuit which prepares him for the final stage of his life, namely Sanyāsa, the fourth and last order of life. In the Vānaprastha stage, one is allowed to keep the company of his wife also. Swāmīji himself cautioned that Vānaprasthārāma is not in tune with modern times, because the forests are unsuitable for dwelling. Instead he advocated that people passing out of Grihasthāram should opt to decide in the āshrams and then take to the final stage of life namely sanyāsa once they attain the required fruition by practising Dhyāna.

(iv) Sanyāsa:

On the realisation of true knowledge, which occurs as a result of going through the first three stages of life, one has to meditate on God (Brahma Nishtha) in order that he attains competency to teach right knowledge and righteous conduct to the people of the world and also educate them to lead a life of virtue. By practice of Brahma Nishtha, the element of suffering is destroyed and with the cessation of suffering also ceases the element of selfishness. Thus emerges the idea that he ought to be good for all living beings. However well educated, however wealthy and however healthy one might be, one can never attain a state of Bliss unless one has attained a peaceful mental state.24 We are not able to appreciate the greatness of the Blissful state of existence because we fail to cognize the divine light and abode of grace.
Swāmījī says that material wealth is not the end of life. He instances the case of Janaka and other Upanishadic kings who despite possession of all material wealth, approached the great seers for the attainment of Blissful state of the Self. This a truth vouched for by all the Sāstras. This is not the truth of the past alone: Even in modern times we have a host of interested people who are seeking Brahmajñāna with the help of the enlightened teachers. According to Swāmījī, Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Sri Gurunānak, Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa, Sri Dayānanda Saraswathi, Sri Vivekānanda, Sri Rāmā Teertha, Sri Rājarām Mohan Roy, Sri Nārāyana Guru of Kerala, etc. have rendered invaluable services to the world. But the Swāmījī laments that the number of such God-intoxicated, the practisers of penance and yoga, the great devotees and those who care for helping to others, is slowly dwindling and the places of these people are filled by selfish, the lazy, the inactive and men of vices. This is the reason why people have lost faith in Sādhus, and men of virtues and Sanyāsins. The Swāmījī warns that by merely putting on the appearance of Sādhu or Sanyāsin one cannot become a true Sādhu or Sanyāsin. All those who practice Sādhana Chatusthaya as advocated by Sri Sankara and all those the men of sacrifice are the real Sanyāsins. All those who are bent on helping others are the real devotees. This is not something confined to any particular caste, creed or race or any stage of life.

The present generation of Sanyāsin does not possess the qualifications of a true Sanyāsin as prescribed by the Sāstras and this is why people have become sceptical about them. When one renounces, he does this with the pure ideals of seeking welfare of one's own self and desiring the protection of the world. “Atmano Mōkshārtham Jagadditāya” (That renunciation is intended to help one's self and for the welfare of the world).
Sanyāsin according to Swāmījī is one who endeavours for the realization of the self and world. One who is tied to the bonds of samsāra, will hardly find time and mind to render services to the world uninterruptedly and this is the reason why the institution of sanyāsa came to be established. The institution of renunciation is not unique to Hinduism. It is found in all major religions of world including Buddhism and Christianity.

(v) Ati Varnāsrama or Avadhutāsrama:

Swāmījī in his “Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram” introduces a discussion on ‘Ativarnāsrama’ or Avadhutasrama as the fifth stage of life. He points out some of the Pseudo-Vedāntists in the name of Ativarnāsrama have become the eaters of all stuff and deceiving the innocent people. Swāmījī gives warning to keep away from such perverse philosophy of Rājayogīs and avoid the pitfalls of thoughtless and unverified adventures in spiritual life. They have destroyed themselves and will destroy the common people who go near to them.

Further, for the benefit of the spiritual aspirants Swāmījī explained the true state of life which is called “Ativarnāsrama” or “Avadhūtāsrama” as follows: In the Śāstras, there is a state of life called “Ativarnāsrama” or “Avadhūtāsrama”. It has been practised by some of the few Brahmajñānins. It refers to a higher order of life. One who possesses this state of life is really free from ego and bondage. Avadhūta settles in a condition of perfect satisfaction by his knowledge and also direct experience of the Reality. He is not affected by the changes caused by nature. He has mastered the senses. He sees no difference between earth and gold, likes and dislikes, the honest and the dishonest, purity and impurity, men and women and thus moves about the world at all times and under all circumstances enjoying
the supreme Bliss of Brahman. In the modern times, Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa is an example to this *Avadhūta* state of life. It is a transcendental stage of life or 'Atītasthiti'.

The Swāmīji asks, are not the propounders of the religion are ideal men? Is not the world treating them as worthy of emulation? Buddha who is an incarnation first led the house-holder's life, then dwelt for a long time in the forest and finally took to renunciation. It is this great man who spread in the world compassion towards all living beings. If the stage of renunciation were alone the ideal of life and the stage of house-holder's life is not of any consequence perhaps Buddha would not have taken the house-holder's stage of life at all, and would not have cause-I his progeny. In a similar way Holy Prophet Muhammad the founder of Islam led the house-holder's life for some time and then took to renunciation. In that state he made extensive tours propagating the supremacy of Allah over the entire Universe. He preached truth, fidelity and supplication to Allah to the savage Arabs in the midst of protest against him. In a span of twenty three years of his prophethood he transformed the uncivilized and savage Arabs into the best organised and disciplined nation. No reformer, no king, no warrior has ever been able to influence mankind as did the Holy Prophet of Islam (S.A.W.). Jesus Christ, being a born rigorous celibate, preached the teachings of Christianity in the western world. He was the personification of compassion, peace, tolerance and belief in God. In the contemporary world, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism are the major religions of the world. The unique distinction of Hinduism is that unlike these major religions of the world, it was not founded by any great personality. It manifested itself through the *Veda* from time immemorial as the expression of God's will. How can anybody remain in a state of tranquility and meditate on God without cultivating detachment and
indifference to the world of objects? And also, how can they retain the power and illumination of God in themselves? Hence, it is evident that the propounders of all great religions had been those who went through all the three stages of life those of namely, Brahmacharya, Vānaprastha and Sanyāsa.

Swāmījī in his efforts to stress the importance of Brahmacharya further adduces the instance of Sri Sankara, the founder of Advaita, who had led a rigorous and strenuous cālibate life in his short span of life. The distinction of Sri Sankara is that he took to renunciation from the stage of Brahmacharya itself. It is well known that Sri Sankara carried the message of Advaita to the four corners of the country. In a similar fashion, Sri Madhvāchārya, the founder of Dvaita system took to renunciation from Brahmacharya without passing through the house-holder's stage of life. He preached the cannons of righteousness by practising which the purity of self could be realised. More or less the same can be said of Sri Rāmanuja, the founder of Visishtadvaita system. This is so because despite the fact that Rāmanuja, was married very young, he took to renunciation before giving birth to any children. It is these great people, who gave a vehement and uninterrupted expression to the philosophy of devotion and meditations on God.

It is true, that Gurunānak, propounder of Sikhism, though led the house-holder's life for a short while, decided to renounce everything the moment he realised the elements of dependence, and the impurity of the self, associated with it. He founded Sikhism, and preached compassion, true knowledge and freedom to the world. Swāmījī also cites the instance of Sri Lord Chaitanya, the founder of Krishna cult who also took to renunciation immediately following his marriage which took place when he was very young. We all know that the Krishna cult is very popular in the world in the name of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna's Consciousness).
Swāmījī enunciates that at a time when truth, peace, compassion, and belief in God are on the vain in the field of human heart, God descends on earth in different parts of the world in the form of divine personalities reinstating the philosophy of compassion, truth and righteousness in those areas and transforming the people as enlightened and sentient beings.29 It is in this way the Jaina Muni appeared on the scene and renounced after great sacrifices to teach his purified philosophy of compassion.

In the land of China, the great thinker Confucius taught his religion of self-realisation only after renunciation and becoming a saint. Sri Dāyānanda Saraswathī, the founder of Aīya Samāj took to renunciation from a rigorous state of celibacy and drove away all the irrational and superstitious practices from the human mind and established his Aryan Religion on the authority of the Vedā. Sri Rājarām Mohan Roy, established Religion of Brahma Samāj, the crux of which consists in freedom to all human beings. This he achieved only from the stage of renunciation.

One who himself is bound can never make another person unbounded. And therefore, one who is afflicted by the bonds of Samsāra, can never help the release of other house-holders. For this reason, he must first get himself released from the bonds of Samsāra and then he could possibly help others in this regard. The oil can and the glass should both be kept clean. Then only the lamps give good light. Such that the Bliss of Knowledge does not shine in the impure heart.

3. On Sanātana Dharma

The concept of Dharma - 'duty', 'law', 'righteousness', 'moral merit' - is exceedingly rich in Indian thought in general and in the Bhagavad Gītā in particular. The term connotes religious and social duties, that which one ought to perform
by virtue of the place which one occupies in the social order, and it further suggests a law of one’s own nature (Sva-Dharma), which is understood to be a reflection of one’s particular mental-spiritual development. The concept of Dharma is thus articulated in terms of status in life, since this ideally expresses the level of one’s development as a spiritual being.

The four aims of life, Purushārthas (literally, “what is sought by men”) are based upon the recognition that there are different basic drives that control human experience and which need to be satisfied, redirected, and transcended at appropriate times in one’s life. The four aims are (1) Dharma or ‘Social Duty’ (which is related to, but not to be identified with, the general concept of Dharma) (2) Artha or ‘Wealth’, (3) Kāma or ‘Desire’ and (4) Moksha or ‘Release’ ‘Liberation’, ‘Freedom’. (The traditional ordering of the aims put dharma before artha and kāma, the relations between the aims, however, might best be brought out by treating dharma as the first aim).

Hindu society is organised traditionally in terms of three inter-related schemes i.e., (1) the four Asramās or ‘stages of life, (2) the four ‘Purushārthās’ or ‘aims of life’ and (3) the four ‘Varnās’ or ‘social classes’ or ‘castes’. In sum, then dharma refers to the norms which make a social order; to the duties of an individual in society with respect to his particular stage in life, his aims in life, and his class position - as this is determined ideally by his own natural capacities and mental-moral-spiritual development.

It was Sri Sankara, founder of Advaita, who first brought “Srimad Bhagavad Gītā” into prominence from the vast literature of Mahā Bhārata. He fixed its contents to the 700
verses and produced first commentary on it. Sankara, gave it a place in the Prasthāna Traya (Foundation Texts) of Vedānta, and the importance he thus gave has been accepted by all the succeeding Achāryas of different schools of Vedānta that are opposed to his schools. Sri Malayālaswāmi gave greatest importance to Bhagavad Gītā.

The real content of the Swāmījī’s propagation of Sanātana Dharma, is to carry the message of the Bhagavad Gītā to the world. In the numerous Vedāntic discourses that Swāmījī conducted in the various parts of Andhra, he used to teach the philosophical theories of Sanātana relating to Hindu religion, taking the Bhagavad Gītā as the standard text. For him, Bhagavad Gītā is the highest standard. The life of Swāmījī has become the laboratory in which the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā are tested. Everyone of the tests conducted was a success and proved beyond all shadows of doubt, the terminal truths of the Gītā teachings. Swāmījī’s efforts to enlighten the people on the teachings of the Gītā and its message, is unparalleled and unprecedented. All the discourses conducted either within the premises of the Vyāsāsramām, or outside started with the chanting of the Slokas of the Gītā. The tradition of thousands of men and women in different parts of Andhra assembling at one place and chanting the Slokas of the Gītā collectively in high pitch, is a tradition established by the Swāmījī himself. There are no two opinions regarding the fact that the real foundation for the various Yajñās conducted now a days in different parts of the country is already laid down by the discourses conducted by the Swāmījī on the teaching of the Gītā Saptāhās (Gītā discourses conducted continuously for a week) and Gītā Yajñās and the like.
In the initial stages of the Swāmījī’s discourses on the teaching of the Gītā, the pundits, and the learned scholars of the day wondered if the esoteric truths of the Gītā could be given expression to so openly and publicly before hundreds and thousands of audience unmindful of their caste, creed and community. Some of them, even expressed their doubt openly to the Swāmījī himself. Unnerved, the Swāmījī continued this practice unbroken trying to convince his sceptics with all the calm and humility at his command. He made it very clear that the chanting of the Gītā is absolutely necessary for all the people and that it is very unethical to observe the distinctions of sex, caste and community in this regard. Swāmījī offers his own definition of Sanātana Dharma as follows:

The religion which creates for all its people opportunities, which are acceptable to the world, and which are conducive to their enlightenment taking into consideration their individual qualifications on the basis of the respective qualities present in them. Any religion which fails to take cognizance of this fact is bound to fail. The Swāmījī laments on the present plight of Sanātana Dharma, and wonders if the religion which teaches the presence of the Self in all living beings (Ātmavat Sarvabhūtāni) now behaving in this manner. Is the Vedāntic Religion which exhorts “Brahman pervades the Universe (Brahmaivēdam Sarvam) is conducting itself in this manner? He questions. He appeals to all the knowledgeable and enlightened people to keep these facts in mind and make every effort to save the land of Bhārat sanctified once by the presence of the seers and sages.

Swāmījī elaborates the implications of Sanātana Dharma, very vividly and precisely: He appeals to all the people desirous of attaining purity of knowledge, not to give up the eternal truth of God. He exhorts them never to do untoward
things even if it means to loss of their lives. On the other hand, they ought to do all the duties enjoined on them even under the most critical conditions. This is Sanātana Dharma or the eternal law of righteousness. Swāmījī makes it very clear that the connotation of the term Sanātana, transcends the limitations of the physical, and connotes necessarily something spiritual and is of the nature of the knowledge of reality. Sanātana Dharma, calls for the revival of the religion of the Rishis. It really means, that all men and women who were possessed of Sādhana Chatushthaya are equally competent to pursue the philosophical wisdom. It also means that we ought not to put any obstacles in the way of those seeking enrichment of themselves and if possible we ought to extend them a helping hand in this regard. Like-wise, one should try to remove all obstacles standing in the way of his own upliftment of the self. It follows from all these that the crux of Sanātana dharma for the Swāmījī consists in one’s efforts to liberate himself and help others in their efforts to liberate themselves.

Swāmījī in his efforts to throw light on the several implications of Sanātana dharma depends on the Gītā. He refers to twenty fourth Sloka of Chapter II in the Bhagavad Gītā:

Achēdyoayamadāhyoyam Akle dys Asoshya eva, cha,  
Nītya ssarvagatah sthānur Achaloyam Sanātanah.

“This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble and can be neither burned nor died. It is everlasting, all pervading, unchangeable, unmovable and eternally the same which is Sanātana”. Swāmījī laments that the absolute value of the Sanātana Dharma as enunciated in the Gītā namely that the Self which is eternal is not properly understood. On the other hand, people at different periods of times have tried to identify it with the concept of ‘stages of life’ conceived
to meet the demands of their respective times. With the result, people expected to be possessed of spiritual knowledge have tended to identify the not-self with the self or the eternal (Sanātana). The eternal is something uncontradicted by the limitation of time—past, present and future. The eternal transcends the limitations of creation, sustenance and destruction. It is untouched by the states of existence—waking, dreaming and sleeping and the causal facts of the gross, subtle and the minute. Sanātana dharma is devoid of all these characteristics. This is the absolute truth. On the other hand, the phenomena of the four castes, the four stages of life and the four periods of the span of human life, are all relative and necessarily change as the natural seasons change. This appears to be the law of the Lord. Failure to understand this truth is the cause of the decadence of the law of Sanātana Dharma.  

Anything advocating the unreality of the Self is opposed and is not acceptable to the Hinduism which advocates unflinching faith in the knowledge of the Self. The seers of ancient India had acknowledged only the Self which is of the nature of the divine as Sanātana Dharma. It was the avowed opinion of those great seers that all other Dharmas were amenable to revision and change as per the exigencies of the changing times. These great seers who were themselves the realised souls were aware of this truth and were themselves responsible for the creation of Arts and Sciences in tune with their times.

If the body which pertains to these Arts and Sciences is to be considered as Sanātana, it should then be something unchangeable and imperishable. But it is not so. If we reflect upon other Dharmas (than Sanātana) in a similar way we will arrive at the same conclusion that the knowledge of the Self is the highest Dharma. How? For instance, we
observe one who is a Hindu today is becoming a Muslim tomorrow and vice-versa. Similarly, a Buddhist is becoming a Hindu, and a Hindu and a Christian is becoming a Muslim. We also observe even within Hinduism, a Saivite is becoming a Vaishnavite, and vice-versa. Everyone of those mentioned above claims to be an upholder of Sanātana dharma. But Sanātana dharma is something eternal and does not admit of any revision and change.34

The Śvāmījī anticipated an objection in this context. One might ask, is not a Brahmachārin becoming a house-holder, and a house-holder becoming a Sanyāsin? And a Sanyāsin becoming an Avadhūta? Similarly, the boy advances into youth and a youth becoming an old man? How could all these changes pertaining to the body be called Sanātana dharma?

The Śvāmījī offers the following reply to such objections based on ignorance. He says that Sanātana dharma is something eternal and unchanging. In and through all these changes, from one religion to another, from one stage of life to another stage of life, and in the different stages of one’s life, the Self essentially remains identical and is not affected by any of these outward changes. He says that this is the reason why Lord Krishna identifies the word ‘Sanātana’ with ‘Atman’.35 As we have descended very low from a spiritual outlook to a materialistic outlook, we tend to think that all these external practices are really Sanātana dharma. For instance, Gold is one but the ornaments made of it are many. Gold is God’s creation but the ornaments are man-made. God’s creation is Sanātana. But the things man-made are ephemeral. Similarly metals are God’s creation. The idol is man-made. It is therefore, quite possible to melt by heating one idol say of Rāma, or of Lakshmi or a Christian Cross, and make out of it a Krishna or Nārāyana. Here,
what changes is the name and the form but the metal remains essentially the same. Therefore, all the stages of life, and the different castes are all man-made. If they were God-created there should be no change for them. The Swāmījī thinks it very relevant to quote Sri Sankara in this context. Sankara says: "There are five elements in the world: Sat (Existence), Chit (Consciousness), Ananda (Bliss), Nāma (Name) and Rūpa (Form). First three (Sat, Chit, Ananda) are the features of Brahman. This truth is Sanātana. This means eternal. The last two - name and form are the features of the world and are therefore non-eternal. Therefore, the wise must accept the first three elements of "Sat-Chit-Ananda" having the characteristics of Brahman and abadon "Nāma and Rūpa" which are the creations of 'Māya'.

The Swāmījī hastens to add that he does not mean that we should abandon caste and stages of life. He only means that people should realise that they have no eternal existence. And they need not necessarily prove a hindrance to their spiritual development. There is no need to form a new association or a new society of religious followers. One more association or society would lead to one more religion or creed. We have enough sects and creeds in India. Our aim should be to bring together the existing branches of Hinduism - not to cause further fragmentation. The Swāmījī invites our attention to the fact that the intellectuals of the country are gradually realising that it was the disintegration of different religions and associations that was instrumental for the country coming under the yoke of foreign rule. As long as any one of you like to feel superior to any other fellow-being, you will remain inferior to all fellow-beings. This is the law of nature. A lot of reformation is needed in this kind of country wherein this type of philosophy is so pervasive. Complete denial of freedom of will in Indian religions due to the assignment of duties in
accordance with the Caste-system, has given rise to total disintegration of the Indian community.

The pity is that when religion separates man from man, mankind's mental love also is broken. This is inevitable. Nor is it easy for us to unite the castes and the communities. Our aim is to offer the world such as a bright pearl necklace of universal good-will, like the different precious stones bound by single unbroken thread. Is it not possible for us to preserve the diversity of our separate entities in the unity of the one jewel of universal entity?

Sanātana means that which remains noble, immortal, beneficial, joyous and divine in the past, the present and the future; in creation, preservation and cyclical extinction; in the state of waking, dreaming and sleeping; and in childhood, youth and old age. 'Dharma' means, the thing that upholds the universe in order, the thing that helps those that help themselves, and the thing that all humanity can accept as a code of conduct, an act of faith and a duty of righteousness.

The least the spiritual leaders of the community can do is to impress on brother the just mentioned analogy of precious stones and necklace. Let us go and preach that the minds and bodies of these people are the numerous pearls and that their Soul (Atman) is the single thread that holds them together. If we do out bit in propagating this catholic ideal, we will have done the right thing by our Sanātana Dharma, which is actually the religion of universal love.

Even though the peoples of various creeds and countries may follow a varied path in their respective occupations and convictions, they are equal heirs to the Sanātana Dharma that offers them an unequivocal and just reward for whatever attitude they unequivocally and justly have towards their
apportioned duty. For everyone of them has the equal right to see his or her particular idea of deity in the Supreme Self-Atman. We ought to follow a path similar to one practised by people when they approach a good Doctor for curing their ailments without prejudice to their duties of castes and stages of life, and lead a happy home. The castes and stages of life are creations of nescience. We cannot attain unity in these.

Many an incarnation, many a world-teacher and many a saviour have appeared on the world-scene; they have come and gone without really being able to do away with the divisions formed by caste and creed. On the other hand, the followers of these doubtless great souls have created more and more sects and societies which have been more and more dividing men. Therefore, the need of the hour is not one more religion, or even any religion which is based on exclusive claims and divisive influences. All that we need today is the Universal Religion based on the universal love of the universal God.

4. On Women Education

The Swâmîji says that we learn from the “Gîtâ Mahâtmâyam” (the special significance of Gîtâ) that Lord Vishnu taught the Gîtâ to his consort Lakshmi Devi. This is taken from ‘Varâhapurânam’. The significance of the words ‘Dhara-Uvâcha’ (Mother Earth said) is that “Goddess of Lakshmi, in her incarnation as Mother Earth, wishes to carry the message of the Gîtâ to the inhabitants of the earth.”

Swâmîji refers to the popular condemnation that women are sinners for it is through their sex organ that human beings make their entry into this world. He reminds us of the Vedic utterance “Matru Devô Bhava” (The Mother is Divine). In this connection, he expresses deep regrets at the naked condemnation of women as sinners in life, and
unqualified to perform all religious rites. He questions if the mother is sinner, how can the son who takes his birth from her is virtuous? He is of the strong opinion that it is because of the spread of such unfounded and immoral utterances that the sons have lost faith in their devotion to their mothers. On the contrary, they would have cultivated immense devotion to their mothers had they been taught that mother is the manifestation of the divine and the personification of all virtues.

Keeping in view, the people trying to prohibit women and also the non-brahmins from receiving the Divine knowledge by giving some distorted meaning to the teachings of the Gītā, the Śvāmīji vouches that the teachings of the Gītā either in their external or internal meanings, would never convey such pernicious thoughts. He adds that he would undertake the process of purification once he was convinced that the Gītā contains any such malafide intentions.

Here is the crux of the problem. India has lost some of its old glory because of the misunderstanding of our original tradition by later generations who have placed their faith in contemporary misinterpretations of the scriptures rather than in the Dharma Sāstras yore. We have to discard the books that misguided us. We have to revive the study of the sacred literature that gave us special place of honour in the comity of nations.

The Śvāmīji, like Sri Veeresalingam Panthulu, is a pioneer reformer who successfully launched several measures for the upliftment of the women to the teachings of the Vedānta. Even as late, as the life time of the Śvāmīji, there prevailed the profession of hereditary prostitution and even highly accomplished and beautiful women who hailed from this particular profession (Kalāvanthulu) were wooing even men of high morality and character to fall into their trap. They
used to think that they were pure as they were only practising the duties of their caste. They thought that they were true to the teachings of the Gītā, in respect of caste, and the duties incumbent upon it. Swāmījī had the determination to reform even such unfortunate and ill-fated women.

The women who seem to have had in view the 35th Sloka of the third Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā:

Sreyān svadharma vigunah paradharmat svanushtitat,  
Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayāvahah.

"Better is one’s own law though imperfectly carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. Better is death in (the fulfilment of) one’s own law, for to follow another’s law, is perilous."

They vehemently argued with the Swāmījī that the performance of ‘Svadharma’ or one’s own duty even if it were to contain a bit of immortality. It is certainly better than even a highly accomplished performance of the duties of the other castes. This is the Sloka which first appears in the third Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, and half of it is repeated by the Lord in eighteenth Chapter and perhaps this is the only Sloka in the entire Bhagavad Gītā, that is repeated for a second time. And this is the reason why that this Sloka for their purpose is taken to be the most authoritative for the same of their argument.

Sreyan svadhasmo vigunah paradharmat svanushtitat,  
Svabhāvaniyatam karma kurvan napnōti kilbisham.

"Better is one’s own law through imperfectly carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. One does not incur sin when one does the duty ordained by one’s own nature." These prostitutes declare that this is the statement of the Lord. They are adducing this Sloka also in support of their argument:

Sahajam karma Kaunteya sadosham api na tyajet,  
Sarvarambha hi dōshena dhūmenā gnir iva vṛtah.
“One should not give up the work suited to one’s nature. O; son of Kunti (Arjuna), though it may be defective, for all enterprises are clouded by defects as fire by smoke?”

The Swāmījī opines that this is all what some of our own interested people taught them. Are we to understand the import of these Slokas in the way in which these women would have us believe? Swāmījī enlightens us on the true import of the term ‘Svadharma’. ‘Svasya - dharma’, ‘Svadharma’, Svadharma or one’s own duty is the duty of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. It may also be expressed in terms of the desire on the part of the individual soul to get released by serving the Lord.40

Svadharma means, the attainment of realization of the self. Manu says if one undertakes action which conforms to the criteria of the good, it may also be called ‘Svadharma’, The Swāmījī regards what Manu says is the truth. We would have witnessed a world worse than this had the people belonging to different castes upheld their duties as ‘Svadharma’ even if they were immoral.

Now the source of all the troubles according to Swāmījī is that all the Sāstras were written by only men. According to him polygamy is an evil. He hates the idea that the women will be faithful to man and not vice-versa. He wants all the Sāstras propagating such ideas should be consigned to flames.41 The people of high castes resorting to the actions of the lower should be thrown into an abyss. The Swāmījī opines that the codes of conduct for different castes should be legalised. He appeals to all to involve themselves in the investigations of truth and not be led away by distorted interpretations of the Slokas given by some interested people and waste their precious time.42 We all know how pious is a philosophy of ‘Svadharma’ taught by the Lord to his disciple Arjuna. It is a great sin that we should resort to immoral actions, in the name of ‘Svadharma’. It looks like the devil chanting the scriptures.
To a question relating to women education, with special reference to Brahma Vidya, Swāmījī was deeply moved with pity for the unfortunate women who were denied even the consolations of Divine Philosophy to heal their mental wounds. The Swāmījī emphatically and authoritatively declares that all men and women are heirs to the treasure of spiritual knowledge, irrespective of caste or creed. The treasure of divine knowledge is not external. It is in one’s own heart, and is in one’s own self. How can any one deny it to any one else? If women do many things like men, is it not reasonable to suppose that they can meditate with their mind and attain Brahmayāna? Just as all those free from the defects of the eye can see the Sun, so also, all those whose ignorance is removed by the grace of God can obtain the vision of the Self. This is the declaration of the Vedās acceptable to the thoughtful and the wise. The Swāmījī wants us to consider what the Sāstras say on this issue. Lord Siva taught Brahmayāna to Parvathi. Also Nārāyana taught the Vedic Philosophy to the goddess of the Earth. These are mentioned in different Sāstras and Purānas. Would Siva and Vishnu do so if women are prohibited from that higher Knowledge? The Swāmījī asks.

The Swāmījī reminds us that the Divine Mother endowed with the sixteen aspects of light and lustre is verily the embodied image of Brahmayāna. Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara worship her.243 In the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, we find Yājñavalkya teaching Brahmayāna to his wife Maitreyi. Kapila taught Sānkhya-yoga to his mother Devahūti. In the Rāmāyana, Sabari attained Brahmayāna by the teachings of Matanga Mahāmuni. We find in the Yogavāsishtha, the yogin queen Chūdāla taught the knowledge of the Self to her husband king Sikhidhwaja. King Janaka who was himself a Jivanmukta was tested and examined in various ways by Sulabha, a great yogini.
Besides, there are the biographies of great Bhaktas, we come across mighty spirits like Meera Bai and Sakkubai. The story of Andal is famous in the epic work of the twelve Alwärśs. In the same way, among the sixty three Siva Bhaktas, we come across the shining example of Mahila Nāyaki Ammal and Karaikkal Ammal, which we find in Periya Purānām. Nearer home (at Tirumala) we have the famous devotee Tarigonda Venkamamba who possessed miraculous powers.

Bhagavan Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa whose name occupied the foremost place among spiritual leaders in modern times was taught Tāntric secrets by a woman known as Bhairavi Brāhmaṇī. Śwāmi Vivekānanda gave Mantra-diksha to foreigners among whom the name of Sister Nivedita stands out as a shining light. She established yogic centres and educational institutions for the benefit of Indian women. She wrote many books in English and did great service to our motherland. What a great soul Dr. Annie Besant was, the founder of Theosophical Society? How many books she wrote on spiritual subjects? She interpreted the Gītā and did research in the Vedās. Many Vedic Brahmins were her disciples. The name of Gohrajān as musician is well known. If women are not prohibited from taking medicine to cure their physical ailments, why should they be prohibited from seeking knowledge of the Self which cures the endless sorrows and worries of worldly life?

In Śwāmīji’s view those who deny access to Brahma Vidya for women are selfish men. They fear that if women acquire knowledge, they would not yield to men to satisfy the demands of their animal nature. The qualifications for Brahma Vidya is the practice of four-fold discipline mentioned in the Śāstras - discrimination, renunciation, control of inner and outer organs of action and perception, and a high aspiration for Liberation. The Law is the same for men
and women. Without this equipment, there is no spiritual realisation for anyone.

According to the Swāmīji, the position of woman in a family is unique. She is the centre, and all other persons revolve round her. Children are attached to the mother for some years in early life. The father comes into the picture later on, but even then children go to the mother instinctively when they are in any trouble. If the mother is a wise woman who is devoted to God, she would teach her children good things like kindness, faith in God, devotional tunes and Bhajans and songs of spiritual life. Thus children get a fair ground in spiritual culture. What they learn as children will have permanent influence on their later life.

There is another fact. The thoughts and feelings which a woman entertains during pregnancy decides the character of the child to a large extent. Molten brass has no form. It takes the form of the mould in which it is deposited. We find this in the case of Prahlāda and Abhimanyu. Leelavathi was a devotee of God, though she belonged to a Rakshasa family. While Prahlāda was in her womb, she was taught the highest philosophy by Sage Nārada, and the child in the womb heard it and absorbed the teaching. He came out as the greatest of the Bhaktas. So also, Abhimanyu was taught the secret of breaking through the Pādmatvūpha by Arjuna, while he was in the womb of his mother Subhadra. Pregnant woman should desist from hearing horror stories or seeing horrible scenes. The husband should avoid all cruel words that cause fear and dread. Their minds should be delighted with happy thoughts and feelings and they should live in the midst of delightful surroundings. That is what the Sāstras say.

In ancient times, most women lived a simple, pure and devotional life. They practised austerities. And so their children
became devotees and men of knowledge. If only our parents had led a spiritual life of devotion and knowledge, we would have an easier path to tread in life’s pilgrimage.

Swāmījī says that it is his prayer to God that men should not treat women as hired Jutka-horses, intended for the gratification of their lust. They should elevate the status of women, teach them religious discipline and regard them as noble partners in their spiritual life. Swāmī Vivekānanda used to say this many times. His mother was a good devotee. She prayed to Lord Siva to bestow a good child on her. Vivekānanda was God’s gift to her. We know what he did for the propagation of spiritual thought all over the world. The Swāmījī says that women are the custodians of the character and conduct of future generations of the country. So from every point of view, good education, religious discipline and spiritual outlook are more necessary for women than men. The Swāmījī asserts that nowhere did the sages say that women are unfit to pursue self-knowledge. It is clearly putforth by selfish men of later generations who are responsible for the spiritual degeneration of our country.

The Swāmījī adduces further evidence to strengthen his thesis. In the Vedās, we find hymns composed by twenty seven ladies. In the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad, we find the dialogue between sage Yajñavalkya and two famous saintly women Gaargi and Māitreya. Sankarāchārya was engaged in an intellectual debate with Ubhayasaraswathi, wife of Mandanamishra, even in this age of Kali. It is true that one of the synonyms of ‘Women’ is ‘Abala’ but that only means that she is comparatively weaker than man physically not that she is weak in intellectually or spiritually. The weakness is merely from the physical stand point. We all know that physical strength is no match for the spiritual and mental one. The puny man conquers mighty beasts by
virtue of his mental superiority. The great sages and wise
men are physically weaker than the manual labourers as
a rule.

Anyway today we see women taking an equal place
with men in all walks of life. Actually Chānaka, a famous
ancient economist, opined that the intellect of women is
four times greater than that of men. "Streenam Buddhīh
Chatur gunam."46

The Swāmījī says that in the thirty fourth Sloka of tenth
Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, the Lord allotted only one
share of His might to ordinary man, kings and sages, but
credited women with seven of His qualities.

"Keerthih Sreeh Vākcha nāreenām Smritih medhā dhritih
kshamā" - "Of feminine qualities, I am renown, riches,
vocal power, contemplative cognition, retentive mental power,
physical fortitude and forbearance."

The Swāmījī refers that history is full of incidents in
which women took care of their homes and even their nations,
when the men were in no position to shoulder their
responsibilities. The happiness of man in family life depends
on the character and integrity of the woman. Otherwise,
man's life is hell. Man's spiritual progress is directly connected
with woman's help, cooperation and encouragement. The
sages say that the home itself is a penance grove when
the men are free from Rāga: "Nivrittarāgasya gruham
tapōvanam."47

Above all, the Soul is common to all creation. Water
store in various vessels still remains water, so also, does
the Atman in the different physical manifestations. And then
the theory of rebirth reminds us that a woman in this birth
can be a man in the next one, or a man of lower caste
can be highborn in another birth. Yet the Ātman remains
over and above the physical entity.⁴⁸ So, none is weak or unfit to learn about a Reality which has nothing to do with physical strength or sex or caste or creed. The Swāmījī refers to the ‘Avadhūta Gītā’ which says “the Atman is neither male nor female nor eunuch. It assumes the external form of the person with which it is temporarily associated in creation, all the time remaining aloof in its essential reality.”⁴⁹

The Swāmījī opines that all Dharma Sāstras have been evolved only in tune with the political trends of the times. He illustrates the point by stating that the Dharma Sāstras enunciated at the time of the Hindu Rulers but never followed during the Muslim rule. Likewise, the Muslim Legislation was never adopted during the British Rule. Therefore, the Swāmījī says the Dharma Sāstras have only relative but not absolute validity.⁵⁰ The concept of Dharma changes from time to time and from place to place. He anticipates an objection that the matter relates to the empirical world and has nothing to do with religion. He says that he never meant that this is essentially a matter of religion. The Swāmījī says even religion is not absolute. Different religions have been founded at different periods of human history by great people only having the welfare of the world at large as their motive. And they never compelled even to practice the religious truths, they preach. The people always had the liberty to follow them or not. As far as this country is concerned, the Swāmījī draws our attention to the fact that the practice of getting women married as soon as they attain maturity was done more as a matter of habit rather than as a matter of religious practice. Similarly the Swāmījī refers to another important aspect of the Hindu community namely the practice of Ghosha (concealing a woman’s face by the use of a cloth, thereby preventing her face from being exposed to the males) which was prevalent in some
of the places in Gujarat and Karnataka, and remarks that such a practice is also more a matter of custom or habit and never an essential element of religion or Dharma. These outward practices never touch the core of Dharma. According to him, any action or practice which only helps the purification of the Self is to be treated as Dharma. Dharma is to be really found in devotion, truth, compassion, detachment, knowledge and wisdom and not in the external or outward practices which are more a symbol of a status in life and personal identity.

The Swāmījī now raises an important issue and puts the matter straight: If there is the sanction of the Śāstras for the remarriages of men, there should be the same for the women too. If it were not to be, then it should be assumed that these Śāstras must have been authored by people with prejudices and partiality and certainly not by men, impartial and objective in their attitudes. The Swāmījī sees no point in Śāstras being discriminative and partial and there are no reasons to believe that the Śāstra should be like this. The people advocating remarriages for women seem to justify it on the following lines. When men and women are equal in the eyes of the Lord, it goes against the Śāstras and will of God to say that men are eligible for remarriages and women are not.

The Swāmījī is favourably disposed towards widow remarriages. It is true that the widows who lead their lives truthfully and virtuously with unalloyed devotion to God, need not necessarily get married. But this is not easy. In such an eventuality better they get remarried and the Śāstras do not prevent them from doing so. The most important thing that the Swāmījī suggests in this connection is that for those women who wish to continue as widows it is very necessary to live in established Ashramas or Social
Homes or Widow Homes, which facilitate them for the practice of Brahmanishtha, for offering daily prayers to the Lord, for reading and reflecting the sacred Sāstras, for the performance of actions helpful to the world, and for accomplishing their own duties by being dissociated from men of worldly pleasures. He makes it very clear that he has no illusions about remarriages. There is no guarantee that every widow-married woman will lead a happy life by creating a heaven on earth. All that he wishes to say is for a woman who wishes to get remarried, no Sāstras will stand in her way. Remarriage is not certainly the best of the alternatives. What all he is anxious to say is that remarriage is preferable to any unsocial action say, suicide or prostitution.

The Swāmījī looks at another important aspect of social life, viz., the problem of population. His concern for the increasing population and the shortage of food is clear. He discourages remarriages in that they help growth of population. He says the problem of population has always been there in ancient India and in the absence of any contraceptives in those days people used to practice Brahmacharya in order to keep the population under control.

5. On Vegetarianism

The Latin word “Vegetus” means active or vigorous. Vegetarianism is not a doctrine, but a way of life as well as an outlook on the whole life. Life is not only a sacred and divine, but also beautiful the most beautiful thing under the Sun. So there is a sense of aesthetics in the commitment to vegetarianism, besides a profound value - judgement. It is based on the unflinching faith in the unity of life. It is not only an attitude of ‘live and let live’, but an attitude of “live to help other creatures live.” The Bible Christian sect of England and U.S. also preached a meatless diet.
“As long as we do not exercise kindness to all living creatures, we cannot ask for world peace” observed Albert Schweitzer. Vegetarianism connotes something more comprehensive than mere meat-eating. It represents an integrated outlook on the whole life. As we all know, the scriptures assert that non-violence is the greatest of all Dharmas. We can define “Ahimsa” as compassionate nature and tenderness and gentleness of attitude towards all creatures.

The Swāmījī like Mahatma Gandhi taught through his lectures and writings the philosophy of truth and non-violence on the authority of the Vedās and the Sāstras, himself leading a life of truth and non-violence. He professed what he practised. Gautama Buddha was the Swāmījī’s ideal for his philosophy of Ahimsa. In contemporary times, M.K. Gandhi was his ideal. In his first work entitled “Sushka Vedānta Tamōbhāskaram”, the Swāmījī called all the people, especially those seeking liberation, to cultivate compassion towards living beings as a matter of absolute necessity and abandonment of all alcoholics and meat-eating. He also wanted to be very cautious of the distorted teachings of the pseudo-Vedāntins. It was his conviction that addiction to alcohol and meat-eating would be harmful for the cultivation of devotion and detachment. One can see adorning the walls of “Sri Vyasāshramam” the dictum “A heart of compassion is the home of the Lord.”

Swāmījī calls upon the devotees, to remember two very important truths. They are (1) concerning the activities of the physical body (Deha) we are all the descendants of the Rishis and (2) concerning the activities of the Self we all are the manifestation of God. He tells them that it is enough if they could meditate on these truths and they could only ill-afford to forget them. Those whose hearts are filled with these truths, will never be deluded by Māya
or its actions just as darkness can never exist in the presence of light. A contemplation on these truths paves the way for the habit of a true concentration. This is also an easy path and is unrivalled in this regard. The most important pre-requisite for the cultivation of such noble thoughts is the presence of pure sāttvic ideas and this is aided by sāttvic food. As Chandogya Upanishad says the purity of a man’s system depends on the purity of his food. The food that man eats is digested in three ways with the help of the ‘Jatharāgni’ - intestinal fire. The gross matter is rejected through the bowels and the kidney, the middle, subtle matter goes into the blood and the flesh; the causal ‘least’ matter forms the mind. So man’s mind is the product of the food he eats.

The Swāmījī says that the three modes of human character are determined by the three kinds of food that man eats. In the manner of ‘Panchikarana’ we can also relate the “Antahkarana” aspect of the human consciousness to the sky element, the ‘manas’ aspect to the air element; the ‘buddhi’ aspect, to the fire element; the ‘chittam’ aspect, to the water element; and the ‘ahamkāra’ aspect to the earth element. Thus the natural food like grain and fruit formed by the influence of the five elements has the ingrained power of inspiring its consumer with the natural brightness of godly nature. Accordingly we can appreciate the Sage’s dictum ‘tasmāt annamayam manah’ as just now noted55.

The Swāmījī wanted the people to realise that it is not merely to please the palate, indiscriminately that man is born as the highest of the living species. Man should transcend the physical pleasures and attain to the metaphysical status of godhead by mastering the noble qualities. The Swāmījī says, by performing sacred rites and service to the teacher, the gross body can be purified; by detachment,
mercy and non-dual devotion, the subtle body is cleansed; by means of meditation and trance, the causal body is sanctified and by the realisation of the intrinsic significance of the great teachings of the Upanishads, like "That art Thou" (Tat tvam asi), you can purify your ultimate sense of the body. Then, like the Sun unhidden by the clouds, self-knowledge will shine brightly in you. 57

Meat-eating may give greater physical strength, but the ancient sages, by their example, give us perfect proof of the fact that vegetarianism provides superior mental power. Still some modern scientists opine that vegetarian food may provide higher nutrition than non-vegetarian food. Even if some of the world’s greatest scientists are meat-eaters, the fact remains that their inventions contribute only to the transitory physical comfort, where as the legacy of the ancient sages offers us immortal spiritual strength not to speak of the instruments of warfare and the ingredients of nuclear holocaust which the modern scientists who are enslaved by the political opportunists, create.

The Swāmījī points out that violence and non-violence are defined in different ways by the wise men. Some say that the violence against the physical body is not wrong and that only the vindictiveness and torture against the soul is violence. Some others say that the violence against both the body and the soul is equally reprehensible. And yet others prescribe violence against the body, the mind and ego or life of man. These three entities are correspond to the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies, that is, violence must not be caused against the mind by hard words; and must not be inflicted on another person either to kill them or to hurt his feelings. 58

On scrutiny, the Swāmījī says that it appears that the three kinds of violence are gradually worse than the other, or conversely, better than the other, if refrained from. That
is to say, the person who shows consideration for the other person in such a way as not to hurt body alone may be said to be of an animal temperament, he who would not hurt the other’s body and mind may be said to be humane and he who does not harm the other’s body, mind and ego of life may be said to be divine. Swāmījī examines the connotation of the first two terms. The argument that ‘Jīva’ (The ego or life) is eternal and cannot be killed is no doubt authoritative if one understands that to let one’s ego hidden in ignorance is violence and to free it from nescience is non-violence. For without self-knowledge it is essential to practice the three kinds of non-violence before mastering the above mentioned four kinds of the means to liberation (Śādhana Chatusthhayā Sampatti).59

In Swāmījī’s opinion ‘Trikāraṇa Suddhi’ - purity of thought, word and deed - is absolutely essential in every aspect of life or philosophy. One cannot light a lamp by placing the wick, the flame and the lantern in different places. The real yoga requires the control of these entities in every work of life and in each attitude one man shows towards another. It is not even enough if one forsakes violence against the living creatures, and eschews eating meat. One must acquire a complete non-violent pure mental attitude towards all creation, as well. Never forget that all the good qualities of mind and heart remain fruitless, as long as one cannot identify one’s soul with the absolute. Similarly, if one has mere self-knowledge without an attitude of mercy towards all fellow-creatures, he may be compared to a living body which has no eyes or ears or any other functional sense-organ. It is not the physical powers that make man superior to the animal. In Swāmījī’s opinion, helping others, showing mercy, being devoted to the service of God, and man and similar benevolent attitudes, make up what we call humanness. Actually, even a blade of grass is more helpful to the living
creatures than a selfish man. The trees and the various grains offer food for man. Even man’s clothing and shelter are provided by trees. The fish keep the water clear. The flora and the fauna that do not directly serve man at least indirectly maintain the balance of nature.

So should man kill the dumb creatures that help him to please the excessive gluttony? Does not man get the needed minerals and vitamins from the food grains and other eatables that God and Nature have given him, without having to indulge in the slaughter of helpless animals? The Swāmīji asks.

According to him, Lord Himself came down as the incarnation of Buddha in order to teach the highest truth - “Ahimsā paramō Dharmah” i.e., non-injury is the highest dharma. He condemned Vedic rituals because they required killing of animals. He offered his precious life to save the life of a little sacrificial goat. He taught equality and unity of the human species. And he gave to the world the message of Universal Love that leads to Nirvāna or Supreme Bliss. Buddha was an ocean of mercy. His life story is the most glorious illustration of Ahimsa. One tenth of the world population are Buddhists today. They are found in Japan, China, Tibet, Burma, Ceylon and other countries.

The thirty second Sloka of sixth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā says “the Yogi with a large heart who sees the same everywhere and feels the joys and sorrows of others as his own, he indeed is the highest Yogi. Do we not feel pain when other injure us?” So it is when we cause injury to others. He who remembers this simple truth and acts according to it is the highest Yogi and philosopher. Patanjali Yoga Sūtra says, “In the presence of the man in whom Ahimsa is well established even wild animals like tigers and lions abandon their natural cruelty.”

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Ancient Rishis possessed universal love. That is the fruition of their **Atmajñāna**. In their hermitages, wild animals lost their natural hostility and lived in amity and friendship with other wild animals. In Mahābhārata, Brihaspati instructs Dharmarāja that Ahimsa is the abode of all other virtues like **Dhyāna**, sense-control, service to Guru, and daily religious duties.⁶¹ **Ahimsa** lights up all other good qualities. Bhishma, the grand-old-father of the Mahābhārata, who is himself the embodiment of all moral qualities and who is the exponent par excellence of all moral laws, declares the supremacy of Ahimsa in the following terms to Dharmarāja: "Just as the foot prints of all lesser animals are included in the large foot print of an elephant, so also, all moral laws are included within the scope of **Ahimsa**. **Dāna**, **Dharma**, **Tapasya**, **Suchi**, **Mantra** and **Tantra** are all various forms of **Ahimsa**. No one can be sure of attaining Brahma-loka by the austerities which he chooses to perform, but he who avoids eating flesh can be sure of attaining the highest."⁶²

To a question relating to eating vegetables which are green in colour and having life and is it not a kind of sin to kill them, Swāmījī replied that Sāstras are our authority. They have not prohibited the use of corn, vegetables and green as items of normal food for all mankind. We know that during a surgical operation, the patient is kept in a state of artificial sleep, while the Surgeon's knife plies on his body. The pain of the operation is not felt by the patient, though the activities of life go on as usual. Nails and hairs also grow but no pain is felt when they are cut.⁶³ Like men, animals and birds take birth by the sexual intercourses of the male and female species. Not so paddy, green and vegetables. They live and grow by absorbing energy from earth, water and air. And so, it is said that vegetarian food gives strength and develops intellectual understanding of man, in the same way as sunlight dispels darkness. Besides this,
there is a world of difference between the life force of humans and the different species of trees. If the branches of a tree are cut and planted, each branch will grow into a big tree. So also, the roots of tree. The mutilated bodies of men and animals have no power to reproduce themselves.

According to the Swāmījī, the central secret is this. The character and conduct of man are directly determined by the quality of food that he takes. The gross part develops the body and the subtle part nourishes the mind. Unless man takes sāttvik food, he cannot make any progress in spiritual life. Sattva produces knowledge. Rajas creates agitations of mind and body. Tamas causes inertia and dullness.64 This he says, is elaborately stated in the Gītā and also in Chāndogya Upanishad. Therefore, to say that any food can be taken at any time in any manner goes against the principles of the Sāstras, hygienic laws and also common sense. Even wild elephants are trained and taught to do useful things by man. That is because they survive only on Sāttvik food like grass, leaves, vegetables, and fruits. They have certain intellectual understanding, however low it might be. But we do not come across any one who rides a tiger or makes it draw a cart.65

Even among the illiterate people, there are many devotees who lead a pure and simple life and travel on the broad highway towards their spiritual destination. They do not know the Sāstras. They cannot debate and argue. But they have high reverence for holy men. Such innocent folk are in danger of falling victims to those bogus teachers and perverse Vedāntists. These people have brought disgrace to the very system of religion which they are supposed to uphold.

Swāmījī mentions the above facts because, among the meat-hungry false preachers, there are many who have read the Sāstras well. Some of them wear the sacred Sivalinga
ostentatiously round their neck. Some practice mantras and tantras. Yet others wear the kāshāya robes and smear ashes all over the body. Thus carry the staff and water bowl in the traditional way. And yet, since they do not show mercy to other beings, they do not obtain the mercy of God. He who does not show mercy to other creatures, how can he hope for the grace of God? The Swāmīji cautions "keep away from any contact with such bogus preachers. They cause immense harm to the genuine aspirants. They are like epidemic diseases and destroy those who come within the range of their influence."66

Once the Swāmīji was confronted by a devotee with the following statement: "There are many who avoid meat and drink even among the lower classes of people. Are they Jñānins for that reason? Some sects in society generally avoid meat and drink, but I do not find them any better in moral qualities than others. How do you explain?" Swāmīji logically and philosophically replied as follows: "You must understand me correctly. I did not say that mere abstinence from meat and drink would confer immortality on anyone. Food generally builds up the body and to some extent directs the mind. It can do not more. If food alone is the chief factor, why cows, and goats should be great philosophers and Jñānins? Discipline of food is the first step on the spiritual path. Abstinence from sex contact, mild and moderate food, control of breath - all these purify the body and the nervous system. Devotion to God, solitude, practise of Pranava, truthfulness, control of the senses and the mind, purify the Antahkarana (Inner equipment). Both these are necessary for self-knowledge. The oil can and the glass should both be kept clean. Then only the lamp gives good light. Therefore, the purification of the inner and the outer organs is necessary for perfection. The Rishis have prescribed Yoga and Jñāna to achieve this double object. By Yoga, the body
is purified i.e., kept in a state of harmony and balance and by Jnāna the Inner equipment (Antahkarana) is purified i.e., kept in a state of receptivity for reflecting knowledge when it shines forth in the heart of the aspirant.”

While speaking about the purity of food the Swāmījī cautions that the concept of Sāttvika-āhara (or pure food) is so comprehensive as to include even the means by which it is obtained. The means of getting it must be truthful. The concept of Sāttvika is complete when it is pure and also when it is obtained by as a result of our own efforts and not by any questionable means. Even if you purchase pure food like fruits, vegetables and rice by money earned by corrupt practices it cannot be called sāttvika. It is a sinful or tāmasic food. If you grow crops by the labour of those who are not properly paid and use it for appeasing your own appetite it is only a tāmasic food. Even the food that you eat by your own efforts must be limited i.e., one must cultivate the habit of taking food at regular times and in limited quantities. Over eating is prohibited. The Swāmījī refers to Sankara’s conception of food referred to in fifty ninth Sloka of second Chapter of Bhagavad Gita:

Vishyā vinivartantē nirāhārasya dēhinah,
Rasavarjam raso pyasya param drstvā nivartate.

By fasting, the senses may abstain from the objects of desire. But, desire for happiness will not cease until the realisation of the highest goal or the transcendental is achieved.

‘Indriyārthas’ means objects of sense i.e., sound, touch, visual, taste and smell. The sense organs for these objects are respectively the ear, the skin, the eye, the tongue, and the nose. Just as taste is the object of the tongue, so also, sound for the ear, touch for the skin, sight for the eye and smell for the nose are the objects. When the sense organs are suspended from their respective objects there
is the state of foodlessness (Nirāhāra). We can’t attain the state of Nirāhāra, by merely stopping to eat by the sense organ of the tongue. The real state of Nirāhāra is possible only when the four sense organs also are kept in suspended animation. It is only one who keeps all the five sense organs immune to their objects who can be called a Samyamin.68

The Swāmījī brings to our notice what the Hathayoga says about the purity of food. By taking pure food, the mind becomes pure, and when the mind becomes pure, there is self-knowledge. And by self-knowledge, the glands of the heart become liberated (Hridaya grandhi vimōchana). And it is clear therefore, that those seeking liberation, must take only pure food to start with. Even the scriptures say the same thing.69

Man has two bodies - the subtle and the gross. There is also a third one namely the causal body. But the latter is not in practice. In practice we have only the gross and the subtle. By taking pure food only the gross body and the senses become pure. But this only partly helps the purity of mind. Complete purity of the mind can be achieved only by meditating on pure thoughts. It is more conceptual. Just as the gross body is purged of its impurities by sustaining on pure food, so also, the subtle body becomes pure only by cultivation of pure thoughts. Compassion, humility, study of the scriptures, love, god-mindedness, the idea that all-selves and his own are equal, are the thoughts that one should cultivate to attain purity of the subtle body.

The Swāmījī now raises an important issue which may be said to concern the problem of absolutism versus relativism concerning ethical values.70 Students of philosophy are aware of the Kantian doctrine of categorical imperative or unconditional obligation which is a standing example of the absolutist or formalistic ethics in western ethics. The Swāmījī
now raises a specific question concerning the ethics of *Ahimsa*. Is *Ahimsa* absolute or relative? Such a question gains some significance in the following contexts: Usually all the people cannot be expected of total renunciation or disbelief in the non-eternality of the physical body. If it were so, is there a way out even for these people? The Swāmīji affirms that there is a way out even for these people.\(^{71}\) Cultivation of an attitude of compassion towards living creatures naturally dispels from one's mind the desire for māt-eating. Just one would certainly refuse to eat even an eatable of his preference once he knows that it is poisoned, so also, one would certainly refuse to eat meat if he were convinced that it is sinful. When there are available so many kinds of vegetarian items, nutritious and tasteful like vegetables, rice, pulses, etc., where is the need for one to resort to meat-eating? One should actually visit slaughter house and witness for himself the horrible picture of agony and suffering that the whole animals are subjected to in the process of their being slaughtered. Perhaps a stone-hearted soul may not react even to such a ghostly situation, just as no reflection is perceptible in a plate or stone. But just as reflection is evident in a mirror, such ghostly scenes will not go without reflecting themselves in the hearts of pure souls.

The Swāmīji suggests a way of liberation from meat-eating even for those who are entirely devoid of any element of compassion, purity, and detachment. As a first step in the process one should give up the habit of himself killing the creature, cooking it and eating it. He should initiate the step that somebody else should cook it for him. Even this should be practiced only once in a week to start with and he should go on widening the gap, say once in a fortnight, once in a month or even once in a year. If he could achieve this he would be getting rid of the sinful practice. Not only
the abandonment of this physical act, but he should also simultaneously meditate constantly on the sinful nature of the act of killing and eating in his mind. In the absence of a real conviction of the virtues of avoidance of meat-eating, it would serve no purpose if he were to merely observe the external act of avoiding non-vegetarian food. Unless a real purity of heart and a real change of mind are achieved, one cannot have a vision of the self and the divine glory in all the living creatures. If he could perceive the agonizing experience of even a single creature, he would feel that he himself is undergoing such an agony. Lord Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi were this type of great souls and that is why they spread the message that non-violence is the highest virtue (Ahimsā Paramō Dharmaḥ).

References

2. Ibid., p.12.
4. Prasnöttara Mānikya Māla, p.159.
5. Lōkōddhārakam, p.31.
8. Rig Veda Samhita, Mandala-X, Anuvāka-I, Ashtaka-VII, Adhyaya-V, Sūkta-VI: Purusha Sūkta: "Brāhmaṇoṣya mukha māsit bāhu rājanyakritah, Urutadasya yadvysyah padbhyaṃgam südro ajāyataḥ" - "From the Face of the Cosmic Deity (Virātpurusha) Brahmans are born, from His shoulders Kshatriyas, from His thighs Vaisyas and from his feet Südras."
9. Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram, p.71
    Lōkōddhārakam, p.8:
10. Ibid., pp.140-45.
    Bhagavad Gītā, XVII 41-45
12. Ibid., p.61.
   Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.179.
   Chāturuvarnyam mayā srushtam gunakarma vibhāgasah,
   Tasya kartāramapimam viddhya kartaramavyayam.
13. Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram, p.75.
18. Ibid., pp.7-10.
19. Ibid., pp.3, 104
   Dharmasēthuvu, pp.150-52.
   Sushka Vedāndta Tamō Bhāskaram, p.107.
20. Patanjali Yōga Sūtras, II.38.
   Eshwara krupa, p.204.
22. Grihasthāshrama Dharmamu, p.4.
23. Ibid., pp.5-8.
24. Prasnōttara Mānikya Māla, p.78.
25. Ibid., p.77.
26. Ibid., p.79.
27. Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram, p.135.
   S.A.W. = Sal-lallaho Alaihe Wasallam (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him)
29. Ibid., p.193.
   Bhagavad Gītā, IV.7-8.
   Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.363.
   Yathārtha Bhārati, Oct. 87, p.298.
32. Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.351.
33. Ibid., p.352.
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35. Ibid., p.354.
36. Ibid., p.16.
37. Gitärtha Prakāsam, p.36.
38. Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.82.
39. Ibid., pp.87-88.
41. Dharma Sēthuvu, p.165.
42. Ibid., p.166.
44. Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram, p.39.
45. Ibid., p.38.
46. Ibid., p.376.
47. Ibid., p.380.
48. Ibid., p.381.
39. Ibid., p.383.
50. Dharma Sethuvu, p.147.
51. Ibid., p.148.
52. Ibid., p.148.
53. Ibid., p.170.
54. Ibid., p.171.
55. Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.419.
56. Ibid., p.420.
57. Ibid., p.420.
58. Ibid., p.408.
59. Ibid., p.410.
61. Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram, p.11.
62. Ibid., p.12.
63. Ibid., p.13.

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   Chandogyopanishad, VI.vii.
   Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram, pp.17-18.


66. Ibid., p.16.

67. Ibid., p.308.
   Dharmōpanyāsāmulu, Part-IV, p.45.

   Dharmōpanyasamulu, Part-IV, p.319.

69. Ibid., p.320.


72. Ibid., p.16.
CHAPTER IV

SWĀMĪJĪ ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PURUSHĀ PRAYATNA OR HUMAN EFFORT

The Swāmījī is a great optimist. He is a thorough and an uncompromising champion of free will. It is these two great qualities of the Swāmījī that remain as the two fundamental pre-suppositions of his illuminating account of Purushā prayatna or Human Effort. In his opinion, no man is condemned to hell and no man is destined to heaven by the mere will of God. To him, man is the maker of his own future. The quintessence of the Swāmījī's teachings on human effort consists in man's will to reform himself and work for a happy life in this world and lasting peace in the world beyond.

In his opinion, no object in the world becomes useful unless it is refined. Even the meanest object gains significance and value when it is subjected to refinement. In fact, it is becoming a different object. Any such refinement is only possible by human effort. Be it the students at the ordinary empirical level or the seekers of liberation at a transcendental level, are becoming purified only in virtue of the process of reformation and refinement. There is no short cut for success. He who aims high in life, must put in matching efforts to realise his objective. The Swāmījī opines that all great and lasting achievements in this world can be attributed to this kind of human effort. We are becoming victims of suffering by lack of will and failure to act. The Swāmījī firmly believes that those who succumb to physical pleasures and laziness, can never realise the blissful state of existence. On the other hand, those who resist the temptations of sense, and cultivate the culture of hard work will be blessed with happiness in this world and the world beyond. The lives of great men in this world are standing
proof of this truth. The Swāmījī rates laziness as the greatest evil in the world. He says truth is deeper and there is something more than that meets the eye. What first appears is the milk. It is only after churning it, the butter presents itself. What first appears is the ground and it is only when it is dug, water becomes perceptible. In a similar way, what is perceptible is the physical body. But every physical body is a manifestation of the Supreme Soul. But this becomes visible only when the individual becomes pure after the annihilation of all impurities in him by such practices as the performance of penance, meditation, devotion to God, renunciation, acquisition of divine qualities, and abandonment of demonic qualities. The result of all this is total removal of suffering and attainment of perfect Bliss for the people. It is only then this physical body becomes temple of God. This, in Swāmījī’s opinion is the teaching of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā.

1. What is Human Effort?

The Swāmījī exhorts the people at great length about the importance of Human effort in almost all his talks and writings. He also wrote a work called “Swabōdha Sudhākaram” exclusively devoted to the explanation of the nature and significance of human effort. It may also be mentioned here that there are very useful and enlightening discussions on human effort in “Pancha Dasi” of Vidyāranya and in “Yogavāsishtha”. The quintessence of the Swāmījī’s teachings on human effort is to inspire people to act. The philosophy of action is none other than the ethics of the divine, and the commencement of the Vedās and the human obligations. The Swāmījī seeks to argue that human action is inevitable and inescapable.1 The Swāmījī points out that there may be doctrinal differences in this regard resulting from the different conceptions of bondage and liberation.
However, not withstanding these doctrinal differences, the path from bondage to liberation does involve human effort. If it were not so, all the Vedic teachings of virtues and vices, righteousness and sin would be devoid of any substance and meaning. It would also amount to dispensation of any religious teachers. The Swāmījī declares such a society of human beings is nothing short of a society of animals and beasts. The knowledge of the people in such a society could be limited to the identification of the soul with the body. If that is the state of their enlightenment how could they hope to get release from suffering? The Swāmījī asks us to reflect on the present day phenomenon that the people who are inactive and unmotivated being ruled over by men of action and motivation. The Swāmījī asks, is not a person who has not renounced and does not pray for the mercy of the Supreme Soul, suffering under the weight of the elements of nature? At the same time, are we not observing a great soul, practising truth and righteousness and cultivating the culture of renunciation and constantly meditating on Brahman, becoming a liberated soul and being adored by the people? The Swāmījī illustrates the significance of human effort through an analogical argument. Just as a boat sailing in the swift waters of the river will find its grave in the deep sea if it were not actively driven by its crew, so also, a life without action, a life without exerting any effort would meet with a similar fate. The Swāmījī says that there is hardly any area of human life and existence which can be successful in the absence of the needed effort.

The Swāmījī refers to in this connection the thirteenth and fourteenth Slokas of the eighteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gīta:

Pañcaitāni mahābāho kārānāni nibōdha me,
Samkhya kṛtānte prōktāṇi Siddhaye sarvakarmanām.
“O! Mighty armed Arjuna, learn of Me, these five factors, for the accomplishment of all actions, as stated in the Śāmkhya doctrine.”

Adhisthānam tathā kartā kāranam ca prthagvidham, Vividhās ca prthakchestā daivam caivaṭra panchamam.

“The seat of action i.e., the physical body and the like-wise the agent (the phenomenal ego) the instruments of various sorts, the many kinds of efforts and providence being the fifth.” Since God’s role is listed as the fifth it has to be comprehended and preceded by Adhishtāna, karta, kāranam and chesta.

The Swāmījī also refers to the teachings of Vikrama Charitra:

Utsāham sāhasam dhairyam Buddhiḥ sakti parākramah, Shadete yatra tishtanti tat ta devoapi tishtati⁴.

Since, ‘Tatra devōpi tishtati’, the part played by God is mentioned as the seventh, all the preceding six relate to the human effort. They are motivation, prowess, courage, intellect, potency and valour. Jīva and Eshwara are the causes of creation. It is clear that worldly action is possible only when there is the creation of Eshwara and the creation of the soul combine. The Jīva can find its fulfilment and realise his perfection only when Eshwara and the Jīva work in unison. It should be a desert or the vast ocean where there is only a creation of Eshwara, with no trace of human effort. In the absence of human effort, no evolution is possible. The Swāmījī adduces the uncivilized savage people living in the remote forest and hilly regions with no contact at all with the outside world.⁵

The Swāmījī says that India had a glorious past. But in the course of history this country was invaded and ruled over by Pathans and Moghals and later by the French for
the simple reason that India lacked men of action and resistance. But all these invaders gave way to the British who ruled over this country for a few hundred years. This is, because the English people proved to be more active, to be more work-minded and to be more goal-oriented on all these people. Literary and cultural heritage was the creation of ancient Indians at a time when they were active.\textsuperscript{6} The Vedās, the Upanishads, Darsanas, Yoga Sāstra, Sruti, Jyōtisha (Astrology) and Vyākarana (Grammar) - all these were the creation of the ancient times. The Swāmījī admits that there are some elements of evil present in some of these above mentioned works and Smritis. This is due to the fact that the classification of human beings has been made on the basis of caste and not on the basis of guna and karma.\textsuperscript{7} The Swāmījī opines that this sole factor has proved fatal to the progress of the country. It is true that the Smritis, have references to guna and karma. But there were no social reformers and men of effort to bring these references to light and put them into practice. Such deep and profound philosophical truths are lying idle as treasure in the deep seas. However, the great desires of the Rishis cannot go without influencing men of purity and sanctity. That is the reason why at least a portion of those philosophical truths are now being gradually felt by the people.\textsuperscript{8} But some lazy people who are absolutely devoid of any motivation to work, comfort themselves with the impression that the Vedās contain all that is required from the womb to the tomb and there is nothing else that we are called upon to work for. If questioned as to why they could not practice such deep insights available in the Vedās, they conveniently avoid the question by saying what now obtains is the law of ‘Kali Yuga’. The Swāmījī has a word of great praise for the people of certain countries for their sense of commitment and zeal for accomplishment. He says that people of the
countries like Germany, Japan, America and Britain are greatly benefitting themselves on account of their persistent efforts to improve their Science and Technology and discover new things. If they were to come across anything newly written in the books, they will not rest until they verify the truth of the claims made. By contrast, we in India, could afford to be idle till the great things mentioned in books become a matter of actual experience. There are some people in our country who prefer to be idle by consoling themselves that after all the discoveries of Science and Technology achieved by the westerners could at best help improve the physical conditions of living and can never be of avail for any spiritual upliftment. The Swāmījī however consoles himself by taking cognizance of certain great souls who firmly believed that only a stomach satisfied can think of salvation. The Swāmījī feels that this is good augury. He sees the manifestation of Indian laziness in another set of individuals who brood over the past glories and shed tears over the present down-fall. This is the first sign of laziness. On the other hand, the races dedicated themselves to work and achievements take pride over their astonishing discoveries and compare them with a dim past of their ancestors. This is the first sign of human endeavour. The Swāmījī thinks that the real cause of human suffering is not making proper use of the god-given intellect. There is an eternal relation between God and individual soul. That is the reason why God has made the individual soul participant in the world creation. The Swāmījī calls us to concentrate on this fact. Any type of grain which is not attended to by relevant human effort will not be fit for eating. Cotton is God-creation. But turning it into a cloth is a human effort. Grains are god-made. But turning them into human-food is human effort. Metal is god-creation. But the machines and utensils made up of the metals are the result of the human effort. Gold
is god-made. But the ornaments are the results of human effort. To be born as human beings is God’s creation. But to evolve oneself as a cultured being and attain Brāhmanatva is entirely the result of one’s own self-effort. On deeper reflection, we can realise the truth that it is only by the combined effort of both God’s creation and human endeavour can anything be possible. Swāmījī refers to the tremendous achievements of the natural sciences when he refers to the phenomenon of hybridization of plants. Similarly, the chemists by their powers of experimentation are even able to change the nature of things. The Swāmījī asks that if by power of science the inanimate objects are made to change, what prevents the human beings to change their qualities of nature. The Swāmījī cites the instances of people like Vālmīki who evolved themselves as great souls despite their unsophisticated and uncivilized past. To submit ourselves to the influence of nature is a quality of matter. It is a natural quality of active human beings to transcend the limitations of nature and evolve themselves as great souls. The Swāmījī feels that it is the latter quality that was responsible for the magnificent achievements of Science and Technology that enabled man today to fly into the blue skys and pathom the depth of the oceans. That man should become God is entirely in the hands of man himself. Every man is a potential God and should we realise this and strive for its actualisation, we will have achieved the ultimate destiny of human life. This is human effort. All the needed intelligence and planning to realise this goal is already in us. Those who cannot understand this truth by themselves, have to depend on Vedic sciences for such knowledge. This can also be known by the illustrious instances of some living great souls.

Swāmījī says that the word Rishi is not necessarily a term which applies to only to the ancient Rishis. It is just
a title for people who have some extra-ordinary sense of perception. This is just like the titles that are offered in modern society for people who qualify themselves in different fields of Arts and Sciences. Nothing prevents us to confer the title of Rishi on one who has some extra-ordinary power of sense and intuition. The point is that even in ancient times, there was no sect of Rishis by birth. Men like Vālmīkī, Visvāmitra, Janaka, Satyakāma etc., and women like Gārgi, Kātyāyani, Viswavara, Sulabha etc. were not born as Rishis or Yogins respectively but evolved themselves as such by practising celibacy, penance and constant study of the Vedās. No one ever became great without tremendous human effort.

Explaining the 20th Sloka of Chapter VI of the Bhagavad Gītā, the Swāmījī says that we should identify the objects of sense around which the wavering mind is hovering and strive to turn it away from them. This is how by the practice of Yoga, the Yogin is able to secure peace for himself. The Swāmījī says that the Sloka referred to above also tells us about the significance of human effort, when it says that we should by constant practice of meditation resist all deviations from the path of the divine. The Swāmījī points out that there is a second way of restraining the mind. That is, the mind must be kept under our constant observation by observing all the objects after which our mind is running. When this technique is perfected, the mind appears as different from the soul. A mind controlled by a purified intellect alone can take us to the greater realms of spiritual perfection.

The Swāmījī says that there is a third way of achieving the same end. That is this. The self must keep a constant vigil on the activities of the mind in its pursuit of the objects of sense, itself remaining enlightened and truthful. Then the self will be greatly surprised on seeing the mean and bane
activities of the mind. Such a revelation annihilates the mean activities of the mind. The Swāmījī says that there is a fourth way also. That is, to reflect on at great length on the pernicious consequences of mind’s pursuit of objects of sense and on his own purity and high status. When this is done the mind can be arrested from running amuck. Finally there is the fifth and the best way of realising the same goal. To arrest the mind, from its pursuit of pleasures, one should meditate on the divine if he were a devotee and on Brahman, if he were to be enlightened soul. As a result of this, nothing appears other than the Self or Brahman. All these are the manifestations of the mind. Just as the waves of the sea are non-different from the sea itself, so also, we will come to know that all the perceptible world is non-different from God. When such an enlightenment comes there is nothing like mind at all.

In the Chapter VI, Sloka thirty fourth of the Bhagavad Gītā, though Arjuna asks Lord Krishna, whether restraining the mind is as difficult to control as the wind. Lord Krishna replied: “O: Arjuna, without doubt, the mind is difficult to curb and restless, but it can be controlled by constant practice and non-attachment.”

The Swāmījī says that we can understand from this Sloka that it is God’s intention that it is absolutely necessary for all the living beings to practise renunciation and those who do not do so, can never be able to realise God. To make us understand this idea by analogical reasoning, the Swāmījī asks us: Is it not because of preserving water by building some dams on great rivers like Krishna and Godavari that we are able to irrigate and cultivate our lands? If human effort is absent and we had not such great dams and bridges. Our life would have been very miserable if we were to mainly depend on the whims and fancies of the weather
conditions. But for human effort vast areas of our agricultural land would have turned out to be deserted by this time.

According to the Swāmīji, the ideal of the Gītā consists in the teachings of Bhagavan to Arjuna regarding the indispensability of human effort. At a time when Arjuna overcame by sorrow and grief and was vacillating whether to fight or not to fight, the Lord teaches him that he ought to fight as a Kshatriya as it was his duty. When the Gītā says that in the absence of human effort one can hardly meet even his biological requirements and can hardly make his both ends meet, it is needless to point out that without human effort we can never attain liberation which is worthy of realisation only by great of men god-consciousness. Again, Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna that he ought to conquer his temptations of the senses, and the feelings of love and hatred by exerting tremendous human endeavour. The Swāmīji says that the real meaning of the Gītā here is desire for objects destroys Jñāna (Knowledge) and Vijñāna (Discrimination). The Swāmīji explains the connotation of the terms Jñāna and Vijñāna by saying that ‘Jñāna’ means the discriminative knowledge learnt by the study of scriptures and by the teachings of the Gurus regarding virtue and vice, merit and sin, and bondage and liberation and Vijñāna (Discrimination) means realising oneself as a result of practical application of one’s knowledge learnt from the teachers.

Desire for objects destroys both Jñāna and Vijñāna. It has always proved a great enemy even for men of enlightenment. This is the reason why the Lord teaches ‘Prajahi’ and not ‘Jahi’. ‘Jahi’ means the Swāmīji says ‘leave it’ and ‘Prajahi’ means ‘leave through effort’ i.e., ‘leave instantaneously’.

The three commentators of Bhagavad Gītā - Sankara, Rāmānuja and Madhva and their respective followers have tried to interpret the meaning of this Sloka “Sarva dharmān
parityajya mām ekam saranam vraja” (abandoning all duties, come to me alone for shelter)\textsuperscript{21} in accordance with their respective traditions. The Swāmījī opines that a closer understanding of the three great commentaries of the Bhagavad Gītā, reveals that for constant meditators of God there is no need for performing daily obligations and duties, and other watery rites (Nitya, Naimittikādi Srādda Tarpanas)\textsuperscript{22}. This is so because, all these obligations are associated with ignorance. All these are performed only with the help of others. If these obligations were to be fulfilled by a totally renounced soul there is a possibility of their going amuck. Moreover, only those who could perform these obligations with perfection are capable of attaining liberation. The Upanishadic theory is that for those who have been thus liberated, there is no further need of performing these obligations.\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, the Sloka referred to assures us that there need be no fear of over riding the Sāstras by opting not to perform these obligations. Again the result accruing from the performance of obligatory actions is negligible. And the result offered by right knowledge is infinite. Just as different rivers join the same sea, so also, all actions dissolve themselves in Self-knowledge. This is the reason why it is said as “Sarvam Karmākhilam Pārtha, Jñāne parisamāpyate” - “for all works, without any exception culminate in wisdom” and “Jñānāgnis sarva karmāni Bhasmasāt kurute tathā” - “The fire of wisdom turns to ashes all work.”\textsuperscript{24} This is the reason why Rāmānuja comments on these statements of the Bhagavad gītā by saying that we ought to become a devotees of Brahman by giving up all actions obstructing the concentration of mind on Brahman. For this, the expression ‘Mām ēkam’ has come into vogue. The Swāmījī states that the meaning of the Lord’s teaching to Arjuna is so clear that it leaves the latter in no doubt that he could be liberated only when he could achieve absolute concentration. The Swāmījī draws the conclusion that
self-effort is absolutely necessary, and there are innumerable evidences to substantiate this view.

When his disciples by referring to "Na tumām sakyase drastum" - expressed the view that divine knowledge cannot be attained only by human effort, and it can be seen only by divine grace i.e., the God-vision is a gift of God, the Swāmīji comments that the Sloka stated above does not lend support to the theory that there is no need for human effort. In the third Sloka of the same chapter it can be clearly seen that Arjuna requests the Lord with the highest devotion to reveal His Viswaroopā (Cosmic Form or Transfiguration). It can also be seen that the Lord lest he should disappoint His devotee bestows on him intuitive powers to have the vision of the Lord. Hence, it can be understood that there is the element of human effort on the part of Arjuna in the matter of viewing God’s transfiguration.25 It can also be inferred from this that physical senses are not the means of having a vision of the Lord, and unless the people attain intuitive powers they can never have a vision of the God. Yōga drishti, Jnāna dristi, and Samyak drishti are the synonyms of Divya drishti. What we usually possess are the senses constituted of the five physical elements. These are inanimate. Inanimate things can never inspire consciousness. The reverse is true, i.e., that which is conscious can illumine the inanimate. Hence, he who attains absolute concentration on the Self which illumines our sensuous knowledge will be blessed with intuitive knowledge.26 In certain works it is said that there are only nine exits for the human organism. But in Kathōpanishad, it is said there are eleven exits. May be that these extra two exits might not have been realised when human knowledge has not evolved. When knowledge occurs i.e., when we transcend the limitations of nature, these two openings make their presence felt. Then, one can have a vision of the Lord.27
As our physical senses of sight are perishable, even the objects seen by them are perishable. Hence, for all the ordinary people only the physical world is seen, but they can never see the God illumined by infinite number of Atoms. In Swāmīji's opinion, the reason for this is, their minds are not yet open to viewing the existence of God. It is for this reason that Lord Eshawara is called the God of “Three Eyes”. At the time of the annihilation of the life-qualities of the individual souls, and consequent ascendance to god-head (Sivatwa), the third eye opens. Such people are considered by us as manifestations of Eshwara. Out of these two intuitive faculties, one is known as the opening of Brahman-hole and the other is known as ‘Sushumna Udbhoda’. This is the secret revealed by Yoga Sāstras. This is known as Nirvāna in Buddhism and as attainment of knowledge or as occurrence of great teachings or as Hridayagrandhi Viccheda in other religions. The Yogins say that the Sushumna nerve is seated in the position of Mūlādhāra, and Brahmarandhra (Brahman-hole) is in the place of Bhroomadhyam (place between two eye-brows). As long as the sense of palate and reproductive organs are operative so long Brahman-hole and the power of Kundalini are closed. In whom, the palate and reproductive organs are suspended, for them, Brahman-hole and the power of Kundalini are opened. This is the secret of Yoga. Just as the micro-organism invisible to the naked eye are perceptible through the microscope, so also, for the enlightened there is a clear vision of the Lord and His secrets, which are beyond the comprehension of the ordinary people. For this, extrasensory perception is absolutely necessary.28 The ordinary people are usually ruled by sensory knowledge. He who has the faculty of extra-sensory perception, will get extra sensory knowledge. This should be comprehended as the result of the restraining the senses. This is the secret
implied in calling some people as having super-human capacities. Ordinary people have only human capacities. From this we understand that as long as the mind remains servient to Prakriti or Nature, so long an individual soul can never aspire to attain Brahman - the essence of all the Vedic teachings and the truth proposed by all the Upanishads. It does not mean that man need put in no efforts but it means that we must put in every effort to annihilate all the qualities of nature which is intuition of God. It should be comprehended that this state of Bliss is the seat of intuitive knowledge. Hence, the whole of the Gītā teaches the indispensability of human effort at all times and places.²⁹

The Swāmījī asserts that human effort lasts till the attainment of Sivatwa, consequent to the destruction of the selfhood, just as the flow of the river ends with its entry into the sea. In such a state, all duality ceases and everything seems to appear divine and as manifestation of God. All sufferings end and a state of Bliss is realised.

2. Avoid Laziness

Swāmījī feels that many people are not careful in their attitude towards time. Even people with some enlightenment and perseverance are likely to waste their precious time. Usually, most of our valuable time is lost in indulging in loose talk, reading cheap literature, in moving with friends with no objective and so on. If care is taken in avoiding all these kinds of behaviour and habits, people will be greatly benefited.

He says that one should not be under the impression that to become free from bondage and attain liberation, is uneasy and soft task. He who repents for having spent even a minute's time in vain, should be really considered as one who has realised the value of time. He who sheds
tears on the loss of time, is the one who understands the secret of life. With the passage of every moment, we are moving nearer and nearer to our end. What is lost can never be recovered. It is the considered opinion of the qualified people that time is invaluable. We may remain calm and quiet and inactive, time will not. Only people who ceaselessly work till the life’s objective is realised, can be really considered to be Jīvanmuktas or liberated in this very life. For the lazy and the lethargic even ordinary and small works seem to be heavy and burdensome. But for the enlightened and accomplished people, no work is difficult and beyond realisation. Sri Sankara writes in his Sivānandalahari, that man should spend his time in meditations as long as he can.\(^{30}\) When he fails to meditate, he should spend his time in Manana or reflection and chanting of hymns. He should also spend sometime in Vedāntic discussions, and the performance of dis-interested actions. This is how he should distribute his time and should not allow even a moment of time to lapse in vain. One who practises the stage of house-hold life should spend his time in discharging his family duties. It should be the responsibility of everyone to see the purity of means in the realisation of the end of life. The Swāmīji has attempted at several places to delineate on and answer the question whether knowledge of Brahman is instrumental in producing men of laziness or men of activity? In an attempt to answer this question, the Swāmīji makes a review of the social conditions that prevailed in his time and explains the repercussions of laziness on the country.

There is a misapprehension among the common people that Brahmajnāna or devotion to God, Yoga, Penance and the other which are instrumental for the attainment of liberation within this life itself (Jīvanmukti) tend to make people lazy. This kind of mis-apprehension is the result of lack of proper enquiry into Vedānta and absence of
association with men of devotion. Even people of some knowledge also entertain such mis-apprehension. Such mis-apprehension on the part of enlightened people is based on the observation of certain lazy people who indulge in easy going way of life like begging, and addiction to certain drugs. There is some substance in this attitude. They may not have come across real Sādhus, who are the real aspirants after liberation. Naturally people are likely to generalise and say that all Sādhus are lazy and addicts to narcotics. According to Swāmījī, the increase in the number of such persons is in fact due to the poverty and lack of employment opportunities. And the third reason is that we do not have people who are prepared to reform them and set them in right path. Reformation of such people according to Swāmījī cannot be done by the ordinary people. He says the Government alone is capable of such great task. Necessary legislations must be made in this connection and opportunities of employment must be created in order to divert them from their bad habits. Care must be taken to discriminate between the false and the genuine Brahmanishthas. Some people are labouring under the impression that it is well nigh an impossible task to practise tapas, and yoga and carry on investigations into the philosophy of Vedānta, leading the house-holder stage of life consequently they renounce the house-holder stage of life and accept Bikshātana or receiving alms as a means of livelihood. Swāmījī feels that at no time in this world, without making sacrifice and renouncing the objects of life, can anyone achieve anything worth. All the great people of the world who have accomplished great things for the world are those who have made supreme sacrifices and disciplined themselves to great austerities. Our education must be as good or high as the job that we seek to obtain. The same can be said of Brahma Vidya. Whatever is great can be attained only by great effort.\[31\]
The Swāmījī feels that it is the responsibility of every aspirant of liberation to try everything in his capacity to erase from the minds of people the wrong impression that the knowledge of Brahma Vidya tends to make people lazy. All men and women, be they leading house-holder stage of life or any other stage of life and interested in the way of ‘Nivṛtti’ (detachment from action) must spare no efforts to propagate the idea that it is only by exerting human effort and knowledge of Brahman that we can attain a state of sorrowlessness. This holds true to all people, be they Brahmins, or scholars, or rich people or of any caste other than Brahmins, Sanyasins or the other. At no time in the world, a state of peace or sorrowlessness can be realised without drinking the nectar of divine knowledge which is the essence of the Vedānta. Anything short of Brahma Vidya, riches or yajnās or position of authority, is of no avail to achieve this end. For this, everyone should have the inclination to be industrious and should abandon all laziness. They should also renounce all sensous pleasures. Education must be obtained to the extent possible. Knowledge of Sanskrit is also essential. Simultaneously with formal education one should also try to attain knowledge of Brahman. i.e., Anushthāna, otherwise there will be no true knowledge. Those who are interested in the practice of yoga, can also learn the yogic practices. However, caution must be taken to see that penance and yoga should not be used to obtain extra-ordinary power. If yoga and penance are so used, pensance and yoga could be converted into Tamas (Ignorance) and Avidya respectively. It is because of the begging habit, the Śādhūs have lost their respect in the society. It is because of the non-observance of Aparigraha by the Śādhūs, there is the prevalence of the strong impression that Brahma Vidya is instrumental for laziness which causes great damage to the world. 32
The Swāmīji exhorts people to attain mental victory with the great conviction that they are pure souls and descendants of great Rishis. When such a mental victory is attained all the qualities of nature in your heart will perish. Swāmīji also asks the people to propagate the idea that all the people who cultivate the qualities of Sama, Dama and so on, are qualified to receive knowledge of Brahman. We should all see to it that the statement that Brahmajñāna is instrumental for laziness should be wiped out from this country. All people are qualified to receive Brahman knowledge, irrespective of their caste, community and sex. It is only then that this world will have been liberated.33

The ancient teachers, have established Ashramas, Mutts and Kshētras for the purpose of teaching Brahmajñāna and for creating facilities for the practisers of Anushthāna. These were established with great ideals. But in course of time as these were used by the wealthy people for their personal end, they have fallen on evil days.

To attain the culmination stage in Brahma Vidya - Yoga, and devotion to God, one has to practice for sometime, loneliness and penance. It is anybody’s imagination as to how long one has to practice Brahmanishtha as a means of annihilating the disease of the mind called ‘Avidya’ or ignorance in him. However high a position that a man occupies in this world, and however healthy a man might be in his physical existence, no one can attain a real state of peace and eternal Bliss as long as he remains ignorant in Antahkarana.34 It is only Brahmanishtha that secures for the self supreme peace either in embodied or disembodied state. If Brahmanishthas were not so powerful, the Swāmīji asks would the kings of the ancient past have renounced their kingdoms and left to the forest to practice it? Again would the Pundits or men of great learning have renounced all things of the world and left to the forest?
The opinion of the common people is that real happiness consists in securing worldly pleasures. This is nothing but the result of ignorance. Mind is the seat of happiness. Manas is also called Chitta or Buddhi. As long as man’s heart is pure, it continues to get more and more peace even without enjoying any physical pleasures. When it becomes impure, it will not be really happy even if all the material pleasures are at its disposal. Realising this truth, the kings of the ancient times never hesitated to renounce their kingdoms, before they took to penance by living in the midst of the forest. It is by such practice, they earned the title of Rājarshi for themselves. With the change of times, there is a decrease in the number of practisers of penance, practisers of Yoga, great devotees of God, seekers of Brahman knowledge, great men of compassion and renouncers of the world, with the result that the people are at a loss to know the importance of these people for the world. The Swāmījī wonders at the great fall and says that history evidences the present sorry state of affairs that we are living in when compared to the glorious past of the country, an age of enlightenment and civilization. When questioned as to why great people of the past had not created Science and Technology, the Swāmīji answers that it was because of lack of proper support for them in this regard, the country plunged into the darkness of bondage. The Swāmīji also refers to certain causes for their downfall. The chief among them is that guna or quality was not accorded proper importance. Superstitious beliefs have led the people into a state of ignorance or tāmas. When people were considered important just on the basis of their caste in complete disregard of their nature, people became inactive and went from worse to worse. For this reason, the people born in higher castes never try to improve their nature, with the impression that they are born in higher castes. People born in the so called
lower caste, despite their possession of high qualities, never attempted to improve their nature strongly bound by the impression that they are incapable of any evolution. Thus, both people born in higher castes and the people born in the lower castes, became so indolent and reduced themselves to the level of inanimate objects.

This should not lead us to the impression that Indians lack in wisdom, and intellectual powers. Persons to whichever country they belong must be considered great if they have awakened their people from their state of slumber and ignorance. Reformation or betterment of the world always presupposes awakening of the people and reformation of their selves. Reading of the scriptures and great books is a necessary prerequisite for purification of the selves. Bhagavad Gītā occupies prominent place among such great books. The Swāmījī describes the Bhagavad Gītā as a divine work which seeks to drive away the evil of laziness by teaching grief stricken Arjuna - that he ought to fight as it is his own duty or Swadharma as a Kshatriya. The Swāmījī vehemently opposes a conception of certain people that the philosophy of Vedānta is instrumental for the people becoming lazy. Is it making people lazy to enable people become men of accomplishments by making them fit in the discharge of their own duties? He questions. As the Upanishadic statements teaching these things “Uttishtata Jāgrata, Prāpya Varān nibōdhata, kshurasya Dhāra nisitā duratyayā durgam pathastat kavayō vadanti”36 - making people lazy? The Swāmījī makes a clarion call to the people to come out of their slumber. He asks them to awake from the illusion of desire, from the deep sleep or tāmasic nature. He exhorts people to approach men of learning and seek enlightenment. Once they liberate themselves they ought to liberate others. With the spirit of the Gītā, “Dharma samśhāpanārdhayā sambhavāmi Yugē Yuğē”37. The Swāmījī expresses the truth
that the great men are born on the earth to redeem the world when it descends from the path of righteousness under the impact of sensuous desires and when it immerses itself with tāmasic ignorance. Enlightened people are aware as to how much the world filled with the darkness of illusion or ignorance, and as to how far the living beings were removed from God, at the time when such great people like Sri Buddha, Sri Sankara, Sri Jesus Christ and Sri Muhammad was born.38

3. Human Effort with reference to Yoga Vāsishtha

The Swāmījī also has taken great pains to explain the significance of Human Effort as elucidated in ‘Mumukshu Vyavahāra Prakarana’ of “Sri Yoga Vāsishtha” or “Sri Vāsishtha Rāmāyanam”. Citing the dialogue of Vāsishtha and Rāma, as illustration, the Swāmījī explains the indispensability of human effort. Vāsishtha instructs Rāma that all objects of will in this world could only be realised by human endeavour and it is only by human endeavour, knowledge and liberation are realised in this life itself. Karma is the result of human effort. It is only by human effort, the pleasures of travelling through the country, and the pleasure of eating will be had. This is the personal experience of everybody. The so called luck (Adrishta or Daivam) is a human creation. This is so because, whatever good that happens to us is not accidental but is the necessary consequence of the merits of our past actions.

Human effort is of two kinds. One is ‘Prākrita’, and the other is ‘Ihika’. ‘Prākrita’ means the effort put in the past lives. ‘Ihika’ means the effort or actions put in this life itself. The efforts done in accordance with the Sāstra, are auspicious efforts. All others are not auspicious. Just as light is instrumental for the perception of the colours, so also, discharge of duties as ordained by the Sāstras is
the first means for the performance of all attachment to action (Pravrtti). As we sow, so we reap. The way in which we perform our actions decides the way we reap its fruits. Therefore, all that happens to us is only due to human effort. Even the divine cannot over ride the influence of karma. Such action is of two kinds namely that which conforms to the Sāstra and that which is contradictory to the Sāstra. That which conforms to the sāstra aims at transcendental and that which is contradictory to the sāstras paves the way for destruction. There is always a keen contest between actions done in the past life and those done in the present life. That which proves to be more powerful, wins the contest. If something inauspicious were to happen while performing the actions ordained by the sāstra, it should be understood that the present human effort is lacking in power, and the actions done in the past are powerful. In such a context, we should do everything with added interest and perseverance and suppress the actions of the past life. The actions of the past life can never excel the present efforts. Hence, man ought to refute and abandon the idea that the actions of the past life are guiding the destinies in every respect. It is certain that the actions done in the present will nullify the actions of the past. The phenomenon of future actions or impending actions (Agāmi) being destroyed by the present actions is an illustration of this. To get liberated from the cycle of Samsāra, keeping away all ideas of luck and misfortune, one should put in great intellectual effort to realise the qualities of Sama, Dama etc. In this world, actions of merit will yield good results and actions of demerit will yield bad results. The category called Daivam is not different from Karma. That means the results will follow in accordance with the law of karma, God being the witness. Just as the objects like pot have the quantity or size, so also, the goal of Purushārdhas (Human
Ideals) also has a quantity. A weak and foolish person tends to treat the efforts of a strong and worthy person which may prove to be fruitful or fruitless as sanctions of God. The Swāmījī proves to be so rationalistic and scientific when he exclaims, who on earth cannot reach the heights of wealth and glory if only he bids farewell to laziness, the cause of all ills and misfortunes! This is the reason why this Asian subcontinent, is filled with the hungry and the foolish. A strong man wins over a weak one, as effortlessly as a person swallows his food. This is the reason why the weak persons are becoming servants and objects of enjoyments for the strong and powerful. It is only by the strength of human effort, that one can realise benefits in the world and the world beyond. Hence, the wise people always rely on their self-effort and proceed to act. The word ‘God’ is only a source to control the weak in their difficulties. The Swāmījī vouches from his wide experience based on his extensive travels in the country, that it is a matter of direct perception that human effort can never go unrewarded. The fruit resulting either immediately or after a lapse of time consequent to the human effort done to suit the demands of time and place is called God. We can determine by the three valid sources of knowledge namely Pratyaksha, Anumāna and Sabda, that this human effort is really fruitful. Perception certifies that speech is not possible without opening the mouth and walking is not possible without the movement of the legs. From our perceptual knowledge of certain great people enjoying the highest position, we can infer the stupendous human effort that they must have put in. Referring to the role of Sabda Pramāṇa, the Swāmījī says that all our knowledge regarding the duties of man is based on the authority of the Sāstras. Statements like ‘Satyam Vāda’ (Speak the Truth), ‘Dharmam Chara’ (Perform righteous actions), ‘Naanritam Brooyat’ (Don’t speak false) are coming to us
as Sāstric prescriptive statements. The Swāmījī asks, would not these prescriptive statements of the Sāstras be superfluous if it were the case that it is God that inspires man to act on respective occasions in strict conformity with the law of karma, and awarding the results of those actions good or bad? God has no form. To think that something is given by God is an illusion. As a matter of fact, there is nothing that God does or does not do. Hence, to think the word 'God' as different from karma is a product of illusion. However, it has become customary to think that all the fruits following from all our actions as god given. The Saint Vasishtha instructs Sri Rama to resist all sensuous temptations and put in great human efforts to secure everything auspicious for the well-being of the people. The saint also instructs him to aim at the realisation of Purushārdhas (human ideals) by human effort associated with spiritual activities practiced right from childhood like study of the Sāstras, association with virtuous people and speaking truth. In this world, all objects are illumined by the powers of place, time, action and money. In these that which proves most powerful will win over the rest. Hence, one should strive to cross the sea of Samsāra by realising the purity of mind, with the help of association with the good people and reflection on the teachings of the Sāstras. The wise have clarified that any effort which brings forth good results and cessation of suffering as human effort. This kind of human effort supported by Sāstras is the instrumental cause for the realisation of the human ideals (Purushārdhas).

The result of action consists in strength of human effort. The wise people are able to realise their interested goals by cleansing their minds of all their impurities as a result of their association with and service to sacred people and by listening to the scriptures. Philosophical enlightenment, desire to realise the human ends, the movements of the
organs of action, are the salient features of human effort. The result comes forth only from these. Action besides the nature of the result. As the mind thinks so the result will be. The effort of the senses follows the idea of the mind. So also, luck also may be said to follow human effort. The Swāmījī refers to the instances of people who by sheer dint of hard work could scale the heights of wealth, despite their initial conditions of poverty, sorrow and suffering. Human effort is universally successful in that it is aided by scientific thinking, instruction, from the teachers and one's own endeavour. This has absolutely nothing to do with luck. All that we get is because of what we have done and there is nothing like luck other than the past actions. God is imperceptible and human effort alone exists for us. The sage Viswāmithra could attain Brahmanhood only by self-effort keeping all ideas of luck at bay. The sage Vasishtha strikes a personal note when he says that he himself could realise Brāhmanatwa, only by human effort. Maintenance of family, winning the enemy's kingdom, enjoyment of luxuries of life, and controlling others by anger, and similar difficult activities are only the manifestations of human effort. Luck does not provide these like appearances created by the help of incantations, crystals and herbs. To think, that I am inspired by luck and everything is coming to me only in virtue of luck and similar expressions are only statements of self-consolation. When two persons of equal intellectual abilities strive towards the realisation of the same goal, and it so happens that one of them succeeds and the other fails, why do we say that the failure on the part of the said person, is because of his ill-luck? Why not we say the failure is due to his lapses in his efforts? There are innumerable instances of men, who had overcome with ease many dangers, and resisted all the temptations of wealth. Abandon all ideas of luck as illusions of the mind, and
become a man of action by taking refuge under the best of ideals namely the human effort. As long as you remain impure; and you fail to understand the reality of Brahman, so long you have to perform actions prescribed by the Guru, and the Sāstras. True knowledge is possible by the practice of Sravana or listening to the scriptures, Manana or reflection over their teachings and Nidhiḥdhyāsana or elimination of all doubts. This means that the Sāstras and the teacher cannot help us to realise the nature of the Atman if they are not preceded by a strong desire to know the truth. This is tantamount to saying that knowledge is possible by human effort alone. By means of knowledge, one can realise Jīvanmukti or liberation in this life itself - a state devoid of all desires. One should annihilate by great efforts all sense of lethargy which is the land of all sorrows, the home of all dangers and the seed of the tree of Samsāra.\textsuperscript{43}

Swāmījī says that laziness, delay, carelessness are the synonyms of lethargy. Even as a bird requires both the wings to soar, deep devotion to God and scriptural discipline are necessary to purify the mind and to serve as principal aids to secure liberation. The former enables a person to approach the Lord and beg Him to remove the worldly bonds while the latter helps him to discard desires and cultivate knowledge of the divine. He who seeks only pleasures of the body because of his laziness can never be liberated. He who invites physical suffering will acquire merits. This can be explained by the following analogies: Just as butter cannot be extracted from milk without churning it and just as juice cannot be extracted from sugarcane without crushing it, so also, knowledge cannot occur to one who does not exert physical exertion. As long as one’s heart is not free from the impressions of sense, so long, he will be disqualified to have a direct perception of God. The Swāmījī says that he was hardly aware of any couple who have sacrificed
the world while enjoying the pleasures of sense, and avoiding the extremities of heat and cold. In Swāmījī’s opinion, only those who have borne the brunt of heat and cold, undergone many a suffering, abandoned all sensuous pleasures, and who have practised great penance, could be said to sanctify this world. Our ancient seers are standing illustrations of such people. The Swāmījī also cites the instances of Sri Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sri Rāmākrishna Paramahamsa, Mahatma Gandhi and Tarigonda Venkamāmba etc. in this context.

4. Human effort as a moral obligation

The Swāmījī in his essay on human effort, explained the significance of human effort having the Upanishads, Yoga Sāstras, Dharma Sāstras and the lives of great men as his ideal. Those who have faith in the existence of God, have taken Sri Rāma, Sri krishna as incarnations of God. Rāma, Krishna and Buddha are the principal among the Avathāras. Of all the teachings of Lord Krishna, Bhagavad Gītā reigns supreme. The crux of the Gītā consists in teaching that man ought to perform his own duties (Svadharma) in a disinterested way dedicating the results of his actions to Īshwara. Lord Buddha, who by his own self-effort and a great philosophical exercise could see the limitations of the Vedās and the Vedāngas taught that everyone should strive to attain a state absolutely devoid of pain and suffering called Nirvāna. The Swāmījī refers to Rāmāyana also, to explain the significance of human effort.* (He mentions that Sri Rāma’s explanation of the importance of human effort to Bharata). Men act in strict conformity with the results of the past actions. As such man is not free to act either in a good way or in evil way. The results of the past actions determine the course of his present actions. If God is

*The Swāmījī says that the verses are from Rāmāyana but they are not available in Vālmīki Rāmāyana.
considered important, all the teachings of the law of causation become superfluous. All the great people accord high place to human effort. Only those who are incapable of any human effort, become devotees of God. Everything manifests itself in the form of man and in the form of God. For the strong and the weak, Karma is always of two kinds: That which is the result of past actions and that which is the cause of present actions. Both of them will not be able to get true knowledge unless it comes to them as the result of their past actions. If a man were happen to reap a big result for a small action that he has done it must be presumed that the result must owe to a great action in the previous life. Some people say that the said great result is due to both the result of his past actions as well as the result of present actions. Sri Rama concludes by saying that one stands to reap the fruits of both Daivam and one’s human effort. This means that it is the characteristic of common people to be bound by the actions of the past, and the people with a wide perspective because of their human effort are able to go beyond the bounds of the actions of the past.46

The Swāmījī refers to ‘Muktikōpanishad’ in which Sri Rama teaches his devotee Hanuman, the indispensability of human effort, in an attempt to remove the doubts of certain people that human effort holds only to people adopting the path of Pravṛtti and it does not apply to people adopting the path of Nivṛtti.47

Here, by man adopting the path of Pravṛtti, is meant a person, who having disrespect for the liberation, and for the people who are aspiring to become liberated, under the impression that family life is the most important, performs actions to attain the pleasure of the senses. By a person adopting the way of Nivṛtti is meant, a person, who after
realising the futility of Samsāra in its ultimate analysis, and
doubting the usefulness of the actions aimed at the fulfilment
of desires, becomes detached and immerses himself in the
service of people and meditation on God. All the sufferings
of the kind, ‘I am not the subject’, ‘I am not the enjoyer’,
‘I am happy’, ‘I am the sufferer’, will cease, and through
this cessation of suffering, will be attained eternal Bliss and
this is possible by following sincere human effort.

The people of the world by practising the human effort
called Putrakāmeshtī, are attaining parenthood and they are
carrying wealth by practising cultivation, commerce, and by
doing various jobs. They are attaining liberation by practising
Jyotishtōmādi Yajna Karmas and the like. Similarly by sitting
at the feet of the Guru, and listening to the Upanishads,
and by reflecting on their meanings (Manana) and by getting
all the doubts eliminated, they are acquiring Jñāna or true
knowledge. Such human effort is of two kinds: (1) Utchāstrām
(that which transcends the scriptures) and (2) Sāstritam (that
which follows the Sāstras). 48 By the former, one goes to
hell and by the latter one gets liberation. By concerted human
effort one should annihilate the impressions of the results
of good and bad actions of the past. And by destroying
these past impressions, one can attain Amanaska Yoga which
is of the form of the eternal and the peaceful. Amanaska,
here means the substratum of Swa-swarūpa which means
a state of self-realisation.

In his Vivekachūḍāmani, Sri Sankara states that human
effort is an obligation on the part of man. The Swāmijī
also refers to some of the great people who have done
yeoman services for the betterment of the world, concerning
the significance of human effort. 49 Jesus Christ says “He
who searches for will get it. He who asks for will be given.
He who calls on, will be replied.” 50 Holy Prophet Muhammad
says "It is the duty of man to attain a state free from all misery. And it is also the duty of every man to believe in God, to know that Khurān is the divine duty, and to accept that Muhammad is the prophet of God." Lord Buddha states that "Every man has a right to have a critical examination of the Vedās and the end of the Vedās and to have the discriminative knowledge of truth and falsity". Sri Vyāsa at the very outset of his Brahma Sūtras says "Athāto Brahma Jñāsa." This means that human effort really means that one should by acquiring the qualities of Sama (Control of mind), Dama (Control of the external senses) etc. and reflect on the truth of Brahman. In his Yoga Sūtras, Patanjali writes "Abhyāsa Vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ." This means that human effort is the attainment of true knowledge which is of the form of Supreme Bliss by acquiring absolute concentration of mind which is possible only by inquisitiveness to know God and cultivation of detachment. From 'Kathōpanishad' we understand that Nachiketa by the great human effort, could learn the self-knowledge from the God of Righteousness (Yama).

According to Swāmījī, the Sāstric answer to the question as to why all people are not able to know the form of Divine knowledge if it is self-illuminous, is that it is because of lack of effort in that direction. No Sāstra tries to answer this question in any other way: in terms of Māya or Karma or in terms of Prārabdha Karma or ignorance. The Sāstra also informs that the transcendental method is also called transcendentalism, supersensuous or that which inaccessible to words, mind and sight. This is because mind and speech etc. are inanimate. All these are sentient only in the presence of this Atman. They can illumine the Self. The objects are illumined by the light and they can never illumine the light itself.
It is a well known fact that one who practises Yoga for about three hours time everyday will acquire some extra-ordinary powers. Practice of yoga for nine hours a day is called the best, practising it for six hours is called the middle way, and doing it for three hours a day is called the minimum. Unless one does it for a minimum of three hours, the self will not be enlightened. Even this minimum practice now a days is a rare thing. This is precisely the reason why any one in the present generation is not able to raise to the heights of our ancient saints and yogins.

References

2. Ibid., p.241.
3. Ibid., p.241.
4. Vikrama Charitra, 68.
   Dharmopanyāsamulu, Part-I, p.296.
5. Ibid., pp.297-300.
7. Ibid., p.80.
10. Lōkōddārakam, p.145.
13. Ibid., p.176.
   "Yatroparamate chittam Niruddham yoga sevayā,
   Yatrachaivātmāna tmanam pasyan Atmāni tushyati".

16. Ibid., p.264.
   Gitārdha Prakāsām, p.193.

   Patajali Yoga Sūtras, I.12. “Abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tan
   nirodhah” - They are restrained by practice and
   desirelessness.


   akarmanah”.

   nāsanam”
   Sankara explains ‘Jnāna’ as “knowledge of the self and
   other things acquired from the scriptures and teachers”
   and ‘Vijnāna’ as the “personal experience, anubhava
   or the things so taught”. Translated by S. Radhakrishnan,
   Bhagavad Gītā, p.149.

21. Ibid., XVIII.66.

   Swabödha Sudhākaram, p.259.

23. Ibid., p.259.


   Swabödha Sudhākaram, p.270.

26. Ibid., p.271.

27. Ibid., p.271.

28. Ibid., p.272.

29. Ibid., p.273.

31. Eshwara Kripa, p.211.
32. Ibid., p.214.
33. Ibid., p.215.
34. Ibid., p.217.
35. Ibid., p.223.
   Lōkōddārakamu, p.52.
39. Yoga Vāsīṣhtam, Mumukshuvyavahāra Prakaranam,
   fifth sarga, 4.
   Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.294.

**Daivam:** Providence: represents the non-human factor that interferes and disposes of human effort. It is the wise, all-seeing will that is at work in the world. In all human actions, there is an unaccountable element which is called luck, destiny, fate, or the force accumulated by the acts of one's past lives. It is called here Daiva.
(S. Radhakrishnan, Bhagavad Gītā, XVIII,14, p.356).
40. Ibid., Sixth Sarga, 12.
41. Ibid., Ninth Sarga, 40.
42. Ibid., Sixth Sarga, 32.
43. Amritabindūpanishad, 4.
   Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.315.
44. Ibid., p.309.
45. Ibid., p.338.
46. Swabōdha Sudhākaram, p.326.
47. Ibid., p.347.
48. Muktikôpanishad.
    Swabôdha Sudhâkaram, p.346.

49. Ibid., p.330.


51. Swabôdha Sudhâkaram, p.333.

52. Brahmasûtras, I.i.1.

53. Patanjali Yoga Sûtras, I.12.

54. Eshwara Kripa, p.15.
CHAPTER - V

SWĀMĪJĪ ON THE NATURE AND MEANS OF LIBERATION

According to the Swāmījī, if the people desire a life of peace and prosperity, they should equip themselves not only with material wealth but also with the knowledge of the Self. The position of man lies between the two extremes of the animal on the one hand and the divine on the other. The animals are satisfied with appeasement of the physical needs. But man is related to the physical body on the one side and God on the other. Whatever be the quantum of his physical satisfaction, man can attain the state of unceasing Bliss only when he secures peace for the self. Man is the product of the triple qualities of nature. Prakriti is also called Māya or Avidya. It is only in the state of ignorance and illusion man suffers with the thought that he is bound. As long as man desires for the objects of the world, so long his self remains in the state of imperfection. It is only from an immature self, desires generate. Moreover, the existence of pure or impure qualities of nature in the Antahkarana is instrumental for the birth of desires. The qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are products of Prakriti. Prakriti continues to exist for the individual soul, till it attains liberation. In Swāmījī’s opinion, the process of working out these qualities of Prakriti, and attaining a state absolutely devoid of them is strenuous and difficult. Though the self is a manifestation of self-luminous knowledge (Swaprakāsa Jnāna Swarūpa), it is limited to heart covered by ignorance (hridayāvarana) due to the impact of Karma.

According to the Swāmīji, the whole teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā from the beginning to the end, consists in enlightenment of the eternal nature of the Self and the ephemeral character of the physical body. He says that all seekers of liberation should not rest content with the
performance of the ordinary actions of merit or devotion to God, or meditation or renunciation or practice of Yoga or leading truthful life, but must continue their efforts till the very foundations of Prakriti are destroyed. He describes Brahmadhyasa or practice of Brahman as a state in which the mind assumes the form of Brahman or God resisting all temptations of sense. The pre-dominant presence of the qualities of nature drives the mind to run after the objects of pleasure. If one could by sustained efforts would gradually decrease the presence of these qualities, it could place itself in a state of stability in the self. According to the Swamiji, the people who have absolute devotion to God can easily make their mind turned to look within. In Swamiji’s opinion, Bhakti or Devotion is a means within the reach of all. He reminds us of the fact that in each and every chapter of the Bhagavad Gita it is said, that liberation is easily attainable by the means of pure devotion. In Bhakti Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita, it is unequivocally said that it is only by unwavering devotion to God, that one can cross the limitations of nature and qualify himself for the realisation of Brahman.

1. What is liberation?

Though the Swamiji expressed his views regarding ‘Nirvana’ at many places in the course of his writings, he wrote a work on ‘Nirvana Nilayam’ (The abode of Nirvana), exclusively meant for elucidating the concept of Nirvana. According to him, the Sastras clearly declared Nirvana, Nirvikalpa Samadhi, Brahmasakshatkara, Amanaska, Paripoorna, Jivanmukti, Videhamukti, and Atmasakshatkara are all synonyms of Nirvana. The Swamiji says the work ‘Hathayoga Pradipika’ mentions sixteen synonyms for Nirvana.

The use of the term ‘Nirvana’ is extensively used in the course of Buddhistic writings. The Swamiji says the
term ‘Nirvāṇa’ is also found at many places in the Upanishads, the ‘Bhagavad Gītā’, in Yoga Vāsishṭha’ and so on. An Upanishad called ‘Nirvāṇa Upanishad’ is listed as one of the 108 Upanishads (Ashtottara Sata Upanishads). The second half of ‘Yoga Vāsishṭha’ has a ‘Nirvāṇa Prakarana’ which contains 14,500 Slokas. Sri Sankara wrote six Slokas under the caption of ‘Nirvāṇa Shatka’. Both the orthodox and heterodox schools of Indian philosophy made use of the term ‘Nirvāṇa’. All the Schools of Indian philosophy agree on the essential meaning of Nirvāṇa as Moksha, Mukti and Kaivalya.

All accept ‘Mukti’ as freedom from the fetters of nature. It is true the Swāmīji says that there are differences of opinion between different religions regarding the nature of Mukti. But all people are unanimous in their conception of Mukti as liberation from Samsara, which is the cycle of births and deaths. All religions and the different shades of each religion agree on this point namely that ‘Mukti’ is freedom from the bonds of life and death, and the attainment of eternal Bliss, devoid of all sufferings. The Swāmīji refers to Amarakosha’s rendering of the term ‘Mukti’ as follows: ‘Dheevarga’ - “Muktih kaivalya nirvāṇa sreyo nisreyasāṁritam, moksho apavargah”. It mentions Mukti, Kaivalya, Nirvāṇa, Sreyas, Nihsreyas, Amritam, Moksham, Apavargah as synonyms of ‘Moksha’. The meaning of Nirvāṇa’s Dhātvardha is “Nirvanti, nirgaschanti, dukhaadayo asminniti”. All kinds of suffering are dissolved in the Nirvāṇa. That means that stage which is entirely free from all mental afflictions and fetters, and Avaranas pertaining to man’s ignorance is called ‘Nirvāṇa’. There is no recurrence of impressions of nature, impressions of past lives, the three qualities of nature, and the three kinds of Karma (Agāmi, Sanchita and Prārabdha) to such liberated beings. The Swāmīji says that if there is no any element of balance of karma, the soul can be said to be liberated.1
According to the Swāmījī all religions agree in rendering the meaning of Nirvāṇa, as Moksha or Liberation, despite differences of opinion between them regarding its nature and the means of obtaining it. He makes a mention of the definitions of Moksha or Liberation as offered in the different systems of Indian Philosophy.²

The Buddhists define ‘Nirvāṇa’ as a state of pure Bliss free from all mental afflictions and cycle of births and rebirths.

Sri Sankara describes ‘Mōksha’ as (“Vidwān Sāstrāchāryopadesa janita Jnāna dīpa prakāsitam Sadbrāhmaṇam pravisya nāvartate”) a state of realization of Self which is Brahman attained by an aspirant enlightened by the instructions received from the study of scriptures and listening to the great teachers and from which there is no return.

Sri Rāmānuja defines ‘Mōksha’ as the attainment of status in Vaikuntha by a liberated being - the status so attained being on a par with Sriman Nārāyana, the Lord of Vaikuntha.

Agreeing with Rāmānuja’s conception of ‘Mōksha’, Madhva, the founder of Dvaita system, says that different conceptions of nature of liberation are possible depending upon the different means employed for attaining it.

The Yoga system defines ‘Mōksha’ as a state of ‘Kaivalya’ attained by the Purusha after freeing itself from the fetters of nature.

Just as the flame naturally extinguishes as the oil dries up, so also, the individual’s ideas (Vāsanās) will vanish when the results of the past actions (Karmas) are destroyed. A state of Nirvāṇa is the status in which the individual soul realises its true nature after freeing itself from the limitations of Prakriti. Sruti says: ‘Na tasya prāna Utkrāmantyat traiva
samaivaliyante Brahmaivasan Brahma aptye. It means that the vital breath (Prāna) of a Brahmajñāni immerses itself in Brahman of the transcendental world. Thus the Brahmajñāni attains Brahmanhood by assuming the form of Brahman. By attaining the nature of Brahman, he becomes Brahman. Nirvāṇa means, freedom from all the pre-existing limitations, the past impressions, and the three qualities of nature relating to the individuals.

The Swāmījī refers to the presence of the term ‘Brahma Nirvāṇa’ in the course of the Bhagavad Gītā. He says in these places, the Gītā makes use of two expressions “Rishis” and “Kshina kalmashas”. Despite different meanings given the term ‘Rishis’ essentially mean as those who have supersensuous knowledge. ‘Kshina kalmashas’, means as those in whom all the impurities relating to ignorance and illusion are destroyed. Only, these two categories of people are capable of attaining ‘Brahma Nirvāṇa. The Swāmījī also points out at later times that Vemana also extensively used the term ‘Nirvāna’ as Nirvikalpa Samādhi’, ‘Brahma Sākshātkara’ and ‘Nirvāsana’ in essentially identical sense. The Swāmījī draws our attention to the account of Yoga Vāsishtha in this connection. Yoga Vāsishtha says that the seventh stage of Saptajñāna-bhoomikas (or seven stages of knowledge) namely ‘Turyaga’ is that which eludes all speech. Some people describe it as ‘Siva’ and some others say as ‘Brahman’. Still others, opine it as discriminative knowledge relating to the union of Prakriti and Purusha. Just as the birds break away from their eggs and fly out into the sky when they come of age, so also, the individual soul illumines itself as truth, knowledge and Bliss when it becomes free from all bonds consequent to perfecting itself in its efforts to attain liberation. The Swāmījī points out that by all this we have to understand that true knowledge of the self is not something to be attained in any other world but something
which can be realised in oneself,\(^6\) when the Antahkarana (inner equipment) becomes perfect. There is no time limit for the attainment of self-knowledge. It may take a little or a long time depending on the early or late maturation of the actions in previous lives. Anushtāna has to be ceaselessly continued till the attainment of Jivanmukti. This is the right instruction. And that is the truth. The Swamiji points out the 'Vedānta Panchadasi' (of Vidyāranya) also confirms this view. The Swāmījī refers Patanjali Yoga Sūtras: "Purushārtha Sūnyānām gunanām pratiprasavah Kaivalyam Swarupa-pratisthāvā chiti saktiriti".\(^7\)

It has been said that absolute freedom comes when the succession of the functioning of the qualities in the performance of their duties is over. Its nature is now ascertained. Absolute freedom is the latency of the qualities on becoming devoid of the object of the Purusha, or it is the power of consciousness established in its own nature. Absolute freedom is the becoming latent by inverse process, of the qualities, when they are devoid of the object of the Purusha, after having achieved the experience and emancipation of the soul.

Nirvāṇa is that which remains after the extinction of the mutually relative existents, viz., the seer and the seen. In other words, that state wherein the triple factors (Triputi) of the seer, the seen and the sight are destroyed is called 'Nirvāṇa'. Such a state of Nirvāṇa is the direct vision of Brahman. The Swāmījī describes the state of Samādhi as the state of Dhyeya which concealing the form of Dhyāna, which in fact evolves itself as Dhyeya when constantly practised, just as water conceals the form of salt when dissolved in it. But in Dhyāna, the Trio or 'Triputi' consisting of the meditator, the meditated and the meditation illumine. In Samādhi, only the Dhyāna (meditation) alone illumines.
This is the only difference between Dhyāna and Samādhi. The culmination stage of Nirvāna is extensively discussed in ‘Yoga Vāsishtha’.

2. Means of Liberation

The Swāmījī characterises ‘Mōksha’ in terms of total denunciation of the pleasures of the world. Bondage means desire for the objects of the world. All our contemplations of Brahman will not bare fruition in the absence of total renunciation. The Swāmījī observes that man is descending himself because of his failure to observe regular austerities, his entry into prohibited actions and his inability to resist the temptations of sense. In Swāmījī’s opinion, he who aspires to free himself from the cycle of births and deaths must be able to control his senses. To attain such a state of liberation or realisation of God, the ancient Rishis had taught us several means. And these have been classified into four kinds; Jnāna, Yoga-tapas, Yajna-Yāgas Nirmala Bhakti. An aspirant for liberation opts for any one of the above means of liberation consistent with his culture and in tune with the times. But it was universally accepted that liberation will not occur in the absence of pure devotion to God. This truth is elaborately discussed by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gītā. The Swāmījī observes that just as all the rivers become one with the sea, so also, the different means of liberation maintain their individual identity only upto the point of reaching the God.

(A) Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jnāna with reference to Bhagavad Gītā:

The Swāmījī now explains the factors instrumental for the purification of different kinds of physical body or sarira
and their relation to the attainment of knowledge. He says, the gross physical body is due to service rendered to the teacher and Vratānushthaṇa (austerities and rites), the subtle body is due to renunciation, compassion, and unwavering devotion, the causal body is due to meditation, Dhārana and Samādhi, and Mahākārana Sudhī (great causal purity) is due to philosophical inquiry into the great Upanishadic statements like ‘Tatvamasi’ and ‘Aham Brahmasmi’.  

With realisation of the last of the above, Self-knowledge illumines like the Sun with the disappearance of the clouds. Such Supreme Knowledge is attained by following the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. He is the best of men who himself follows the Bhagavad Gītā and makes others also follow it. Such people are the best of men for all times. This is the reason why Swāmi Vivekānanda has spread the philosophy of Dharma as stated by the Bhagavad Gītā, throughout the continents of the world. The Bhagavad Gītā has been translated into many foreign languages and the message carried to the people world over. Karma, Bhakti, Dhyāna and Jñāna are the base of Liberation. These four means of liberation are inherited by us, from our ancient Rishis. The remaining fourteen yogas of Bhagavad Gītā are included in these four. However, only these four are popular among the people. Of these four, Karma Yoga is considered by majority of people as the ideal of the Bhagavad Gītā. According to the Swāmiji, it is quite possible to comprehend the ideas of the Gītā, if we read the Uttara Gītā (the latter part of the Bhagavad Gītā). The Swāmiji adduces a reason for this. He says, a man’s life is usually classified into earlier and latter. Brahmacharya and Grihasthāsrāma states are considered as the earlier part and the Vānaprastha and Sanyāsa stages are considered as the latter part of human life. It is clear that Arjuna had received the Gītā when he was leading the house-holder’s stage of life which is the
earlier part of his life. When he was in the latter part of life, the Uttara Gītā was taught to him. For this reason, it is called Uttara or Latter Gītā. According to Bhagavad Gītā, Nishkāma Karma must be practised till the purification of the Antahkarana is achieved and this is to be followed by Jnāna Yoga. If any one of its legs is lost the cow becomes lame, likewise, if any one of these four yogas runs out of practice, God, incarnated himself for reinstating that Yoga.\(^9\)

In Śvāmījī's view Lord Buddha and Jesus Christ have descended on earth to teach the philosophy of Love and Sacrifice. Sri Sankara was born to strengthen the philosophy of Kevala Advaita. Lord Krishna Chaitanya took his birth to review the philosophy of Devotion. M.K. Gandhi, came to this earth to teach the philosophy of disinterested action. The Mission of Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa's life was to bring out a reconciliation of all religions of the world.\(^10\)

Four types of yoga are primarily mentioned in the Bhagavad Gītā. The third, the sixth, the twelfth and the fourteenth Chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā are of vital importance for those who are interested in disinterested action (Karma Yoga). Dhyāna Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnāna Yoga respectively. The seven Slokas commencing from the 13th to 19th in the twelfth Chapter of Bhagavad Gītā, describe the salient features of the great devotees. The Śvāmījī opines that these qualities of the great devotees should also be the qualities of any one who aspires from liberation. Only he who possesses these qualities will attain Brahmānhood.\(^11\)

The Śvāmījī says that the Vedā is composed of three Kāṇdas (three portions): Karma Kāṇḍa, Upāsana Kāṇḍa and Jnāna Kāṇḍa. In the same manner, the first six chapters of the Bhagavad Gītā teach Nishkāma Karma (Karma Kāṇḍa), the second portion consisting of chapters from seven to twelve teach Upāsana Kāṇḍa, and the third and the last
portion consisting of the last six chapters from thirteen to eighteen, teach Jnāna Kānda.

The Śvāmījī proceeds to enlighten us on the respective objectives of these different Kāndas of the Bhagavad Gītā. By the cultivation of Nishkāma Karma, the purification of the Anthahkarana (inner equipment) is attained. By the practice of Upāsana (worship), concentration of the Chitta can be attained. And finally by the reflection on Brahman which Jnāna is, the redemption of the self from the different layers concealing its true nature can be achieved.12

The Śvāmījī is of the firm conviction that the three great teachers of Vedānta - Sankara, Rāmānuja and Madhva are the human incarnations of God to spread the message of Jnāna, Upāsana and Nishkāma Karma of the Vedās respectively. Madhva teaches the body-mind purification can be realised by the practice of Nishkāma Karmayoga. Ramanuja teaches, by the practice of Upāsana (worship), the defects of the individual self can be removed. Sankara teaches by means of true knowledge Brahman can be realised.13

According to the Śvāmījī, actions are very subtle. That means, they are not easily understood. And the Yogas are of four kinds: Karma - Bhakti - Yoga - Jnāna. Of these four, Karma, Jnāna and Yoga are extremely difficult for realisation. They are exclusively meant for the philosophers because they have already attained the purity of the self. Those who have abiding interest in the physical objects of pleasure, can never attain true knowledge. In the avowed view of the Śvāmījī, only those who possess philosophical wisdom, those who know that the whole universe is pervaded by Brahman and those who have realised the futility of physical body alone are eligible for the knowledge as a means of realisation.14 For all the purified souls Bhakti and
Dhyana are easily accessible as means of realisation. By means of these two knowledge can be attained.

The Swāmīji says that the third Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is called Karma Yoga since the central theme of this chapter is the teaching of the philosophy of Karma. This chapter is essentially concerned with the way in which an action ought to be performed in order that we may reap happiness in this life and in the life beyond. He says that the word Karma does not mean the fetters of the life of Samsāra. All the actions done as effects of certain causes are included in the word karma. Not only actions done in the waking state but also all actions done by the subtle body in the state of dream constitute the content of karma. The Swāmīji draws our attention to the teaching of the Gītā that no one can remain absolutely inactive even for a moment. He also draws our attention to the Gītā teaching that an enlightened person who has become immune to all the pleasures of sense and is in constant contemplation of God is not bound by the law of karma. However, taking advantage of such a statements even people who are still bound by the pleasures of the senses, are leading a life of laziness bidding goodbye to all their own duties. This is the defective way in which many aspirants for liberation are becoming unprincipled. The Swāmīji cautions that India can attain a better status if only these people free themselves from these defects.

Usually there are said to be three kinds of Karma: (1) Kāmya Karma (Interested action), (2) Nishkāma Karma (disinterested action) and (3) Nishiddha Karma (Prohibited action). The results of interested actions have to be reaped in this life and in the life beyond. By practising disinterested action, the individual soul gets purified in its Antahkarana and becomes eligible for Moksha by the grace of God.
By performing prohibited actions, the soul is destined to suffer in this life, in the next life as well as in the life beyond. Though the impressions of these karmas are not perceptible, they reside in the individual soul in the form of subtle impressions. He who practices Karma Yoga with devotion to God, gets himself purified and attains the grace of God. This is disinterested action.\textsuperscript{17} Nishkāma karma is also known as action of the subtle self (Sukshmātmaka Karma). All kinds of karma pre-suppose duality. However, the action of the subtle self with disinterested action is non-duality, devoid of all bindings. The Śvāmījī is convinced that the building of liberation built with the four-stairs of Karma-Bhakti-Yoga-Jnāna will be stable if only laid on the foundation of the thoughts filled with the impression of dis-interested actions. If it were not so, the building is bound to collapse like a pack of cards by the winds of the triple bonds of the past, present and future.\textsuperscript{18}

According to the Śvāmījī, the individual soul has four kinds of status: They are (1) Happiness in the empirical world (2) Happiness in the other world (3) Status in Brahmaloka attainable by practice of worship and (4) Realisation of God or Samādhi (Trance) or Siva-Jīvaikya. Realisation of God is only possible by the acquisition of knowledge of Brahman. In the other three kinds of states, there is movement for the individual soul. But all movements cease, for the self when it attains liberation is freed from the physical body.\textsuperscript{19} The reason for this is Brahman is all-pervading. There is no reality other than Self. Due to adventitious conditions, it appears as many. At the time of the annihilation of the glands of the heart (Hridaya grandhi) and cessation of ignorance, there is the experience of oneness. This experience is Liberation. Śvāmījī says while in the Vedānta philosophy, the order of teaching the means of liberation is Karma Yoga, Upāsana or Bhakti Yoga, and Jnāna Yoga, one may get a reasonable doubt as to why
Bhagavad Gītā, after teaching Jnāna in second chapter, proceeds to teach Karma Yoga in the third chapter. The Śrīmad points out the precedence of Jnāna to Karma in the Bhagavad Gītā is indicative of the fact that one attains eligibility to practice Karma Yoga in the real sense of the term only after becoming truly enlightened. And if one does not understand the true status of the self he cannot escape the fear of death. Arjuna who was overcome by sorrow due to ignorance, became enlightened after receiving instruction in Śāmkhya Yoga and realised the imperishable immortality of the Self. This kind of instruction is called Atmopadesha or instruction in Self Knowledge. It was the desire of Lord Krishna, the Gītāchārya that this self-knowledge must be imparted by the instruction of the great teachers. In order that one may cross the sea of Samsāra, one must attain self-knowledge. It is this secret that is revealed by the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gītā.

After teaching Para-tattva first in Śāmkhya Yoga, the Gītā proceeds to teach in Karma Yoga as to how all people should be liberated and as to how the purity of Antahkarana can be realised. The Chief aim of Karma Yoga is that everyone in strict accordance with their stage of life should show restraint in matters of bathing, drinking, eating and sleeping. The Śrīmad points out that it is the avowed opinion of the author of the Gītā that it is against the canon of morality to refrain from one’s own duties. The underlying meaning of this is that one ought to perform righteous actions as social obligations even if he had reached the state of Jīvanmukti. The Śrīmad feels that the 19th Sloka of Karma Yoga is the most important.

(B) Eshwara Prāpti and Atma Prāpti:

The philosophy of Vedic advocates two means of liberation. The first one is realisation of Eshwara or Eshwara Prāpti. This is related to Bhakti Yoga. The second one
is the realisation of Self or Atma Prāpti. (Realisation of Brahman). This is related to Jnāna Yoga.

The path of Jnāna and the path of Bhakti appear to be different. But the difference is only in name. The goal reached by the Jnānin and the Bhakta is the same. If two persons start in different directions on a circular road, both of them necessarily meet at the other side of the circle. The Bhakta contemplates Eshrara to the exclusion of everything else, and by such singleminded love, he loses his individual identity as Jīva and becomes one with the Lord. The river after long meanderings joins the ocean and becomes one with it. The worm contemplates the bee constantly and is transformed into a bee by its exclusive attention towards the sound of the bee. Though the Bhakta starts with a dualistic attitude that he is the worshipper and the Lord the object of worship, as he progresses the distance between the two becomes less and less till at last the two merge into one. The Lord becomes the devotee and the devotee becomes Lord. The devotee realises the non-dual state of unity with the divine. This path is more easy and natural.

1. Eshrara Prāpti or Realisation of Eshrara:

Bhakti simply means love of God. It is inexplicable and boundless. The devotee finds joy in thinking of God. He has no relish at all for any kind of worldly pleasures. He is mad after God. Such Bhakti is said to be Supreme Devotion. Bhakti also means meditation on one’s own Self, i.e., the pursuit of the limited individual entity, Jīva, to discover his real identity with Brahman. Sri Sankara says “Swasvarupānusandhānam Bhaktir Itayabhidhiyate’’ - Meditating on one’s own Self is Bhakti.

According to the Swamiji, this Bhakti is of two kinds - Saguna and Nirguna.²² Those who have not perfected
themselves in Saguna (i.e., God with form) cannot reach the state of Nirguna Dhyāna (i.e., the formless Brahman). At first, practice worship following the Saguna aspect and then proceed to contemplate the Nirguna aspect. The archer in the early stages sets before him a well marked target and practices shooting at it when by long practice, his eyes become accurate and his fingers dexterous, he is able to shoot even at flying objects. So, the worshipper must first of all practice Saguna Dhyāna and after acquiring mastery in it, he can raise to the level of Nirguna Dhyāna. The great sages have prescribed the worship of images for the purpose of acquiring steadiness of mind. As the statement “Yat Bhāvam tat bhavati” i.e., what you think that becomes real to you. If one has perfect faith in any image that God is present to him, he will find that God showers on him all the rewards that he wishes for. The great people of epics and puranas as well of modern times are instances of this.\textsuperscript{23}

No doubt, Brahman is all pervasive, but He is invisible to the physical eye. He cannot be comprehended even by the human mind. He becomes visible to the human eye and comes into the field of human comprehension by taking a particular shape or form. We can understand this by studying electricity. Electricity is invisible energy. Its presence is felt when the current is made to pass through the bulb which shines before us. The shining bulb is the proof of the operation of the force of electricity. So also, the all-pervading Brahman i.e., the Supreme consciousness, takes a visible shape and form through the image that is worshipped by the devotee. Though the divine power and presence of Eshwara is everywhere, it is from an image that we can draw it out. The image may be insentient, but by the meditative power of the worshipper, it acquires a conscious power which flows through it. The black-smith pumps air through the rubber
puffers, and the fire burns bright. Similarly, by the force of the Devotee's meditation, the divine power is centered in the image. It is for this reason that the image or idol is addressed by several divine names during worship - "Kesavāya Namah, Nārāyanāya Namah, Sivāya Namah, Rāmāya Namah, Maheswarāya Namah" etc. No devotee worships the image saying "Dārave Namah, Darpanāya Namah etc. (i.e., O! Stone, I prostrate before you. O! Wood, I worship you etc.). The Lord appears to the devotee in that very form which the devotee has cherished in his mind and worshipped in the image. One can test it by his personal experience. The Swāmījī says that one cannot attain Nirguna before perfecting himself in Saguna dhyāna. The child cannot comprehend the sound 'A' unless it is written down in a visible form on the slate. So also, a fixed form is very necessary to understand and comprehend the formless spirit of God. The Saguna aspect gradually melts away in the Nirguna, even as salt is dissolved in water or the worm becomes the bee.

If there is no merit of Image-worship, why should the great sages establish temples of worship in different places all over India? Swāmījī answers that sincere devotees derive the greatest benefit from worship in those sacred places. The sages are conscious of their mental power, but still they have established and practised image-worship for the benefit of the human race. Single minded devotion to God is necessary for Liberation. Without oil in the can, the lamp cannot burn and give light. Therefore, fill the can of your heart with the oil of devotion to God, and true light will dispel the darkness of ignorance. True understanding of the Divine is impossible for any one however great he might be, except by the royal path of Devotion, and humble self-surrender. Devotion to God is the highest pre-requisite for Self-realisation.  

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II. Atma Prāpti or Realisation of Self.

This is related to Yoga and Jnāna. Without Yoga, it is very difficult to attain true knowledge or Jnāna. But the Yoga Sāstra says that it is dispensable for those who have detached themselves from the objects of sense, for great devotees for those who have attained supreme Bliss by means of mental peace and for those who have attained absolute concentration in Dhyāna. Śvāmīji refers to in this context Sankara who has dispensed with the practices of physical exercises in Hathayoga (for the otherwise sedentary yoga) and concentrated on yogic practices like Prānāyāma (Regulation of Breath) and some other postures. Śvāmīji feels that Sankara perhaps thought that these would suffice for self-realisation. The Śvāmīji briefly explains here the functions of these Prānāyāma. Prānāyāma purifies the nervous system of the physical body. With this the respiration system gets cleaned and the heart is supplied with pure blood. This process permeates in mental peace, control over the senses, good health, and concentration of the mind. The Swamiji also says that through Prānāyāma, one can also attain superhuman powers.

He says that one can discern renunciation, knowledge and yoga in many great people. All the aspirants of liberation have to fix their attention on these three - Vairāgya, Jnāna and Yoga. By means of yoga, one can attain Jnāna very quickly. By Jnāna liberation can be attained. The Śvāmīji illustrates here the relation between mind and vital breath. If mind were to be stable, the vital breath will not be disturbed. If mind moves, the vital breath moves. The Śvāmīji says the reverse also is true viz., if the vital breath were not to move, the mind also would not move. By this, he means, that if any one of these is controlled, the other is automatically controlled. In his work on ‘Bālayogini’, the Swāmīji, besides
his teachings on **Karma** and **Bhakti**, also writes on '**Yoga**'. Without yoga or yogic experience, resistance to heat and cold, the mental concentration needed for reflections on Brahman, will not occur. In every chapter of Bhagavad Gītā, the word ‘Yoga’ is used. The Swāmījī reminds us of the expression of ‘Yogēswara’ attributed by ancient seers to Lord Krishna, the Gītāchārya. “Evamuktwa tato rājan Mahā yogēswaro Hariḥ”\(^{28}\) (Having thus spoken, O! king! the great Lord of Yoga).

Therefore, the Swāmījī instructs that everyone ought to cultivate yogic practices. He draws our attention to a common usage of the word yoga, as when we say referring to somebody’s fortunes or misfortunes, ‘Oh! his yoga is like that’. By this extensive use of the word yoga, one can understand the all-pervading influence of yoga.\(^{29}\) Yogayukto munirbrahma nachirenādhigacchati’. From this we can understand that the sage who extensively practices yoga, will attain true-knowledge in a very short time. From the Lord’s use of the expressions, at the end of each Chapter - “Bhagavad Gītāsu, Upanishatsu, Brahmavidyāyām, Yoga Sāstre” - it is very clear that Brahman Knowledge can be attained only by the practice of yoga. The Swāmījī vouches for the effectiveness of yoga, from his own experience of his yogic practices. He states that he had the unique opportunity of practising yoga for a long time with the blessings of the great Rishis. All the authors of yoga are of the unanimous opinion that liberation is not possible in the absence of yoga. The Swāmījī says that yoga is the instrument by which the highest knowledge can be attained. He also says that in the case of all aspirants for liberations the yogic practices must precede the pursuit of true knowledge. According to the Swāmījī, celibacy, diet control and loneliness are essential requisites for the practice of yoga.\(^{30}\)
He elucidates the greatness of yoga by referring to the great men of the past who had practised yoga. These are the great names of Vasishtha, Viswāmitra, Parasara, Matchyendra, Dattātreya, Goraksha etc. He also refers to the great women yogins. In this connection, he mentions the name of ‘Sulabha’ of Mahā Bhārata, who by her great yogic powers, dismayed even the great king Janaka. She had acquired the extra-ordinary yogic powers of assuming any physical body she wished. She attained these divine powers with the help of great seers whom she served on the hills of Satasringa. The other great women, the Swāmīji refers to is ‘Choodala’ of Yogavāsishtha who assumed the form of ‘Kumbhamuni’ and gave instruction to her husband king Sikhidwaja in Brahman knowledge. All such psychic powers are due to yoga. The Swāmīji says that the practisers of yoga have two courses open to them. They may either attain some extra-ordinary powers and receive laurels from the world or they may stay in the state of Nirvikalpa Samādhi for a long time.

The knowledge of self can be attained by the yogin within himself which is already established in him in course of time. This, according to the Swāmīji is the reason why Lord Krishna says “Tatwayam Yoga samsiddhah kālenaatmani vindati.” Here, Yoga is spoken of as the means and Jnāna as the end. The Swāmīji says that this is also the view of Hathayoga. However, according to him, even if yoga were to be perfected, the highest status which is the locus of the Bliss for the self can never be attained in the absence of Bhakti and Jnāna. The expression ‘Jnāna tapasa’ used in the tenth Sloka of the fourth Chapter of Bhagavad Gītā, is indicative of the fact that one ought to become the manifestation of the divine by means of penance and self-knowledge. He feels that ‘Karma tapas’ is only a culture of the physical body. On the other hand, ‘Jnāna
tapas' is the means by which many people had the vision of God. Therefore, Swāmījī advocates that we should all possess Jnāna and Tapas. The purification of the body and its senses is possible by Tapas and the purification of the self is to be had by Jnāna. Such Brahman knowledge is to be acquired with the help of great teachers and great souls. In the same chapter, the expression 'Tattvadarsinah'\(^{35}\), according to the Swāmījī, connotes the truth that only the philosophers of self-knowledge can impart knowledge. God can only grace his devotees. But Jnāna is something which the teachers can bestow only when they are approached in time with reverential attitude and service and by carrying out their orders. This is how Lord Krishna elucidates the qualities of a teacher. This is how we understand the kind of knowledge that the Lord intended to teach.

Brahma Jnāna is described as knowledge of the self in all living beings as essentially the same, i.e., the realisation that all living beings are in him and he is in all living beings. All other knowledge is called 'Karma Jnāna'. In the state of perfect knowledge, there is only one God, when all Drisyā (world of objects) is dissolved in Brahman, all the distinctions between the subject, the object and the action cease to exist. The Swāmījī describes perfect knowledge of God-realisation as the knowledge that there is absolutely nothing, not even an Anu (Atom) other than Brahman.\(^{36}\) Just as for one who sees a snake in a rope, the illusion ceases on the verification of the presented object as a rope, so also, the illusory knowledge of the world in Brahman ceases on the realisation of Brahman. Despite the fact that Lord Krishna teaches that Karma Yoga can be an independent means of Mukti, the author of the Bhagavad Gita, has included Jnāna Yoga in the fourth Chapter just to show the result of Karma yoga.
Truly speaking, the Swāmījī says, all these - Yoga, Bhakti, Nishkama Karma - were evolved to purify the Antahkarana to qualify to receive Brahma Vidya.\(^{37}\) Brahman appears only after the mind is purified and detachment towards the objects of the world, is achieved by means of these three yogas. This according to the Swāmījī is the secret truth of the Śāstras. When we reflect on the life history of each of the great men we are bound to realise the fact that they all got Supreme Bliss, divine realisation and liberation only after practising meditation, continence and penance.\(^{38}\)

The Swāmījī claims that while he was meditating in Gogarbha cave on Tirumala Hills for self-realisation, he had a revealed knowledge which he gave expression to in his discourses in later times. He emphatically declares that he would vouch for the truth that if any one could practise perfect Brahmanishtha for twelve years, he is bound to have self-realisation. This is the difference between the present generation of practitioners and ancient sages. The kind of Dhyāna practised by the present aspirants may have achieved linguistic perfection of the Mantra but has not made much headway into their meaning. If meditation can be done with purified heart, even for a short while, realisation of the self is possible. All the hours, days, years of meditation should not be counted. Sixty minutes of complete super-awareness only counts as one hour of meditation. Such sixty minutes count as an hour and such twenty four hours make a day. Unless and until there are twelve years of such full super-awareness in one birth or many births you cannot merge your consciousness and become one with all-pervading super-awareness. All the other years of Sādhana do not count. The possession of symbols like leaving Samsāra, living in forest, renunciation, practising silence, and the like is no guarantee that people have succeeded in their efforts to realise themselves. He has truly realised
himself who weeps over even a loss of moment’s time in his reflections on God. It is such a person who can be said to be really renounced. Such a person can be said to realise God and attain liberation in this life itself.\textsuperscript{39} According to the Swāmījī, Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa and Meerabai are the standing illustrations of such great souls. This is the reason why Patanjali, the author of Yoga Sūtras says "Trirasamvegānām āsannah’’\textsuperscript{40} - ‘Proximate for those whose consciousness of supremacy is keen.’

For the man who has attained Brahma Jñāna, there is no Samsāra as before. If there is, he is not a knower of Brahman. Like all other people, he is a Bahirmukha i.e., a man who lives amidst the shadows of the external world. It means that so long as the mental vibrations (Vrittis) do not subside, there is no perception of the Reality. When there is no such perception, naturally it follows that his mind is externalised and bound by the senses and sense-objects. This is said by Sankara in Vivekachūḍāmani.\textsuperscript{41}

3. Jīvanmukti

The Swāmījī says that the term ‘Jīvan-mukti’ has two meanings. Firstly, it means liberation while the physical body is still alive and the second one is the attainment of liberation by the self. The question arises, as to what is that from which the self gets liberated? From the root meaning Moksha, ‘Muchl’ = ‘Mokshane’, it is clear that Moksha means freedom from bondage. The question again arises as to what does freedom from bondage mean? There are many statements in the philosophy of Vedānta which declare that it is freedom from Avidya or Ajnāna or Samsāra. On reflection, it appears that all these are only synonymous terms. The Swāmījī says that many teachers and Sadhus basing on the statement “Prārabdham bhōgato nasyet” say like this: This physical body is created by Prārabdha karmas or actions of the
past life. They are of the opinion that good or bad is experienced till the existence of the body, and liberation occurs consequent upon its destruction.\textsuperscript{42} This is the reason why experts of Brahman knowledge by paying least attention for the cultivation of the qualities of Sama, Dama and the like, are possessed of qualities unworthy of Brahma-nishthas. The Swāmījī says that this is a very dangerous trend. It is because of this trend of wrong thinking, the Swāmījī feels that some seekers of liberation and Sādhūs are conducting themselves in accordance with their qualities of nature with least effort to reform themselves by the cultivation of good character.\textsuperscript{43}

Firstly, only one who possesses the qualities of Sama, Dama and the like is eligible for inquiry into Brahman. All the Vedāntic works begin with an enquiry into Brahman. Secondly, the Swāmījī points out that there are some people who are of the opinion that of the three necessary pre-requisites (for Brahman enquiry) i.e., Vairāgya (Renunciation), Bōdha (Knowledge) and Uparathi (Aversion from the disturbing actions), it is enough if one has knowledge only, and the non-possession of the remaining two will not stand in the way of attaining liberation. But the Swāmījī feels otherwise. He says that the acquisition of true knowledge or Jnāna is itself conditioned by Vairāgya and Uparathi and therefore, the view that knowledge alone suffices as a means of liberation does not hold water. The obstructions in the way of knowledge emanating from the absence of Vairāgya and Uparathi are of three kinds. They are (1) Obstruction of the Past (Bhoota Pratibandha), (2) Future Obstruction (Bhāvi Pratibandha) and (3) Present Obstruction (Vartamāna Pratibandha). It is declared that the cessation of the "triple bonds" must occur while the self is still alive in the physical body, as otherwise the knowledge that is accrued will be indirect (Paroksha) and not direct
(Aparoksh).\textsuperscript{44} The same truth is expressed by Sri Vidyāranya, in his work entitled in ‘Dhyāna Deepa Prakarana’ of “Sri Vedānta Pancha Dasi”. Sri Vidyāranya says that liberation is possible only after the annihilation of the triple bonds, and will not simply follow the death of the physical body. Be it in one life, or many lives, liberation occurs only after the triple obstacles are totally removed. If the aspirants after liberation and Brahmanishtas are aware of this truth they will be trying to remove these obstacles in their way. If they are not aware of this fact, they are likely to fall into danger labouring under the impression that all the triple obstacles in them are only results of the past actions (Prārabdha Karmas) and that they will vanish with the destruction of the body resulting in the self-liberation from merits and demerits.\textsuperscript{45} The Swāmījī points out that if it be said that this physical body dies with the destruction of Prārabdha karma, even the physical body of a Brahmanishta must die soon after the destruction of Prārabdha karma. Swāmījī argues, if liberation is ensured by the mere death of the body, even the animals must become liberated as soon as they die. The Swamiji says the philosophy of Vedānta cannot agree to this. The ideal of the Vedānta is Jīvanmukti as that phenomenon of liberation from Hridaya-grandhi which is of the form of ignorance while the physical body is still alive.\textsuperscript{46} The Swamiji clarifies that here the term ‘grandhi’ means a ‘knot’. Just as an animal is tied by a rope, so also, the individual soul is tied by the ropes of Avidya, Ajnāna and Māya. Just as the animal is not set free as long as it is tied, so also, the self tied by the triple obstacles will not be liberated from Avidya or ignorance. The Swāmījī says that it is for this reason that in ‘Saiva-āgama’ Lord Eshwara acquires the name ‘Pasupati’ or the master of animals. Here there are three things: (1) Pasu (Animal), (2) Pāsam (Thread), and (3)
Pati (Master). Here, the allegorical meaning for animal is self, thread means bondage, and master means Eshwara. It is the doctrine of the Saiva-āgama that the self will join Siva after the destruction of the individual self’s bonds of Samsara by the grace of Eshwara.

According to Brahma Sūtra, whether the consequence of Brahma Vidya, which is the realisation of Brahma, is possible in this life or will wait till death. It is therefore, an established conclusion that knowledge originates either in the present or in a future life, in dependence on the evanescence of obstacles.

According to the Swāmījī, the expression “Prayatnādyatamānastu” used in the 45th Sloka of sixth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā, connotes that if one were to be a Yogin, putting in a lot of effort with great determination he would free himself from all impurities and will have achieved an objective realisable in a series of lives. The Swāmījī draws our attention to the fact that the above conception of the Bhagavad Gītā, makes it clear beyond all shadow of doubt that even one who inquires into the philosophy of Vedānta will not be able to realise Moksha till all his sins and all kinds of obstructions are destroyed. The Swāmījī also says that the use of the expression “Aneka Janma Samsiddhah” in the same Sloka referred to above, makes it clear that liberation need not necessarily occur in the next life and it will occur only after all the obstructions are totally annihilated, be it in the course of one or two or many subsequent lives. When it is said that liberation may come only after many lives, it does not mean that one has to necessarily take many briths. If one were to labour under such impressions, he may become sceptical and may not be able to get liberation at all. The meaning of all this is that one has to comprehend that Jivanmukti
is possible only when all obstacles are removed with all the determination and discipline. And therefore, one has to continue Anushthana till the three kinds of obstructions are totally removed. The destruction of the said obstacles is due to the cultivation of qualities of Sama, Dama and so on, and Sravana, Manana and Nididhyāsana. Consequently, one attains Brahman-hood. The Swāmījī points out that the central point to be understood here is that enlightenment after philosophical investigation will not suffice and realisation of Brahman, is possible only after the destruction of triple obstructions.50

4. Qualities of Jivanmukta

The Swāmījī now proceeds to elucidate the qualities of Jivanmukti. It is difficult for any one to fix the qualities of Jivanmukta, because those men who have realised the self fall into different categories and classes. Though Self-realisation is the same for all, their behaviour may be different. In a way, the Jivanmukta is beyond all qualities i.e., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. His state is Supreme. He is fully conscious at all times of his true nature.

It is said that the enlightened person with Self-knowledge though leading the house-holder’s stage of life is not distracted by the objects of the world. This is very much like butter, extracted from curd which though lying in butter milk, still maintains its identity. This fact is recognised by all Brahmanishthas. Some people, whether they are in the state of Brahmacharya or in the state of house-holder’s stage of life or leading a life of renunciation will attain liberation depending on their past impressions. All the liberated souls are free from nature i.e., they are free from all objects of world. Moreover, the enlightened soul considers all objects of sense as poisonous. A really enlightened soul is untouched by all pleasures of sense. Thus the Jivanmukta appears in
different ways and one should be more careful to understand his super-normal state. He is free from any trace of imperfection. But all the Jīvanmuktas do possess certain high qualities of character. Without these, no one can be called a Jīvanmukta. The Swāmījī enunciates the following salient features of a Jīvanmukta: (1) Food, sleep, bath and other normal duties are just the same for a house-holder as well as a Jīvanmukta. But there is a vast difference. Two fruits may have the same colour on the surface, but their tastes may be quite different. So also, though the outward activities are the same, yet the Jīvanmukta is free from likes and dislikes (Raga and Dvesha) in all these matters. (2) He does not indulge in wordly pleasures like sleep, and sex, as the common house-holders. He has discovered the highest treasure within himself, and so he does not at all care for the foolish pleasures of the worldly man. (3) He does not decide to start any kind of work. If he does, the work is only intended for the welfare of mankind. It is not like the work undertaken, by house-holders for personal enjoyment or gain. (4) He regards all beings as himself. So, whenever any suffering comes to any being, he gives them protection even at the risk of his own life. (5) He does not desire anything because he has realised his oneness with all. And since, there is nothing besides himself, he does not hate anybody or anything. (6) If any person wants anything, the Jīvanmukta tries to secure it for him even with some trouble for himself. Otherwise, he is not satisfied. (7) By nature, he is full of pity and compassion. (8) He has no relish for the company of worldly people. (9) He regards others like himself. (10) He sacrifices his own pleasure to secure the happiness of other people.51

Such qualities of character and conduct are found among great spirits of all times and countries, irrespective of their race, nationality, caste, creed and sex. The Jīvanmukta enjoys
the freedom of sovereignty. There is nothing more delightful than perfect silence, stillness of mind, brought about by complete cessation of all the modifications of the mind caused by Vāsanās (Impressions of the past.) He drinks the immortal Bliss of self-realisation. Thus the Jīvanmukta moves about the world, at all times and under all circumstances enjoying the Supreme Bliss of Brahman.

The Swāmījī draws our attention to the fact that there is a tradition of Ativarnāśrama or Avadhūtāśrama. He says that some people in the name of Ativarnāśrama, advocate doing everything and eating everything. The Swāmījī refers to them in his “Sushka-Vedānta-Tamo Bhāskaram”. Only a few of Brahmāvettas are practising this. This is a great stage. If one really attains this stage, he is free from all suffering. For these Avadhūtas everything appears as a manifestation of Brahman and all distinctions of purity and impurity, honour and humiliation, heat and cold, clay and gold, and men and women, cease for them. In the eighth chapter of “Avadhūta Gītā” by Śri Dattatreya the salient features of Avadhūta are explained. Having struck down the immortal self, and the non-dual and infinite experience of liberation, the empty talker, who indulges in useless talk of Vedāntic doctrines for the purpose of maintaining his body will become ruined. This is the warning given by Śri Dattatreya. The name Avadhūta refers to highest order of monks. Of course, several names are used. Those are Sanyasi, Rāja Yogi, Jñāni and Jīvanmukta. The difference is only in the name. Their experience is the same. It is said by great devotees and by the seers who have understand, the meaning of the Vedās and Vedānta, that the word ‘A-VA-DHU-TA’ can be understood by properly knowing the meaning of the four syllables which compose the name of ‘Avadhūta’. Each syllable has a significant meaning and it was elaborately discussed in the ‘Avadhūta Gītā’ of Śri
Dattātreya. Avadhūta refers to the great sages who have thoroughly examined their personality and found out the secret of the extremely subtle distinction between the ‘Purusha’ and ‘Prakriti’. They know that the five-fold prāna, the five organs of action and the five instruments of perception, and the five elements composing the sense objects, the mind and intellect, the ego (I-thought) and the twenty four tattvas, are all of them within the realm of Māya (Illusion) and he is the witness, the eternally pure and self-effulgent Self. In otherwords, it means that the Avadhūta has discovered the illusory nature of everything which is our object of perception before the eternal self. He knows that he is the Self. 53 Such high qualities of character and conduct are found among great spirits of all times and countries irrespective of differences of race, nationality, caste, creed and sex.

The word ‘Sanyāsa’ has a similar meaning. ‘Sanyāsa’ means separating oneself from all illusory things. The path followed by him is the method of negation (not this - not this). He negates everything, till in the last analysis, he arrives at the residual something which is known by the name Atman or Brahman. He identifies himself with that pure awareness which is his real nature. This is the meaning of Mahāvākya “Aham Brahmasmi”. 54

Similarly, the word Rājā yogi has special meaning. The word ‘Rajat’ means ‘shining’, ‘pure’, ‘ultimate’, ‘yoga’ means union with the self-effulgent, pure ultimate and eternal self. So, the Rājā yogi rejects all that is non-self and merges in Paramātman. 55

Thus the Jñāni throws out all that is product of ignorance (Avidya) and Māya (illusion) or Prakriti and realises the pure consciousness which is Brahman. That is the meaning of “Prajñānam Brahma” - Consciousness is Brahman. 56 An
adept who has realised this Truth is spoken as of a Jīvanmukta, the Living Free. Such a man has understood the real meaning of the Mahāvākyā “Tattvam asi” - ‘That art Thou’. He knows that by the power of Avidya, he has been all along under the delusion that he is the body and the twenty four modifications of the body and mind. After long introspection, and analysis, he arrives at the ultimate Truth that he is none of these ephemeral and illusory things, but that he is Brahman.

The practiser of Mauna Yoga (observer of silence) liberates himself by realising the truth “Aham Brahmasmi” (I am Brahman) by meditating on the ultimate reality by means of listening to the teacher, abiding to the Sāstras, and following his own experience.

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CHAPTER - VI
A CRITICAL ESTIMATE

The present generation owes its debt of gratitude to innumerable saints and poets who had contributed excellent scriptural works to make people tread the path of virtue. From Vyāsa, Vālmiki and Kālidāsa, and scores of other eminent men, down to the present - day scholars, they have all adored God, asking people to uphold righteous way of life. His Holiness, Sri Malayāla Swāmījee has been probably one of the finest exponents in recent times of the true ideals of Indian philosophy and the Hinduism in general and the idealism of the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gītā in particular. It goes to the real credit of the Swāmīji to have carried the message of Vedānta to the minds and hearts of the masses of the Telugu speaking areas of the Andhra delta. Irrespective of caste, community and sex, the Swāmīji taught the people in such simple straight forward language the message of the Upanishads, the Gītā, the Yoga Vāsishtha, and other sacred scriptures. His magazine ‘Yathārtha Bhārati’ which proved most popular and his innumerable books are a standing testimony to his native genius and acquired talent.

Sri Malayālaswāmījee has not remained a mere idealist. He had a real concern for the masses of this country not only for their deplorable material conditions of living but also for their total lack of discriminative knowledge and sense of values. The Swāmīji has been a great diagnostician of the ills and evils of our age and all that he taught and practised was aimed at reaching the very core of the problem as a measure of transforming this world to make it a better place to live in. Even a causal glance at the teachings and the writings of the Swāmīji would unmistakably reveal that most of the evils that our present generation is afflicted with can be traced to our failure to understand and appreciate
the true import of our Sāstras and other sources of ancient literature. In Swāmīji’s opinion only right knowledge and right direction can extricate the modern generation from disquieting circumstances.

1

Religion in India is not dogmatic. It is a rational synthesis which goes on gathering into itself newer and newer conceptions as philosophy progresses. It is experimental and provisional in its nature, attempting to keep pace with the progress of thought. The common criticism that Indian thought by its insistence on intellect, puts philosophy in the place of religion, reveals the rational character of religion in India. It is as much true to say that no religious movement has ever come into existence without developing as its support a philosophic content, as to say that all philosophy, anywhere in the world takes its origin in religion. Havell observes: “In India, religion is hardly a dogma, but a working hypothesis of human conduct, adapted to different stages of spiritual development and different conditions of life.”*

What is said above precisely brings out the Swāmīji’s attitude towards religion. In his view whenever religion tended to crystallise itself in a fixed period, there were set up spiritual revivals and philosophical reactions which subjected beliefs to crucial criticism, vindicated the true and combated the false and the spurious. Again and again, the Swāmīji tries to reveal how when traditionally accepted beliefs become inadequate or false, in view of changed times and circumstances and the age grows out of patience with them, the insight of a new teacher, a Buddha or a Mahāvira, a Vyāsa or a Sankara, a Dayānandā or Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa supervenes, stirring the depths of spiritual life. In Swāmīji’s opinion these are doubtless great movements

* Havel : Aryan Rule in India. P.170
in the history of Indian religion, times of inward testing and vision when the soul of man makes a fresh start and moves forward for a new venture, a new religion. In his view it is the intimate relation between the truth of philosophy and the daily life of people that makes religion always alive and real.

The Swāmījī was always proud of being an Indian and a Hindu but he was neither a narrow nationalist nor a dogmatic Hindu. He was deeply influenced by the cultural values as preserved in the Hindu scriptures, purāṇas and epics and felt that unless these values were revived and Hindu society was purged of all the dirt and filth spread in the name of customs and traditions the Hindus as a race would be extinct. Love of all men regardless of sex and caste were the basic doctrines of Hinduism. The Swāmījī felt that revival of these values could not only bring a new life among the Hindus but could also guide the Human race on the path of peace and universal brotherhood. That is why the Swāmījī translated the Bhagavad Gītā and wrote many works and articles and reinterpreted many of the basic doctrines of Hinduism to defend his stand on the religious and social problems. He wanted to evolve a synthetic social philosophy on the basis of Vedānta as Vivekananda did.

He wanted to provide a rational basis for Hinduism condemning all its irrationalities. The Swāmījī was a great champion of freedom and a great lover of Humanity and that is why he pleaded for a world religion. He did not believe in the existing formalistic religion of the Hindus, and introduced his conception of ideal and inspirational religion based on humanism. For him, the practual expression of such faith must always be in ethical conduct, and education to the good of the society. A close examination of the Swāmījī’s writings and teachings will not fail us to be reminded of the two great reformist founders of Arya Samāj and Brahma Samāj namely Sri Dayānanda Saraswati and Rājārām
Mohan Roy respectively. The Swāmījī himself refers to in the course of his writings these great names and unhesitatingly expresses his great admiration to them for extraordinary achievements that they have effected in theory and practice. No wonder we find amazingly interesting points of similarity between the Swāmījī and these founders of contemporary religious movements. We do find the master teachings of these great movements clearly reflected in the teachings and deeds of the Swāmījī. The most important among these is Dayānanda’s interpretation of the Vedās, condemning the earlier interpretation of them by the older Vedic scholars, such as Sāyan and Mahidhar. Dayānanda has not only criticised but has condemned their interpretation because these commentators have seen in the Vedās some of the most inhuman practices, such as animal sacrifice and Sāthi. They supported idol worship, caste distinction, child marriage and discrimination against woman on the basis of the Vedās, all of which Dayānanda ruthlessly rejected on the basis of the very same Vedās. We find that essentially the same trend pervades the writings of the Swāmījī fighting against traditions and customs carried over the centuries in the name of Hindu religion and philosophy. His work “Sushka Vedānta Tamō Bhāskaram” is a monumental contribution in this regard and may be compared to Swāmījī Dayānanda’s Rig Vedādi Bhāshya Bhoomika.

II

The Swāmījī’s teachings on the doctrine of karma and its implications emerge as his finest contribution to this crucial doctrine in the gamut of Indian philosophy with the singular exception of the materialist Chārvāka. The heterodox (Nasthika) systems of Jainism and Buddhism and all the Shad Darsanās repose their implicit faith in the law of karma and based the validity of their ethical and metaphysical teachings on this fundamental presupposition.
The Swāmīji’s contributions to doctrine of karma consist not so much in his assertions regarding its universal validity as in his attempts to erase from people’s minds many of the misconceptions shrouding the real meaning and the implications of the doctrine. The oft-repeated western criticism against the doctrine is that it leads to fatalism, meaning that the person under the impact of the law looses all sense of free will and ceases to be active. The critics have gone to the extent of asserting that India’s great failures in the past and most of the ills in the present are the direct result of the sceptical attitude of the people which itself is an out growth of the law of karma. More often than not, the Swāmīji himself arrives at the same conclusions indirectly suggesting that these western critics have a point to make. He agrees with their conclusions but differs from them in his premises. The sole aim of the Swāmīji in his teachings on the law of karma is to clarify the nature of the premises. In Swāmīji’s opinion the faith in the law of karma or an eternal moral order inspires optimism and makes man the master of his own destiny. It enables the Indian thinker to take present evil as consequence of his own action, and hopes for a better future by improving himself now. There is room, therefore for free will and personal endeavour (Purushakāra). Fatalism or determinism is, therefore, a misrepresentation of the theory of karma. Fate or destiny (Daiva) is nothing but the collective force of one’s own actions performed in past lives (Pūrva-janmakritam karma). It can be overcome by efforts of this life, if they are sufficiently strong just as the force of old habits of this life can be counteracted by the cultivation of new and opposite habits.

III

The founders of philosophy and religion strive for a socio-spiritual reformation of the country. When the Indian civilization is called a Brahminical one, it only means that its main character and dominating motives are shaped by
its philosophical thinkers and religious minds, though these are not all of Brahmin birth. The idea of Plato that philosophers must be the rulers and directors of society is practised in India. The ultimate truths are truths of spirit, and in the light of them actual life has to be refined. The Swāmīji's efforts to spiritualise the society by ridding of all its ills and evils is to be appreciated in this true spirit. The revolutionary changes that he contemplated and strived for, stemmed from his rationalistic approach and a correct appreciation of the teachings of the Sāstras, the purānas, the epics, and above all the great teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā. We thus find in him a fine blend of reason and authority in the enunciation of principles and theories in every field of his intellectual and social activities. He proved himself a man of great courage and conviction judged from the social conditions in which he lived and worked.

The Swāmīji has given supreme importance to his exposition of the conception of Caste (Varna) and duties of the caste (Varna Dharmas) as he was really convinced that the traditional concepts in this regard have done untold damage and destruction to this country through centuries. The Swāmīji goes even to the extent of saying that these traditional concepts of caste and caste system based on birth is one of the major and principal causes of the country's coming under the foreign yoke, and being ruled for centuries by a small nation like England. He also goes further and attributes the failure of the nation on several fronts - economic, scientific, political and social - to this system of caste which takes the birth of a man, not his inherent qualities as the criterion of one’s caste.

The concept of caste which is peculiar to the Indian society has done more harm than help over the ages. It came long back to stay and has survived through the ages
with all its repercussions on the country. It is high time that the views of the contemporary Indian thinkers like that of the Swāmījī on these burning social issues be given great prominence and propagation as a measure of instilling a new spirit and a new awareness in the people's minds. On the eve of Independence, a few decades ago, the country under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Pundit Nehru have chosen the democratic way of Government. After passing through a few general elections, and experiencing the quality of governance at the Centre and at the State levels, irrespective of the political parties in power, even the common man has not failed to realise what democracy means for this country. People are divided not on principles and programmes but on caste, community, region, religion and what not. Man is not respected as a man and duties are assigned to men not in terms of their equipment to discharge the duties but in terms of what they are supposed to be qualified due to their birth in a particular caste. In Swāmījī's opinion, religion or caste must be forced to unite and construct not to divide and destroy. And this would be possible only when caste is understood in terms of the inherent qualities of nature namely, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. It is true that all these qualities are present in every man with the difference that one of these qualities prevails over the other two, indicating the predominating quality as the true criterion of one's nature. As the Swāmījī's theory of caste is already dealt with extensively the present researcher feels that it is suffice to say here that the Swāmījī's conception of caste is rational and progressive. It reminds us of the great philosopher Plato who in his magnum opus the 'Republic' classifies the Human society into philosophers, warriors and the working class. The classification is made on the basis of the predominating quality assigned as the chief characteristic of each class. The qualities are reason, courage,
and appetite. Plato arrives at this by his beautiful analogy of the human organism. The human organism consists of three parts: The head, the heart and the appetite including the organs of sex. The reason is the essential quality of the head, the heart is the seat of courage, and the stomach and the sexual organs are the locus of sensuous pleasures. The philosopher, the warrior and the worker are clearly distinguished on the basis of the predominant presence of reason, courage or appetite, respectively. The Swāmījī’s theory of caste also reminds us of F.H. Bradley’s concept of “My station and its duties”. According to Bradley, an individual realised the ultimate good by discharging the duties accruing from his ‘station in life’. The theory presupposes that each individual knows what his station in life is and the duties there of. But when questioned as to what is the real basis on which this classification can be rationally understood, Bradley has no answer. But in the case of the Swāmījī, the answer is very clear. It is by reference to the specific quality of Prakriti - Sattva, Rajas or Tamas, the caste of a man is to be decided. According to the Swāmījī, the country has been subjected to slavery by the most despicable theory of caste that only Kshatriyas should take to arms, Brāhmanās only should teach and the remaining castes should spend their time in the service of the higher castes. When for instance, there is war and the country has to fight the aggressor, it is not the people belonging to or born in a particular caste called kshatriya that should fight but all the able bodied persons in the state irrespective of their caste should be called upon to fight the invader. In fact, the present military system in Swāmījī’s view is precisely following this criterion in our country and has therefore proved itself one of the best in the world as was evidenced in some of the recent encounters with the neighbouring countries. It is well known what criteria that one has to satisfy in order to enter into the service of
the army. What Swāmījī feels is that had this kind of awareness and practice been present in the past, our country would never have disintegrated itself and fallen into the hands of petty aggressors and invaders.

He also feels greatly satisfied at the turn of events and a new situation in which his theory of caste is gradually gaining ground in other aspects of Indian society. Is it not because of the learning of the English language the people belonging to all the four castes are finding themselves equally placed and competent in the discharge of their duties in all the constructive and nation-building activities? He asks. Had this kind of thing been there even in earlier times, the Swāmījī feels the country would have taken a different shape and stature in the world, economically, scientifically, and militarily.

The Swāmījī’s rationalistic approach to social problems is also most evident in his efforts to establish the root cause of the evil of untouchability so rampant in the Hindu community even up-to-date and the corrective measures he proposes for the eradication of the evil. This is one of the great ills of Hinduism that concerned and agitated the mind of the Swāmījī. He directed his efforts in search of the real or the most probable factors instrumental for the origination of the evil at some point in the course of Hinduism. In this case, as in the case of every other social or individual infirmity, the Swāmījī wanted to cure the disease by removing the factors causing it rather than grappling with the unpleasant phenomena symbolic of the disease.

What then, is the Swāmījī’s diagnosis of the present problem and the remedial measures that he prescribes? It is well known that it is the Harijan community that is subjected to the evil of untouchability. It is true that the Harijans being mostly the working class are physically well built. It is not also uncommon that some of them have some landed
property. It is also true that some of them are becoming highly educated and occupying high positions. By all counts there are certainly many other sections of the Hindu community who are far below the level of Harijans either in the matters of standard of living or in the possession of material benefits. These are the people who eat the jackals, the cats, the frogs, and some other mean creatures. No Harijan ever eats them. Why then, these people of scheduled tribes are never considered as untouchable and Harijans alone are singled out in this regard? The Swāmījī feels that this is the real issue that we have to reflect on. Through the ages the cow has been the object of worship for Hindus. The Hindus worship the cow as the Deity. The conviction among the Hindus that the killers of the cow are Chandālas and great sinners, is deep rooted. This also precisely is the reason why there had been many clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims. This kind of analysis of the social situation by the Swāmījī drives him to the conclusion that the real reason for treating the Harijans as untouchables and excommunicating them is the fact of their eating cow-meat. Anticipating a possible objection as to why the Muslims and the Christians who are also certainly eaters of beef are not considered as untouchables, the Swāmījī clarifies that this is so for the simple reason that they are not Hindus. In Islam and Christianity eating cow-meat is not considered a sin. The Christians and the Muslims never participate in the Hindu Vedic rituals like Yajñās or sacrificial fires, study of the Vedās, idol worship and so on.

Having diagnosed the root cause of the evil, the Swāmījī comes out with his solution, consistent with his most rational approach to the whole problem. In his avowed opinion the real solution rests with the Harijans themselves. He calls upon the Harijans to decide on the basic question: Are we the Hindus or people belonging to a different religion? Once they decide that they are Hindus, they ought to give
up the cow slaughter and eating the cow-meat. And if this is realised, the Harijans would raise themselves to the status of an integral part of the Hindu society, and untouchability and excommunication would be given a descent burrial, as there would remain no other consideration or criterion for their being discriminated from the rest of the community.

In the matter of widow marriages, the Swājījī subscribes to the views of contemporary Indian thinkers and social reformer like Sri Rājārām Mohan Roy, and Sri Kandukūru Veeresalingam who vehemently argued that it was illogical and unethical to discriminate between men and women in the case of remarriage as they both are equal in God’s creation. The Swāmījī denies any scriptural or Sāstric evidence against remarriages for women. There can be no philosophical reason to punish one and excuse another when both commit the same sin. The Swāmījī unhesitatingly calls upon the widows to get married once they feel that they cannot withstand the pressures of celibacy and have to yield themselves to the sinful acts of illegal intercourse, and abortion. But, on the other hand, if these women have a strong desire to leads a life of purity and peace they had better remain celibates. This equally holds good to men also. No Sāstra compels a widower to necessarily get married again. It is therefore to be known for definite that the Swāmījī’s views on the social evil of prohibiting widows to get married, is thoroughly scientific and rational.

Another great misconception prevalent in people’s mind through the ages and the Swāmījī wanted to erase was that women and people belonging to lower castes have no arhata or qualification to receive instruction in Brahma Vidya. Of course, this necessarily follows from his monumental contribution to the theory of caste system. He challenges those who argue in that way to show him any authority in any of the Scriptures or the Sāstras or any other source of Indian literature for their theory. He unequivocally states
that it is, as in the case of many other things, the mischief played by interested and selfish people who always felt education and enlightenment to all irrespective of caste and sex would be detrimental to their own status and interest. In his avowed opinion, the knowledge of Brahman is the birth right of every human being as a means to extricate oneself from bondage. It is one who suffers from ignorance or lack of knowledge that needs Brahman knowledge. And such a one may be from any of the so called four castes. All those who have the qualities of compassion towards living beings, devotion to God, sense of humility, and purity of heart are eligible to inquire into the nature of reality. This, in Swāmījī’s opinion is the definite view expressed by the Vedās and all the Jīvanmuktas.

The Swāmījī is a very powerful advocate of Vegetarianism. He does not argue for vegetarianism on any sentimental grounds but purely on rational basis. He says that a vegetarian does not stand to any disadvantage when compared with non-vegetarians, as all the nutrients for a balanced or harmonious development of the human organism are available in plenty in the different items of vegetarian food like different food grains, vegetables, fruits and so on. It is no surprise to know that there are many people in different countries of the west who have actually taken to vegetarianism due to the same considerations as the Swāmījī has expressed. It is true that his advocacy for absolute vegetarianism stems from his commitment to the practice of non-violence and Ahimsa as meat-eating necessarily involves slaughter of the animals. The Swāmījī is a high priest of Ahimsa which forms an integral and inseparable part of his ideal of Humanism and Spiritualism. But he, as one with a deep understanding of the human limitations and weaknesses, prefers to appeal to people to turn as vegetarians even on empirical grounds. The Swāmījī’s appeal to the people of his times had gone a long way in making
people give up non-vegetarian food and turn vegetarians. The Swāmījī’s whole approach to the problem of food habits is justified in view of the recent discoveries of bio-medical scientists that many of the items of non-vegetarian food prove more often than not to be instrumental for deadly diseases like cancer. It is also proved beyond doubt that vegetarians are more alert and sharp in their intellectual efforts than their counterparts.

IV

The Swāmījī’s extensive discussions on the significance of human effort for life in this world as well as hereafter follows as a logical off-shoot of his concept of freedom of will. In his view procrastination, forgetfulness, idleness and dosing are factors which ruin a person’s life. He reminds us of Lord Krishna’s admonition to Arjuna when the latter disarms himself in the battle field of Kurukshetra expressing his grief over the plight of fighting his own kith and kin. The Lord asks Arjuna as to how he has lowered himself to this despicable status which is only opted by the uncivilized, abandoned by all those who seek happiness in this world and in the world beyond and which is highly shameful. The Swāmījī tells us that these words of the Lord are indicative of the mean qualities of the people who give up self-effort and cease to be active. In another Sloka the Lord calls upon Arjuna to give up sorrow and prepare himself for the discharge of his Swadharma. Arjuna’s affair is cited as an illustration of the Swāmījī’s teaching that it is only for the one who does his duty and his part of the task assigned to him that deserves and in fact receives God’s help and protection. The Swāmījī’s great teaching in this regard is his clarion call to all those who just take shelter under the law of karma and resign themselves to the feeling that the inevitable will happen, to awake and arise. One who is idle and inactive can hardly meet even the minimum demands of his physical needs. If so, how can one aspire
for the Summum Bonum of life, the terminus of all enquiry and the object of all meditations? The Swāmīji āks. The Swāmīji's teachings need to be introduced in all our educational institutions for making our pupils realise the real implications of self-effort and to activise them to strive for the highest glory in whatever field of activity they lay their hands on in the course of their educational carrier and later in the field of their real lives. The Swāmīji's conception of spiritualism essentially consists in the outlook which prevents the Indian mind from ending in despair and guaranteeing its final optimism. This firm faith which finds an eloquent expression in Swāmīji's teachings is an eternal moral order dominating the entire history of Indian philosophy barring the solitary exception of Chārvāka materialist.

V

The conception of Liberation received great importance in Swāmīji's teachings. Spiritual pursuit for him is a way of life, not merely a way of thought. What is specially noteworthy in Swāmīji's case is that he takes the concept of Liberation as such and views the difference between the orthodox and the heterodox schools of Indian philosophy in this regard as not of much consequence. According to him, though Jainism and Buddhism may differ in the substance of this theory from the orthodox schools, they are all at one in teaching, Vairāgya or renunciation. He asserts the term 'Nirvāna' is not the prerogative of Buddhism which is found at many places in Hindu Scriptures and Purāṇas.

However, Swāmīji's leanings towards the Advaitic theory of Mōksha cannot go unnoticed. According to him Liberation is not the production of anything new nor is it the purification of any old state; it is the realisation of what is always there, even in the stage of bondage, though not known then. For Mōsha or Liberation is nothing but the identity of Self and Brahman, which is always real though not always recognised. Though the liberated soul, being perfect has no end to achieve,
it can still work without any fear of further bondage. The Swāmījī, following the Bhagavad Gītā, holds that work binds a man only when it is performed with attachment. But one who has obtained perfect knowledge and perfect satisfaction, is free from attachment. He can work without any hope of gain and is not, therefore, affected by success or failure. The Swāmījī attaches great significance to Nishkāma karma. For one, who has not obtained perfect knowledge, such a work is necessary for purification of the self, because, it is not through passivity but through the performance of disinterested action that one can gradually emancipate oneself from the influence of the ego and its mean interest. Even for one who has obtained perfect knowledge or liberation, disinterested action is essential for the good of those who are still in bondage.

The liberated man is the ideal of society and his life should be worthy of emulation by the society at large. Inactivity or activity that would mislead the people should, therefore, be eschewed by the enlightened. Social service is not, therefore, thought by the Swāmījī to be incompatible with the Jīvanmukta’s life, but rather desirable. In his own life of intense social service, the Swāmījī scrupulously follows this ideal. This ideal is also advocated by some eminent modern Vedāntists like Swāmi Vivekananda, Bālagangādhara Tilak and Mahātma Gāndhi.

The Swāmījī practised meditation on Pranava or chanting of ‘OM’ as a principal means during his penance. It was his great ambition to attain identity with Parabrahman, the object of Pranava by means of meditations on ‘OM’. In this aspect, the Swāmījī was highly influenced by Gaudapāda’s Māndukya kārika whose essential teaching consists in the consideration of ‘OM’ as the fundamental Truth, the Ultimate Eternal, the All-Pervading Conscious Principle. ‘OM’ not only indicates the spiritual centre in the individual but also represents at once the total Spiritual reality behind the delusory
concept of the world of plurality. The Swāmīji was also influenced by Lord Krishna’s imparting great significance to Pranava in the eighth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā in his teachings to Arjuna. In Swāmīji’s opinion ‘Pranava’ is also the essential teaching of ‘Katha Upanishad’. In fact, not only the particular duration of his penance, but the Swāmīji’s whole life is pervaded by the sound of ‘OM’. It has been the consistent teaching of the Swāmīji to his devotees to emancipate themselves by meditating on ‘Pranava’. In Swāmīji inquiry through the seeker is asked to concentrate upon himself, through a process of detachment from his body, mind and intellect he is ultimately guided to the Spiritual Centre latent in himself. This technique should not be construed as an attempt to realise the godliness in the individual as distinct from the Satanic imperfections all round. Realisation of Atman, or the rediscovery of his Self includes and incorporates the total realisation of the All-pervading Divinity.

VI
The distinguishing feature of the Swāmīji is that he takes the Bhagavad Gītā, as Mahātma Gāndhi does in modern times, as the basis of his authority in the enunciation of his principle teachings. It was his conviction that all the teachings of Buddhism, Christianity, Islām, Upanishads, Smritis, Purānās, Epics and Yoga put together are no better than the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā alone. Such is the high esteem in which the Swāmīji holds the Bhagavad Gītā. He agrees with Swāmi Vivekānanda who acclaimed it as the greatest religious exposition in the world. In Swāmīji’s view the greatness of the Gītā is illustrated by the fact that it is recited by the ordinary folk of men and women as well as by the leading saints who have extraordinary supersensuous powers with the same fervour and with the same commitment.

‘Sanātana Dharma’ is an important concept in the teachings of the Swāmīji and one which he tried to make the people
understand in its correct perspective. The definition of ‘Sanātana Dharma’ (Eternal religion), according to the Swāmījī is “Not coming in the way of the others who seek self-emancipation; to help the others in that search, the best of one’s ability; and to avoid the people and the things that obstruct one’s self-realisation - this is the aim of Sanātana Dharma.” The Swāmījī says that the term Sanātana dharma has been a much misunderstood expression. The term Sanātana was taken to stand for a set of dogmatic traditions or as a synonym for Brähminism. It is true that even today the very mention of the word Sanātana is hated by many of us. But in Swāmījī’s opinion the real connotation of the term Sanātana takes us to transcendental heights and means nothing short of the highest form of self-knowledge. He says that true knowledge of the Self is Sanātana Dharma. Those who realised the true nature of the Self by discriminating it from all that which is not-self are the real renouncers of the world and the real exponents of Sanātana Dharma. Thus the Swāmījī identifies Sanātana Dharma with the Self itself and exhorts people to strive for the acquisition of its knowledge. The essence of a religion does not consist in symbols and rituals. These are transitory and ephemeral. Such passing phenomena cannot be Sanātana. Sanātana Dharma is the attainment of such absolute concentration in the Self, i.e., Brahman which is all-pervading and remains as an eternal witness.
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