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THE TRUTH OF HINDUISM

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Essays

By

T. Raghavaiah

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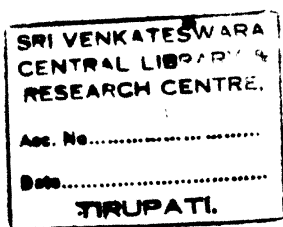
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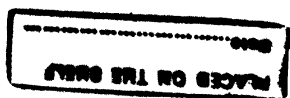
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FOREWORD

As butter is obtained from milk, the truth I have extracted from the books has been meditated upon and tested by experience from a universal angle, and is presented in this book of five essays.

As the live red coal is covered by a thin layer of white ash, and is surrounded by dark smoke, the clear and eternal truths contained in the Scriptures and the Ethics have gone down and are hidden in the many dark layers of superstitions and age-old customs passed on from generation to generation. My sincere attempt to record the truth of Hinduism in this book is just similar to fanning off the ash and smoke to see the bright, pure and red fire.

The truth of Hinduism presented in this book is only to be read and grasped by the lovers of truth and the selfless thinkers; an introduction to this book is quite unnecessary. This is in short "Geetha Saram".

I have thought it proper to dedicate this book only to the sincere readers of a sincere intention to learn the truth, and hence I have recorded the dedication in favour of "Truth".

I have taken pains to present this most important and valuable material in as simple a language as possible, for the sincere reader should not have any language hurdles and ambiguities in directly and easily understanding the contents of this book.

THE AUTHOR

Bhakti Yoga (The Path of Devotion)

(The Last Word)

Catch this truth :

The love shown towards elders is termed as "**Bhakthi**" in Sanskrit, which approximately means "**Devotion**" in English. The love of the elders shown to the children or the young is said to be "**Anuraga**" (affection), "**Karuna**" (compassion) or "**SANUBHUTHI**" (sympathy).

"**Bhakthi** or **Love**" is the most supreme word in any language, for it is in that word that the culture and civilisation of the race are kept or expressed. "**Love**" is a word used to mean commonly both **Bhakthi** and **Anuraga**. Love is the bond of culture, humanism, sympathy and kindness to all, universal brotherhood etc. It is this unique quality of love that sublimates the ordinary human being, and which transforms man into a superman with an intention to dedicate his actions and services for the good of the society and which finally makes him a divine personality. Divinity is the purest goodness of a super human being.

"Daivam" (divinity) is otherwise termed as "Bhagavantham" which means "all in the universe" (Charachararupa). Divinity is the state of feeling one with the universe; it is the feeling of surrender and selflessness. It is the feeling of surrender (**Sharanagathi Bhava**) to the Omnipresent Life-energy (The Eswara or the Vaishnava energy) which is responsible for the birth, existence and death or decay of any being or thing. The feeling of oneness with the universe with the spirit of surrender and selflessness is "**Vaishnava samslesha Bhava**" which is the real "**Bhakthi**

Bhava" or Devotion. This "Vaishnava samslesha Bhava" is the bliss or "Moksha Bhava", which we learn from the life and teachings of the Alvars (The Vaishnava devotees of sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth centuries). The readers with interest may go through the book, "Alvarula Divya Vaibhavam" written by the author of this book both in Telugu and English.

The omnipotent Life-force or energy, which is eternal and constant, and which is responsible for the birth, the existence and the end of every natural aspect, presents itself to us, at different conditions and circumstances, in diverse ways, sometimes as welcome and auspicious, sometimes as peaceful and loving, sometimes as happy and comfortable (The *Siva* aspect) and sometimes as fierce, dangerous, and destructive (The *Rudra* aspect). A real *Bhakta* (Devotee) receives both these two contradictory aspects with equanimity and composure in his *Advaita Bhava* (the feeling of oneness with the universe which is the Vaishnava Samslesha Bhava) and receives and enjoys both the aspects with elation, awe and respect. Therefore this *Bhakthi Bhava* is the best way of life. It is scientific in understanding nature and creation, and is happily emotional in its reception and enjoyment.

Nature or creation is "*Anadi*". "*Anadi*" means having no beginning. That is, its beginning cannot be traced. It is *Anantha* i.e. having no end. It means its end cannot be expected or imagined. The period of its existence is undefined and uncertain. Hence creation is said to be "*Adimadhyantharahitha*". (without a beginning, a middle and an end). It is so with the Vaishnava force, the omni-

present energy.

Man from aboriginal times, lakhs and lakhs of years before he produced the first scriptures, had always been thinking about the creation and the creating force or the creator. The man, who had not the knowledge of psychology, had been wondering at and exploring the reasons through deep meditation for birth, death, dreams, hallucinations, insanity, emotional inspirations etc. In course of time man was afraid of the powers of natural forces, *The Pancha Bhutas*, (The five aspects of nature, the mighty sun and fire, the wind and the atmosphere, the sky or the never ending space), and he began to worship them to save himself from their excesses and to enjoy their advantages for his comforts. He worshipped both the *Salva* aspect (auspicious aspect) and the *Rudra* aspect (the fearful and destructive aspect).

The man, who had been worshipping forces of nature in the beginning, began later to imagine the presiding gods for the natural forces, like the Goddess of Earth, the God of ocean and rain, the God of fire, the God of wind, the Goddess of Sound etc. (*Bhudevi, Sagaradeva or Varuna, Agni Deva, Vayu Deva, Akasavani* etc.) and began to worship the plurality of Gods and Goddesses. This was common with all races, with small differences, of this mighty world.

Idol worship came up later as a worship of Gods and Goddesses. These idols commenced with some type of stones fixed in the ground with varying shapes, the *Linga* (a cylindrical stone with a semi-global top fixed in the ground) being the latest to appear more decent and meaningful. As

the puranas (Epics) gave descriptions of Gods and Goddesses in human forms with changes in appearance, number of legs, number of heads, the weapons, the crowns etc., man's artistic abilities in drawing, painting and sculpture found expression in preparing gods' idols with stone, metal or wood. Temples were constructed in course of time and idols were installed in them, and idol worship is still in vogue in so many forms, methods and rituals according to literature like the *Agamas* (the scriptures of worship and prayer).

The idol worship in olden times was practised by all the races with some changes.

As far as our country, India, is concerned, by the time of the Vedic period, long before the Christian era's beginning, there were worships to natural forces; there were worships and prayers to plurality of Gods and Goddesses; there were worships and offerings, ranging from fruits, oils, some valuable things, birds and animals and even human beings, were presented to the gods to achieve their (performers') desires.

It was only in the Upanishadic period, a long time after the Vedic period's commencement, that the Indian sages evolved the belief in one God and monotheism. Though they declared in the Upanishads that God supreme was the God of gods, they did not discard the minor plurality of gods. Hence worship to God supreme (the omnipresent) was advocated without putting an end to diverse worships to plurality of gods. Though Upanishads indicate that God is omnipresent, omnipotent and incomprehensible, yet a form of God continued to be conceived of by man. Though

the sages enumerated one thousand names to God as per God's qualities (SAHASRANAMAVALI = a chain of one thousand names), yet common belief in a form or image persisted. The BHAKTHI BHAVA (Devotion to God or Divinity) continued in surrender to the universal life-force as well as in an emotional and mental contact with the God's form with all its glory. The devotees and the mystics enjoyed bliss in this mental experience.

The omnipresent (VAISHANAVA) life-force or energy is described in "Svethasvatharopanishad" (6-17,18) like this:-

1. "He is the inner soul of this universe; He is the Lord, eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent; He is the ruler, the protector, the permanent. There is none other than this Soul Supreme (PARAMATHMA). who keeps the universe a -going". (He-pronoun in the masculine gender is used figuratively for this mighty force and universal energy - this should be noted carefully.)

2 "I, with a sincere desire for release from worldly bondage (for Moksha), surrender to that God Supreme, the God of gods, who, at the time of creation, created the BRAHMA first and gave him the Vedas (knowledge), and who enlightens my mind and will."

The first para above is just the substance of the VIBHUTHIYOGA of THE GEETHA, wherein all the aspects of the omnipresent energy (The Easwara or Vaishnava force) are given. This helps the comprehension of God, the omnipresent force.

The second para above is the same as the "Charama sloka" (the last and the most important stanza) of the Geetha

advocating SURRENDER to God to be able to live in the feeling of MOKSHA (Relief from bondage).

The Geetha is the essence of all the Upanishads (The vedantas) and it is the last testament on spiritual knowledge and code of conduct; And the charama sloka of the Geetha is the last and the most important sloka, which was discovered as such for the first time by Yamunacharya, the spiritual teacher or Acharya of Sri Ramanuja in the eleventh century. You know Sri Ramanujacharya (1017-1137 A.D) was the propagator of the "Visishtadvaita Siddhantha" of The Indian or Hindu Vedanta.

As the charama sloka of the Geetha is so important, I am hereunder transliterating it from Sanskrit to English for the spiritual benefit of the readers who do not know Sanskrit :-

**"Sarva dharman parithyajya
Mamekam sharanam vraja ।
Ahamthva Sarvapaapebhyo
Mokshayishyami ma shuchaha" ॥**

The above same sloka is presented below in Devanagari script

**सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकम् शरणम् व्रज ।
अहंत्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥**

The following is the literal meaning of the Charama sloka :-

"Even though you abandon all other Dharmas (Principles), you do surrender to me (the only God). I shall

remove you from all sins and grant you, release from bondage (Moksha)".

From the above literal meaning of the Charama sloka, the following effectual and real meaning shall be grasped :-

Even if all the Dharmas (principles enunciated in all the eighteen chapters of the Geetha) you may not be able to follow, follow this Dharma, which is the Dharma of the Dharmas, namely, surrender to the omnipresent (This is upaya or the means). That is, become selfless.

In that case you will be removed from all possible sins, and you will dwell in a state of Bliss or "moksha", which is release from all bondage and attachments. You need not be sorry or worried. You can be sure of Bliss. (This is Abhaya, an assurance and an encouragement)

"Selfishness is the cause of all desires and ambitions, which are in turn the cause of all sins. There are no mistakes or sins which a selfless person can commit. The selfless person is unattached; he is a "Karmaphalathyagi" who acts for the good of the people and the world. Such a person is always blissful".

This is the essence of Hinduism, the essence of Geetha, the Last Testament, the essence of all the vedas and the upanishads.

Sri Venkateswara Idol of Thirumala Thirupati is a symbolic representation in sculpture of the "Charama sloka of the Geetha" with one hand of the idol indicating "Saranagathi Bhava" (the idea of surrender) and the other indicating assurance of salvation. The worship to Sri Venkateswara Idol

is just to understand the meaning of the Charama sloka. The Idol of Sri Venkateswara has no superstition about it. It is not a mere stone; It is not an image of God, whose form is unlimited and undefined and incomprehensible. It is a highly educative symbolic representation like the script.

If Lord Krishna, the Geethacharya, is the giver of the Charama sloka of the Geetha, the Idol of Venkateswara is the giver of the meaning of the Charama sloka. If the former is the "Charmaslokapradata", the latter is the "Charmaslokarthapradata". With this knowledge and wisdom the real Bhaktha or Devotee worships the idol of Lord Venkateswara and gets inspired for a selfless life and gets assured of Moksha or salvation, the state of blissfulness.

The symbolic representation of the meaning of the Charama sloka through the idol of Sri Venkateswara (with the hands of Upaya and Abhaya) was organised by Sri Ramanujacharya in the eleventh century. You know that Sri Ramanuja was the propagator of the Visishtadvaita philosophy and the Thirumantra. (the Ashtakshari Mantra which is the shortened form of the meaning of the charama sloka. "Om Namo Narayanaya is the Ashtakshari Mantra.)

The charama sloka of the Geetha is the real religion, the religion of religions. Religion is realisation of the truth, the truth of creation and the truth of Bliss.

So the essence of Hinduism as per the Geetha is SURRENDER; the essence of Christianity is surrender and repentance- sincere repentance alone gives rise to the sense of surrender. The word, Islam, means SURRENDER, All great sages thought alike in the matter of Ethics; Buddhism

is selflessness which gives rise to kindness and service - selflessness again gives rise to the sense of surrender; The preachings of the propagators of socialism all over the world, are based on the principle of selflessness to the extent possible to enable a person to feel and understand the principles of equality.

It is to understand the wisdom of the charama sloka that one should read with proper understanding all the eighteen chapters of the Geetha. The scholarship and knowledge of a scholar, who can lecture about Geetha without stressing the meaning of charama sloka as selflessness and surrender, are useless. Since the time of composition of Mahabharatha by Vyasa, in which the Bhagavath Geetha is kept, the scholars and the religious Gurus had been studying and propagating the stories and morals of the Maha Bharatha without catching the main point of "A life of surrender and selflessness". It was only in the eleventh century that Yamunacharya, a spiritual genius, for the first time, discovered the charama sloka of the Geetha, and gave a twist to the religion that religion is meant for sympathy and social service. It was Yamunacharya's spiritual heir, Sri Ramanuja, who propagated the principles of surrender and social service through his Visishtadvalta Philosophy. It is not enough even if a scholar preaches the meaning of the charama sloka as surrender and selflessness if he does not actually live a life of surrender and selflessness. Otherwise he is an ignorant man. You must or can lecture from the platform about the principles which you are actually following, the principles which you have correctly realised.

It is funny that some scholars speak about how to realise God! Have they realised God? Beggars! Bankrupts they are!! Hypocrites!!!

The meaning of the "Charama Sloka" has been clearly and elaborately given in the BHAKTHI YOGA of the Geetha. We have to understand it clearly and be guided by it. Is a BHAKTHA (Devotee) a person of activity? Is he a renouncer of actions (KARMA SANYASI)? Is he a determined hero of action? Is he an idler? Does he engage himself always in uttering the names of God, Sahasranamavali? Does he engage himself in pursuit of actions of social service? Does he wish for his salvation? or Does he work for the salvation of all? Think well and calmly about these contradictions! You can think well and understand the difference only if you are selfless!! The required qualification to understand philosophy correctly is selflessness. A selfish man is a blind person, unable to see the truth.

After Visvarupapradarsana yoga, the Geethacharya taught "Nara" the Bhakthi yoga.

(Here "Geethacharya" stands for the Omnipresent Vaishnava Energy; or it can mean a real Acharya or teacher who identifies himself as one with nature, full of sympathy and kindness. NARA (Arjuna) is a pure-minded, obedient, and intelligent disciple, who is prepared to act up to the instructions of the Teacher).

Let us now understand how Geethacharya defines a BHAKTHA in the Bhakthi Yoga. The number of the Chapter and the number of the sloka are furnished in the brackets.

(12-2) He, who incessantly, scrupulously and with interest and devotion thinks and understands me, is the supreme Yogi.

(It is with Bhakthi or Devotion that he imagines the omnipresent power in a particular form, chiefly in a human form with stupendous glory, and he mentally lives with him in a mystic joy. He imagines God to be in his own form with all good qualities (ANANTHA KALYANAGUNA PARIPURNA). While contemplating these good qualities of Beauty, Truth and Goodness of THIRIBHUVANA SUNDARA, he admires and worships the supreme living human being with all good qualities. Hence Sri Rama and Sri Krishna came to be worshipped as PURUSHOTTAMAS. So to worship Rama or Krishna means to take on to him (Devotee) the good qualities of Rama and Krishna and to try to live like them with dedication to serve the creation. Worship of Rama and Krishna does not mean uttering their names)

(12-12) Knowledge is superior to practice, which is purely mechanical. Meditation to understand the truth is superior to knowledge; And KARMAPHALATHYAGA (Selfless discharge of duty for the good of the world) is far superior even to Meditation or penance, for it is only selfless discharge of duty on the part of human beings that contributes for eternal peace of the world and its progress.

(Man might perform so many types of actions; but this experience in his actions or experiments should lead him to proper and realistic understanding of creation and life - the result is man's scientific understanding of life and its progress; this in fact is a result of man's meditation on his

knowledge and experience. The wisdom which he gains, is of great value and service to humanity-the outcome of this meditation is the spiritual awe at the wonderfulness of creation, which is responsible for the advent of the scriptures and the sciences. It is stressed that the quality of selflessness on the part of man is to be valued greater than any other production of man, Lord Krishna stresses that the quality of selflessness on the part of man is to be valued greater than any other production of man. Lord Krishna stresses that a real BHAKTA should be a KARMAPHALA THYAGI, and not one who sits in devotion.)

(3-25) The really educated man does anything keeping the universal welfare and progress in view, whereas the person who is always selfish and does any action for his own personal gains is said to be an uneducated man.

(A very fine difference is drawn between an educated man and an uneducated man. Literacy is not educatedness. Educatedness or education is wisdom with selflessness in action, Actually the selfishness on the part of a person or a nation is responsible for individual peace or social peace. Thus the Bhakthi yoga advocates selfless service)

(12-13,14) He is a real Bhakta (Devotee) who is friendly and kind to all without hatred for any, who is without lust and egoism, who observes equanimity in respect of sorrow or joy, difficulties and comforts, who is patient and tolerant to all others, who is self-contented, disciplined, scrupulous and self-determined who lends his thinking to understand the universal self.

(12-15.) He, who is peaceful, who does not cause fear and agitation to others, who is strong-willed and does not get agitated easily and emotionally who is devoid of sudden emotional feelings of joy, anger, fear and hurry, is a real BHAKTHA.

(12-16.) He, who is selfless and is prepared to allow the fruit of his work for the enjoyment of others, who is pure in mind and thinking, who is efficient in the discharge of his duties, who is neutral to the feelings of joy and sorrow, and who is without egoism and does not think he is a master of any of his good deeds, is a real Bhaktha.

(12-17.) He is a real BHAKTHA who does not take into account with a difference the auspicious and the inauspicious, who is not overjoyed about his comforts nor too sorry for his troubles, who has no hatred for others and who has killed evil desires of lust and comfort, is a real BHAKTA.

(12-18,19.) One who is neutral and unaffected towards the so called foes and friends, towards admiration and insult, towards the changes in climate, towards joys and sorrows, towards criticisms and praises, who is unattached to his kith and surroundings, who is silent and meditative with alertness and awareness, who is self-contented with what he has, who is not slavishly bound to a particular place or inhabitation, who feels the wide world his home and nature his companion, and who is of a strong and firmly determined will, is a real BHAKTHA.

Please examine with clear discretion what Geethacharya tells about Bhakthi and Bhaktha (Devotion and Devotee).

Is there any superstition, or mysticism or cloudedness here? Is a real BHAKTHA one with a particular dress and fashion sitting under a tree and hypocritically observing meditation? Are not the various good qualities enumerated in the BHAKTHI YOGA for an active person in the society? Geethacharya preaches that man should be a Karmaphala Tyagi (one who renounces not actions but the fruits of his actions) that he should understand the meanings of the one thousand attributes (SAHASRA GUNA NAMAVALI) of the omnipresent Divinity and try to have those auspicious qualities for himself, and that he should be selfless and unattached and live in Bliss (MOKSHA = a state of release from bondage).

While this is the state of a real BHAKTHA, how is it represented by the unwise scholars and hypocrites? The custom and superstition always overpower the scripture and the prophet!

In a beautiful song (VEGA LECHI NITA MUNIGI BUDI BUSI) in Telugu, Gana Brahma Thyagaraja observes as follows in respect of a hypocritical Bhakta :-

"We cannot take him, as a RAMA BHAKTHA, who gets up at dawn, bathes in the river, decorates his body with BUDHI (Ash) and sits calmly counting his fingers as he goes on uttering RAMA - RAMA - RAMA" - - - . He does not know in fact what Rama Bhakthi is ! . . . Chanting of Rama's name, writing "Rama Koti (writing the word, Rama, one crore times), even building a temple for Rama etc. do not constitute perfectly "Rama Bhakthi path" or "Rama Bhakti Marga". What does the word, "Rama", mean? It means "a

person who makes everybody happy, his parents, his teacher, his elders, all other elders, his neighbours, people attached to him in any way etc. Therefore "Rama Bhakti Marga" is that way of good and serviceable life by which you will be able to make all others happy. Nudity, seminudity, wearing orange robes, sitting idle chanting the word, Rama, etc. do not constitute Rama Bhakthi Marga.

Was Rama a Karma Sanyasi? (Renouncer of actions?) No. Was Lord Krishna a Karma sanyasi? No, not at all. Did they not engage themselves every moment of life in some good action fostering goodness and minimising evil? Did not Geethacharya announce in the Geetha that he was born to protect the good and to destroy the evil? Does it not imply that every wise and thinking person should feel that he is also born to protect the good and to put an end to the evil within his circle? Rama and Krishna led exemplary lives of good deeds! Did Rama advocate "Sanyasam" to anybody? (Renunciation from all action?) Did Lord Krishna permit Arjuna to commit Asthra Sanyasam? (Renunciation of his duty?). Therefore if you are a real admirer of Rama or Krishna, you must lead a life of action of righteousness as lived by Rama or Krishna! What is the meaning on the part of a so-called monk of saying that he has renounced everything and is going begging because he has become a Rama Bhaktha or Krishna Bhaktha! What is this paradox? What is this irony? What is this senselessness? What is this ignorance? What is this hypocrisy?

He is a real Acharya (Guru or Religious teacher) who leads an exemplary life of useful action and achievement and who can boldly tell the people, "Do as I do". This is

what Hinduism means. Hinduism is primarily a code of good conduct as against superstition of the aboriginal times. Hinduism is a correction of the corrupt superstitions! The life of a person of selfless action is divine! and not any other way of life!

Please observe what Bhaktha Prahlada tells as the truth! (Andhra Maha Bhagavatha) :-

"Surrender to the omnipresent, the universal soul by the nine devotional ways (NAVA VIDHA BHAKTHI MARGA) a universal feeling of friendliness, listening to the scriptures explaining the omnipresent energy, being prepared to do service, worshipping the divine ideals, being ready to render the so called meanest service, an awareness in the mind about the divinity, singing songs in praise of the eternal, and a deep meditation to understand the truth, salutations etc. Then lead a life of righteousness in action and be a righteous person (SAJJANA). This is the safest way of life; and I think this is the truth".

In Prahlada's Bhakthi marga given above, the essence is SAJJANATHVA (Righteousness). A righteous person is one who leads a good life and assists another to do so, who is gentle and pleasing. SAJJANATVA is another word for KARMAPHALATHYAGAM.

The word Hari, means annihilator; of what? the evil! "Hari Bhajan" does not mean uttering the word" Hari-Hari and dancing to the tune, the rhythm etc in a group of similar people. It is on the other hand a determination to annihilate evil in him and in others to the extent possible.

This determination to annihilate the evil in you comes up only when you believe in the universal self and when

you feel that you are one' with the universal self as any other being. This is the Advaita Bhava which you attain as a result of "Vishnu Samslesha Bhava" i.e. the feeling of being one with the universe.

So also "SIVA BHAJANA" does not mean uttering the word, "Siva". The word, "SIVA", means "auspiciousness", "Happiness". To perform "SIVA BHAJANA" means to wish all the world auspicious and happy.

There is a Telugu song by Gana Brahma, Sri Iyagaraja, "SIVA SIVA ANARADA - BHAVA BHAYA BADHALA NANACHUKORADA". The meaning of this first line of the song is this: - "Why don't you say 'Siva, Siva'? why don't you put an end to your fear, sin and pain?" - When you wish all others auspicious and happy sincerely, normally you are in such an auspicious and happy spirit. When you are in such a feeling and in such an attitude towards others, you can not anticipate any chance to commit a sin; you can not have any fear from anybody and you do not have any suffering.

So, the utterings of the sacred and auspicious words, Hari and Siva, do not indicate any renunciation from action; On the other hand, it is an awareness for a state of happiness for all others and a preparedness to render something good and happy to others.

So, Hari and Siva are not gods; they are good qualities which you should possess. They are just like words of salutation like "Namasthe, Namaskaram, Adiyen. (Like salutations in other races like "Salam" = Peace; let there be peace between us. Let there be auspiciousness between us - and like "Good morning" = This is a pleasant time to see you;

How happy it is for us both to meet each other, how welcome it is!)

While "Hari" and "Siva" are such fine words meant to reform the individual and the society ("Hari" is to purge the evil, "Siva" is to foster the good), it is strange and tragic they acquired quite contradictory effects, some people calling themselves "SIVA BHAKTHAS" naming their God as SIVA and some other people naming themselves "HARI BHAKTHAS" calling their God as "Hari or Harinarayana". These two sects war with each other, have different temples with different idols, practice different types of worship, produce two types of religions, two types of epic stories, two types of heavenly works, follow different types of caste marks, dress and fashions etc. What should we think of these warring Bhaktas, these warring poets, these warring Gurus, and these heads of the Muts? It is just like a blindman being led by a blindman, like the ignorant man teaching the ignorant - in the words of Prahlada in Maha Bhagavatha.

Bharthruhari, a great ancient Hindu Sage-poet, in one of his slokas of Subhashitham, observes like this, which the readers may note with interest :-

"I worship all the gods with all devotion - Why should I worship this plurality of gods when it is said there is a supreme creator who is the God of Gods? so let me worship that one great God. But what does this great God do for me? It is said that he gives me the fruit of my actions according to my sin (papa) and virtue (punya). In that case what business have I with this great God? I consider discharge of duty is superior to God Himself; I shall worship my own righteous duty. "

A great devotee has observed as follows in one of his Telugu stanzas:-

"Are these various flowers, the Lily, the Jasmine, the small scented Jasmine, the lotus, the sweet scented olean-der, the cophalotes, the chamomile, and parijatham (nyotanthes) properly fit for the worship of God? Nay, not so! The three mental flowers with which I should worship God are the pure flower of duty, the scented blossom of kindness and the shining, hued, and attractive petalled flower of knowledge!"

This is the essence of Hinduism and the type of life it indicates. Therefore the real Devotee's life is dedicated to selfless discharge of duty. It is not at all a life of idleness with meditation for the sake of meditation. The real meditation should be for the discovery of truth; it is in turn for proper discharge of duty with a spirit of selflessness and service.

While the authoritative Geetha, the great Devotees, the reformers, and the great Acharyas (Religious teachers) thus advocate a life of activity with a spirit of selfless service, it is strange even now that the so called BHAKTHAS are simply following superstitious ways and customs and leading the people into darkness. There is an increase in the number of the so-called Swamijis, who are heads of Muts and organizations, who try to establish some glamour about them that they are divine, that they grant boons etc.

When can we expect Salvation for the man from this ignorance, from this superstition? Only when man uses his own intellect and thinks with discretion!

Sri Ramanuja (The propagator of the Visishtadvaita Philosophy) explains the thathvathraya gnana from the authority of Bhagavad Geeta : The universe is of three aspects, the Achith (Lifeless aspect, or things), the Chith (The living creatures and the growing vegetation) and the Easwara (the omnipresent energy); The Easwara energy is of all good qualities (Anantha Kalyana Guna prapumam). If you imagine the Easwara energy in a form, it is just a manifestation of Truth, Beauty and Goodness and is called "Thibhuvana Sundara" (The most handsome in all the three worlds (in all the three planes of life). Hence a Devotee is led to consider the jewel of the human beings (PURUSHOTTHAMA) as Thribhuvana Sundara, and hence the worship of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna has become logically valid. One has to follow a Purushottama (a jewel of mankind) and worship and admire his good qualities by adopting those good qualities in the journey of his life.

Sri Ramanuja did not admit "MAYAVADA" of SRI SANKARA that what all we see outwardly is not true. He did not admit the plurality of gods and goddesses and he did not admit that the worship, to who-so-ever god is done, goes only to the One God Supreme. He did not admit the plurality of Religions or faiths nor the "SHANMATHA sthapana". He advocated only one Supreme God or energy, the omnipresent Easwara, the Chief of the Thathvathraya. He advocated that the three aspects of thathvathraya are true without a beginning, a middle and an end. He advocated "The VISHNU SAMSLESHA BHAVA," as the real and pleasurable Devotion is the feeling of oneness with the omnipresent. He advocated therefore an attachment to the supreme omnipresent energy, which is SURRENDER



or "PRAPATTHI". Ramanuja advocated a life of service in the spirit of prapatti. This is the essence of Hinduism, the essence of Geetha, the essence of "Bhaktiyoga".

The knowledge of Thatvathraya is scientific. The feeling of "Vaishnava samslesha Bhava" is spiritual, psychological and emotional. The activity with a spirit of selflessness and service is the social and practical aspect of religion. So Visishtadvaita philosophy, giving the last twist to the Geethaism of Hinduism, is the real Bhakthiyoga and this is spiritual, psychological, scientific, emotional and social, lending full satisfaction to all the aspects of existence of the human being.

The scientist is the constant investigator of Thatva thraya. He discovers the truths of CHITH and ACHIT. His discoveries help the progress and happiness of the world. The search of the scientist in these two aspects is ever continuing, there is no end to this search; In this process the wonders of nature are revealed, understood and explored. The BHAKTA, given to the Thatvathraya gnana, is a step above the scientist; The BHAKTHA'S explorations and meditations do not stop with the discoveries of truth; he wonders about the creation and existence and he surrenders in PRAPATTHI BHAVA to unending source of knowledge and wisdom concerning creation and existence. This is the most enlightened aspect of the BHAKTHA which is an extended aspect of the scientist. The Visishtadvaita philosophy combines with in itself the aspect of scientist leading to the aspect of BHAKTHA the knowledge leading to awareness and wisdom, in turn leading to devotion and prapatti Bhava.

Therefore, to sum up in short, BHAKTHI YOGA is to attain a scientific and spiritual knowledge of the Thatva thraya, to feel one with the omnipresent force of the existence, to dedicate himself to an efficient discharge of his righteous duty with a spirit of selfless service, which is "MOKSHA BHAVA".

This knowledge of Bhakthiyoga, which was first imparted by Lord Krishna in his Geetha, has been passed on to posterity through the Acharya Thraya (Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva) and through the galaxy of Acharyas, Gurus, prophets, religious teachers and reformers. Therefore this ladder of these enlightening souls are from Lord Krishna, the Geethacharya, down to the present teacher who is sitting before us now showing us the path of truth, duty, happiness and Moksha.

There is a very fine sloka in "NITHYANUSANDHANAM" giving this observation of devotional gratitude to all our religious teachers extending back into the past to Geethacharya. This sloka was uttered extempore (at a particular context, which the readers can learn by a study of the book "SRI RAMANUJA DIVYA VAIBHAVAM" written by the same author of this book, The Truth of Hinduism) by Kuresa, who was the first disciple of Sri Ramanuja :-

"Lakshminadha samarambham
Nadha yamuna madhyamam I
Asmadacharyaparyantham
Vande Guruparmparam" II

We recite this sloka in respectful gratitude to the Acharyas who have assisted and who are assisting the glowing candle of Bhakthi yoga to glow for ever.

This last word on Bhakthiyoga is true; It is universally true; It is pure and unbiased; understand this truth; follow this TRUTH in life. This is "Geetha Saram" (The essence of Geetha).

2. Hinduism - Devotion to God - Personal Conduct

(1) Catch this truth:

What do the scriptures and the tradition tell about Hinduism, about individual and personal character and conduct?

Eternity has no beginning. Creation is the existence from eternity. The existence from eternity can not be traced out in history; in fact it cannot be conceived of nor comprehended. The development of man, from the time it could be traced out by proof and authority, is history. A long period of human development before the historical period is called the epic period, an account of which regarding human development, their organization, living habits, traditions and customs, is given in the epics, which are eighteen in number in Sanskrit of which The Bharatha, The Bhagavatha and The Ramayana are the most important.

The legacy and the culture that have emanated from eternity and have grown gradually through the epic period to the historical period, and which have been passed on to us with so many changes, with their core prominent, are said to be SANATHANA DHARMA or the culture eternal. The Sanathana Dharma is a part and parcel of our life and conduct. It is mixed up with our being, our thinking and our doing. One cannot reasonably get out of it, nor any one should denounce it. We have to follow SANATHANA DHARMA with a correct and scientific understanding, with a meaningful and sympathetic interpretation, and with a proper regard and respect for our ancestors and their culture whose product are ourselves.

For the proper development of society and individual conduct, the knowledge of man's all round development and gradual growth and improvement belonging to the Pre-Epic period, the Epic period, and the historic period up-to-date, is quite essential. This knowledge is covered successively by the scriptures, namely, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and History. The wise man is he who is capable of understanding the inner truths of these authoritative writings; a wise man does not admit that every word of the Scripture and the Epics, is correct or incorrect. He reads them with proper understanding, with sympathy and earnestness, and with a scientific out-look. He tries to infer the implication, the purpose and the process of every precept and practice. He gives a meaning and advocates its observance or otherwise depending upon the context and the need, social or moral or spiritual. He is really a wise sage who is capable of applying and advocating the real knowledge of the Scriptures and Epics for the peace, prosperity and happiness of society. A real Devotee (BHAKTHA) is one, who with this real knowledge and wisdom, is always happy and tries to make the society happy. A person who propagates such real knowledge for the happiness of the society is a prophet or a religious Teacher. The Disciple (Sishya) is one who follows the precepts of the religious teacher (Acharya); the person belonging to the line of a disciple is normally a more refined person among the common folk of society. This is the ladder of the grades of human beings in the spiritual and moral empire.

Hinduism is called SANATHANAM. It means the origin of Hinduism cannot be traced out. It has been as if from the beginning of human development in our part of the globe. Hence it is not easy to define what Hinduism is. Neither is it possible therefore to say who started it and who propagated it.

Hinduism is the life of the people, in our country extending from Himalayas to Cape Kanyakumari, from time immemorial to the present time. By "The life of the people" is meant their food, their habits, their occupation, their language, their beliefs, their customs, their culture etc. The life of the people with its untraceable origin growing, developing and extending to the present times, in short, is Hinduism. Hinduism is in fact not a religion; it is highly complex; it is the sum and substance of the life, its history and growth from time immemorial upto the present. Therefore Hinduism is called SANATHANAM.

Hinduism is a combination of the old and the new relating to the people of the wide Hindustan. The old and the new are interwoven. In this cloth of Hinduism the old and the new (cultures) are the warp and the woof.

Hinduism is like the huge holy Banyan tree with a wide spread of its roots unseen being underground, with a wide extensive spread of branches around with leaves and foliage so thick that it is like a huge umbrella giving shelter from the sun and the rain to the hundreds of people and cattle below and with the aerial roots strong and long spreading from the mighty branches of the tree to the ground and through the ground down to the roots with which they are united, which are those now that give strength to the

Banyan tree, the roots underground, or the aerial roots. It is like this that Hinduism is made strong by the union of the old and the new cultures.

Thus, Hinduism is undefinable. It is difficult to say what it is; for it does not belong to any one particular aspect of life.

Hinduism is not like so many other religions of the world that had been founded and propagated by particular prophets or religious teachers or reformers; We find often the latter having been named after their founders or prophets like Christianity, Mahammedanism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. Hinduism did not come down as a bolt from the blue; It did not rise up like a revolution; this is a peaceful and continuous mental growth and physical growth of a huge population of this country from time immemorial against the sun, the wind and the rain. Hinduism is the history of the people, social, ethical and spiritual, still growing and growing for ever. It is the history of the Indian race with its social customs, having established a code of ethics, and then having started investigations of truth (spiritual searchings) and still continuing its existence further in these three aspects of life, the physical, the ethical and the spiritual.

Hinduism is like the ocean whose level is constant throughout. Hinduism which is the culture of the people, social, ethical and spiritual, stands, like a mountain, with so many omissions and commissions in the life journey of the people. Like the ocean which receives into itself so many perennial rivers and remains constant in its level, Hinduism stands as it is in the same name and fame despite so many

religious practices cropping up in the middle among sections of people. Despite all these diversities, the people in general feel that they are Hindus and their creed is Hinduism. The speciality and the individuality of Hinduism is so prominent and significant with a huge lap to receive anything into it.

In a subcontinent like India, there are diverse climatic regions, diverse people speaking different languages, belonging to different races and communities and sub-communities, following different types of cultures and following different types of religious and devotional practices. It is proper to say that Hinduism is the sum-total of all these cultures put together. It appears as though Hinduism is a parent with all these diversities as children; there may be so many differences among the children, but they all equally claim the parent; the parent too does not inherit the children. The different cultures that cropped up in different races have something common and desirable among them and this commonness and desirability put together form Hinduism in the present context.

Either a man worships Siva or Vishnu or Sakthi, either he is a civilian or a tribal, either he is a Sikh or a Buddhist etc. he is in general a Hindu. Of the total population of India today, apart from the Muslims and Christians who belong specifically to religions of a foreign origin, all other peoples of India are Hindus and they call themselves as Hindus as against Muslims and Christians. In fact Christianity or Islam is to be considered as of recent origin when compared with Hinduism whose origin is the origin of the man as a social being in this part of the world.

It is said and believed that Hinduism is related to the Vedas which are the original writings of our country. These Vedas were produced long ago by the Aryans, who were inhabiting the "Sapta Sindhu" region in the beginning and later on migrated and occupied the whole of the Indo-Gangetic plains. The Aryans who are believed to have migrated into India gradually occupied the whole of the Northern part of the subcontinent north of the Vindhyas. Hence the Northern India came to be called "Arya Vartham" (the region occupied by the Aryans). The religion of these people of the North came to be called "Arya Matha" or Vaidika Matha (Vedic Religion).

On account of the influence of the Aryans over the south, the south also came under the influence of the Vedic religion. Gradually the whole country considered Vedas as their scriptures and guides. Hence Hinduism is in a way said to be the Vedic religion. Though in the Vedas the culture is systematised, and guidelines are given for life in general and for ethical and spiritual life in particular, and though Vedas have been followed for these very many centuries, yet some people are still following certain customs and practices which don't have approval and sanction in the scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads. This is the force of tradition on man. Even now there are some tribals in India in various parts, whose culture is quite different from that of the Vedas. But yet all these people are also Hindus.

The authorities for the Hindu way of life and the beliefs and attitudes of the Hindus are the four Vedas, the one hundred and eight Upanishads, the Brahmasutras, The Mahabharatha with Bhagavath Geetha in it, the Bhagavatha

and the Ramayana, the eighteen Epics and the Sastras. As all these authoritative Scriptures and Sastras are inconsistent with contradictions at various points, Hinduism, which is all pervasive, has become limitless and can not be defined with limitations.

The Bhagavad Geetha which is inscribed in the Great Epic, Maha Bharatha, deals with all the beliefs existing in the country till the date of the Geetha, and indicates the aspects of unity in these diverse beliefs; it also indicates what is to be preferred. Hence Bhagavath Geetha is the literature of the essence and truth of all beliefs with a guideline for discrimination and discretion :

"Sarvasastramayi Geetha". (Geetha is the substance of all systematised knowledge given in Sastras.)

"Ekam Sastram Devakiputra Geetham". Of all the Sastras, the Geetha given by Lord Krishna is paramount. It is most precise and discretionary.

"Sakalamupanishadvakya Sampujya Manthram", says Kulasekharalwar about Geetha in his prabanda, Mukunda Mala. He says that the Bhagavad Geetha is adored by all the Upanishads. It is the essence of all Upanishads. So The Geetha is the paramount authority for Hinduism.

- This is what is meant by "Hinduism".

(2)

What does Geetha, the standard authority for Hinduism, the essence of all Upanishads and the only yoga Sastra, tell about Hinduism? What does it tell about the Hindu faith? What does it tell about God?

Geetha tells that God is indescribable; Divinity, which is another word for God, is beyond expression and beyond comprehension. When such is the case, what is the meaning of diverse scholars trying to give diverse descriptions of God? It is neither possible nor proper to try to describe the omnipresent and incomprehensible force, the Divinity. It is useless to discuss about such an omnipresent energy. The only process left to us is to surrender to the Omnipresent (Vaishnava) force. It will only be a vain talk to speak describing God. Thereby you only try to limit the limitless.

As the divine force is allpervading, as it is the universal soul energy, its power and influence and its purpose and its work cannot be comprehended. It is beyond the perception of our five senses. There is no question of anybody seeing this divine omnipresent energy when it is even impossible for comprehension.

This is described in Geetha with proper examples from actual experience.

When Lord Krishna presented himself before Arjuna in "Viswarupa", "an awful and wonderful apparition" presenting in itself all the aspects of the universe, Arjuna could not see and enjoy the sight of it; on the other hand he became terribly afraid of it. This was the "Viswarupa" which nobody had seen before and which nobody had conceived of before, and which Arjuna alone for the first time had the unique opportunity of seeing; but he could not bear the sight of it! He could not see and contain within himself all the aspects of the universe at a time! He was bewildered! He had no eyes enough to witness it; he had not the mind to comprehend it! Arjuna stood shivering with awe and fear with eyes

and mouth wide open! He was almost stunned and became almost dumb! He felt his whole body numb!

Lord Krishna began to tell Arjuna like this :-

"O! Arjuna! this "Viswarupa" of mine which is now presented to you had never been, could never have been, witnessed by people of eminence who had distinguished themselves with their Vedic scholarship, with their performances of YAGNA, DANA, and penance. The awful and wonderful Viswarupa of mine can be seen, visualised and comprehended only by a person unique in real and pure devotion. A really devoted person, with a spirit of selflessness and service, with the "Vishnu Samslesha Bhava" (the feeling of oneness with the universe, the feeling of the individual personal soul as a part of the universal soul), can alone see, can experience and can feel one with this Viswarupa".

Hence Arjuna, who stood dumbfounded at the sight of "Viswarupa" began to express like this :-

"O! Lord Krishna ! My whole body, from the tips of the toes to the tips of the hair on the head, is shivering and quaking with fear and awe. Every hair on my body stands on end with this feeling of fear coupled with wonder. I am too terrified to stand here before this awful apparition. O! The Omnipresent soul! Excuse me! Kindly present yourself before me in your formal usual form. Let me see only your divine, hearty, superb, beautiful usual form".

What is it that we learn from this context of "Viswarupa" in the GEETHA?

"The divine force is the "Viswarupa". It is not possible for man to perceive or mentally comprehend it with his five

sensory organs and his keen mind. He can only visualise it as a form composed of Truth, Beauty and Goodness (SATYA SOUNDARYA SUGUNA MURTHI) - It is here, in this conception that Visistadvaita Philosophy modifies, refines and pleases the concept of Advaita Philosophy. The two Philosophies, "Visishtadvaita" and "Advaita" are not completely apart and opposite. Both of them visualise the supreme or the supreme soul alike. While Advaita gives an urge to man to search incessantly his identification with God (the omnipresent supreme soul), the Visishtadvaita philosophy enables a person by the path of devotion (Love and sympathy) to be mentally emotional, to be in a bliss of happiness, and to be satisfied. While the former is agonising in its search for God, with frequent disappointments, sometimes with a total disappointment, the latter never fails you; it affords you joy and satisfaction at any and every stage proportionate to the degree of intensity of your devotion. It is a sure path for peace and happiness as well as for the realisation of the truth, the path of Devotion or BHAKTHI YOGA.

Man is unable to comprehend the omnipresent force or energy; he is unable to visualise Truth - Beauty - Goodness in a form (SATYA SOUNDARYA SUGUNA MOORTHY) - (Here man stands for the ordinary man and not the sage or the Devotee). Hence for man, the jewel of the human being (PURUSHOTTAMA) with the triple qualities of Truth, Beauty and Goodness in abundance, is for worship and adoration. Such a jewel of the human race is auspicious and inimitable. He works for the peace, welfare and happiness of the Society. Hence Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, who are

presented in the epics as the supreme human beings with the three qualities of truth, beauty and goodness in abundance, came to be worshipped by all. Even Alvars advocated devotion to Sri Rama and Sri Krishna (THE EPIC PURUSHOTTAMAS), to imitate them in life, and to dwell in SAMSLESHA BHAVA with them. It was on account of this, that Sri Ramanujacharya, the propagator of Visishtadvaita philosophy described the universe as TRIBHUVANA SUNDARAM (a combined presentation of truth, beauty and goodness) and the Purushottama as a supreme human personality with these three jewels of properties, truth, beauty and goodness.

It is this BHAKTHI BHAVA (the path of Devotion) that is universally followed by the persons in the proper line of devotion. And devotion to God is just to surrender to the universal energy as Arjuna surrendered to "Visvarupa", to adore, admire the Purushottama (the jewel of the human beings) and to respect the three qualities of truth, beauty and goodness as Arjuna preferred to admire the physical form of Lord Krishna, and to live a life of selflessness and service.

(3)

Who is a real Devotee? What should be his conduct? This is clearly explained by Geethacharya in the BHAKTI YOGA chapter of Geetha like this :-

"A righteous person, without hatred towards any, and with kindness and friendliness to all, who is devoid of lust and egoism, who is neutral to sorrow and joy, who is neutral to sufferings and comforts, and who is completely patient and tolerant, is a real BHAKTHA."

"A righteous person, who is ever self-contented, self-restrained and self-determined, and conducts himself well always to make others happy, is a real Devotee."

"One, who is of no danger and fear to others, who is not timid out of ignorance, who is within his limits in the expressions of joy, anger, fear or any emotion, is a real BHAKTA".

"One, who is not ambitious, who is not selfish, who is pure-minded, who is efficient in the discharge of his duties, who is neutral and not easily influenced by circumstances, who is ever-contented and happy, and who surrenders to goodness and to the Omnipresent force, is a real Devotee".

"One, who is so magnanimous and of a full mind not to feel the difference between friends and foes, who receives alike honour and insult with a composed mind, who is unperturbed and unaffected by sufferings and comforts and who is undisturbed and uninfluenced by climatic changes, is a real BHAKTHA".

"That person of equanimity, who receives alike with a composed mind, accusations and praises, who is silently contented with what he gets by a righteous way, and who is of firm determination for discharge of his duties or for a good cause, is a real BHAKTA".

Thus Geethacharya describes A BHAKTA and his attitudes and conduct. These are the tenets by which a person is to be judged as a BHAKTA. One who does not follow this conduct in life and who describes the title of BHAKTA for himself, cannot be considered so. He is only a hypocrite observing some superstitions regarding dress, caste-mark

on the face, a type of hair cut or hair growth, some type of guise etc. Such a hypocrite is also a deceit deceiving himself as well as others.

A real devotee believes in the omnipresent universal force (The Vaishnava force) and surrenders to it. He is above all differences relating to region, language, race, caste, cult etc. He is a citizen of the world, and of the universe. Such people are very few and rarely spread about in the world. They are responsible for the well being of the world with their auspicious thinking, and blessings. Their blessings are divine. They are mentally always awake and alert. They are endowed with powers of awareness. They know the truth and they are alien to superstitions and regionalisms in customs and manners. Their thinking, their speaking and their doing are all for the welfare of the universe, which they feel their home.

This is the real BHAKTI BHAVA and Prahlada, Vibhishana and Bhishma are examples of real Bhaktas in our epics. They had expressed surrender to the universal self. They were not only Gnanis (wise sages) being aware of the universal truth but also emotionally happy with their feeling of oneness with the universe. They were of the Visishtadvaita feeling, in the correct meaning of the term.

The founder and propagator of the Visishtadvaita philosophy, Sri Ramanuja, had explained the universal truth and our duty thus :-

"Understand scientifically the Thatvatraya (the three aspects of the universe), namely, the CHITH (the animals and the vegetation, which are live and growing), the ACHITH

(the inanimate and the physical part of the universe) and the Eswara (the omnipresent energy pervading both the CHITH and ACHITH). The Eswara is TRIBHUVANA SUNDARA with the three supreme aspects of truth, beauty and goodness. He who believes that the "Eswara" energy is all pervading is named a Vaishnava - such a person is of equanimity, and loves and serves all. Such a person (as is stated in the "Charama Sloka" of the Geetha) surrenders to the universal life force (The Vaishnava energy) and hence he is selfless; he will never commit a sin being selfless, and remains in a state of bliss unattached to the social bonds, which is called MOKSHA BHAVA or release from bondage or salvation".

This is the truth relating to Hinduism, God and Devotion. Understand this truth; follow this truth in life. This is "Geetha Saram". (The essence of Geetha).

3. GOD - DEVOTION to GOD (THYAGARAJOPANISHAD)

Catch this truth :

In the foregoing chapter on "Hinduism-Devotion to God-Personal conduct", we have learnt that the aim and purpose of religion are for the reformation and refinement of the human race, that God, the Divine Force, is omnipresent and incomprehensible, that Devotion to God is to surrender to the Vaishanava energy (omnipresent and all pervading life-force) and that the conduct of a person consistent with real devotion is richly tinged with the spirit of selflessness and discharge of duty for the good of the society of which he is one.

We have also learnt that for the above principles the Bhagavad Geetha, the essence of all the Upanishads, is the authority. Let us now learn what the musical literature of Sri Thyagarajaswami, one of the Trinity of the Carnatic music of South India, teach us about God and Devotion!

In the name of Hinduism and in the name of Hindu religious reformation movement, there have been, extending even to this day, uncountable subsidiary religions or religious faiths or movements. Their conclusions, their similarity and their oneness can be grasped only by a clear thinker with the spirit of selflessness (Svardha Rahitha Bhava). It is not possible for others, even though they are scholars, to understand the underlying unity of truth. We have got today abundant number of scholars and PUNDITS, religious teachers, heads of MUTTS, ACHARYAS and DESIKAS,

most of whom while admitting that God is one, show contradictions between one religion and the other without any tolerance and sympathy, and observe, allow and advocate worship to plurality of Gods, Goddesses and spirits. They shamelessly, ignorantly and superstitiously lecture about to people at well-arranged conferences and platforms that whom-so-ever god you worship, either Brahma, Vishnu or Siva, or Saraswathi, Lakshmi or Parvathi, or Bhetala or Bhairavi or Kali, or Ganapathi, Murugan or Subrahmanyam, or Kali or Rajarajeswari, or Potharajan, Poleru, Kanakadurga or Chandika, or Indra, Varuna or Vayu, or Rama, Krishna or Anjaneya etc. all worship goes direct to that one God supreme! When they say that God is one, omnipresent and incomprehensible, they should, without any alternative or reserve, declare that any person should meditate upon the same supreme universal soul (Paramathma). Why do they advocate plurality of Gods? They are either ignorant or self deceitful! They are afraid of their reactions. (We know in history the reactions faced boldly by Buddha, Jesus and Mahammad in recent times i.e. after the Vedic and Upanishadic period)

The priests try to make the religion their profession and living. They are prepared to conduct worship in the Temple, in the House, to the tree or the stone, to the idol of any God or Goddess, and receive their profits or allowances! Are these people to show the philosophical ways to the world? Are these "gurus" to reform the people towards truth? No, certainly not!

When a person believes in one universal force, will he say, "To whom-so-ever God you pray——". It is meaningless!

The only omnipresent and all pervading Vaishnava energy is the force of creation (BRAHMA SHAKTI); it alone is the power that protects and makes every thing auspicious (SIVA SHAKTI); it alone is the power that brings about PRALAYA or total destruction (RUDRA SHAKTI). So it is all one omnipotent and omnipresent force responsible for creation, existence, and destruction. When a seed is sown in a fertile ground, owing to the interaction of the PANCHA BHUTAS (The five elements) the earth, the water, the heat or the sun, the air and the space, an unknown and incomprehensible energy emanates in the seed that makes the embryo germinate and sprout up, and this is the force of creation. This incomprehensible life energy is kept up in the seedling, in the plant and in the tree by the provisions of the Pancha Bhutas; and the tree grows and exists for a long time; and it is the same force responsible for creation, by its continuous emanation that keeps the tree alive, and now this force of creation is called the force of protection or existence. When this force becomes gradually or suddenly absent from the tree owing to absence of proper conditions of The Panchabhutas or to some other unexpected sudden circumstances like the storm or the flood or a germ of decay, the tree gets destroyed. So the destruction or the death is due to the absence of the energy of creation or existence. Hence for the creation, existence and destruction of the tree, the same and only the omnipresent (Vaishnava) energy is responsible. Do not have a wrong impression of the meaning of the word, VAISHNAVA as one of the Trinity of Gods (TRIMURTIS) of the puranas! "VAISHNAVA" means that which is "SARVA VYAPAKAHA" or all pervading! So the proper name for One God, the one

omnipresent energy, the "NARAYANA" of The PURUSHASUKTHA OF RIGVEDA, the all comprehensive name for God with SAHASRA NAMAS uttered by BHISHMA in MAHABHARATHA, is "BRAHMA SIVA `RUDRA VAISHNAVAM", the creative-cum-protective-cum-destructive force, which is omnipresent.

The person, taking vows, giving offerings and praying to God, seems to be having only fear of God and not love of God! He seems to do all worship to escape from the wrath of the angry or greedy god! Poor man, he does not know that in the Vedas and Upanishads God is described as SANTAKARAM, an embodiment of peace, giving peace and bliss to those who believe in that one God supreme! The SUTRA (principle) or the UPAYA (the plan or the blessed way) that we attain MOKSHA (the state of bliss or release from bondage) only by one unique principle of surrender to the universal soul and selfless service to the world, seems to be not current, seems to have gone underground and seems to have been neglected and forgotten!

Even now, at the growing times of science, at a time when educated people with a knowledge of the origin of species and the history of the human civilisation of the world, are trying to think out the relation between science and the so called spiritualism, we find to our wonder certain hypocritical Gurus and Swamis allowing some of the old meaningless and superstitious customs, and establishing some new customs to suit their own aims, profits and conveniences. Some intellectuals really wonder at the so called some other type of educated people becoming submissive disciples to these hypocritical swamis. It is strange that the

so called intellectuals are misguided by these Fake-Swamijis who are in fact ignorant of the TRUTH, and who are deceitful sometimes. Anybody is a philosopher! Anybody speaks anything; the speaker does not know sometimes what he speaks, and the listener does not understand what he hears, but all is philosophy, all is spiritualism and all is SANATHANAM with its origin from eternity! - A peculiar line of hypocrites! Every thing is to be imitated! There is the fear or the timidity or evasiveness to point out the error! Before the advent of Geetha, there appeared to have not been the practice of saying "It is not so" for whatever belief any person established. That was why before the time of Geethacharya there were so many philosophies in vogue in India. It was in Geetha for the first time that all the philosophies were discussed and the ultimate truth was given. Hence Geetha alone is the unique authority for truth in general and Hinduism in particular.

Adhyathmikam (spiritualism) is the YOGA SASTHRA. The Yoga Sastra is divided into two parts or segments - (1) ATHMAGNANA YOGA SASTHRA (The knowledge of the soul, the individual soul and the supreme soul, the JEEVATHMA and the PARAMATHMA) and (2) KARMA YOGA SASTHRA (The method of discharge of duty). The one is about the God and the creation and the other is about the personal conduct. The one is about the knowledge and search for truth, the other is about a code of life to enable man to attain truth.

The great Tyagaraja, the philosopher-musician, with his mental, physical and spiritual experiences, gives the gist

on the subject, GOD and DEVOTION, which we gather in four select songs of his :

(1) The divine power (the Easwara energy) is all pervading, in the animate as well as in the inanimate, THE CHITH and THE ACHITH, and hence imperceptible and incomprehensible. It is hence useless to discuss and argue about it and its controversies posed by the commentators and dialecticians. The only way to comprehend the truth is by surrender to the universal soul! The difficulty is most and in vain for the impossibility. When divinity is described as one beyond comprehension and expression, what is there for you to see, and what is there for you to say? And what is there for you to search and to guess?

Follow the meaning of Thyagaraja's Keerthan (song) composed in Telugu (MARU GELARA O! RAGHAVA) :- translated hereunder into English :-

"Why this concealment? O! RAGHAVA!
Why this hiding? - O! the manifest
in all the movable and the immovable!

O! The ocean-wide-kind eyed!
That you are the One and the All
I have learnt through my meditations,
slow, peaceful and incessant;

I can't believe in any other except you, the ONE,
Lead me to MOKSHA (Bliss) O! my adored Lord!
The adored Lord of this Thyagaraja".

"The movable and the immovable put together (CHARA CHARA RUPA) constitutes God or the universal lording

power. I have understood this unique Truth. I can't believe in any other except you, the one. I surrender to Thee". This is the substance of the song.

So what has been evolved is that God or the Divine power is that energy, omnipresent and pervading in every atom in the universe, the CHITH (The Live) and the ACHITH (The lifeless). This omnipresent energy is Easwara Shakthi, and this is the knowledge of the Thatva traya. (Sri Ramanuja stresses on the knowledge of Thatvatraya, which is a scientific understanding of the universe.)

The omnipresent energy (Easwara Shakthi) has been understood in diverse ways since the time of the Vedic period and before. Even the PRASTHANA TRAYA (The Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Geetha) with their inconsistencies and controversies in certain points have driven the wise and thinking intellectuals helter-skelter. "The Blind man leading the blind" is proverbial all the time.

But which is the truth? Whose version is correct? Who can determine the place of the Divine Force? Is not the term, "The omnipresent force", suitable and proper? Yes. Can people of diverse views understand this truth? No. The Easwara Energy is invisible; so how to see it and how to define it? Thyagaraja leaves this discussion with recourse to the spirit of surrender to Easwara! A wise man will not follow a long distance to catch the mirage!

How can we determine the omnipresent force in one particular form? Thyagaraja discusses it in a Telugu song, the translation of which is the following :- (The song runs in Telugu like this :-

"Ethavunara Nilakada Niku".

"Which is your place of existence?-

you are not to be seen anywhere!

O! Govinda!, the universal comforter!

Are you to be seen in the female Forms,

Seetha, Gouri and Vagiswari?

or in the Pancha Bhutas, the earth

the water, the sun, the wind & the sky?

or in all the creatures, big and small?

or Are you to be seen in The Trinity,

Siva, Madhava and Tha Brahma,

who are all auspicious and who are extolled by Thyagaraja?"
Some of the Epics tell us that the Adi Shakthi (the first and
paramount force) is Bhudevi, or Parvathi or Saraswathi.
Some other Epics tell us that the seat or place of the Divine
power is the Pancha Bhutas. Some other Epics state that
the Divine power dwells in all the creatures from the small-
est to the biggest. Some Epics tell that the Trinity, Brahma,
Vishnu and Maheswara constitute the Divine power. "Why
all these different names and proper nouns for one omni-
present force, the Vaishnava force?" questions Thyagaraja.
So he says "God! you are all and in all". Each different name
indicates one auspicious quality of that One Vaishnava force.
That is all. Each name is not the name of each different
God or Goddess.

In another of his Kirthan (song in Telugu) Tyagaraja tells
that it is not possible to define God in one word. (That was
why Bhishma addressed the Lording Vaishnava force in one
thousand names, SAHASRA NAMA STHOTRA)

The following is the English translation of the said song in Telugu beginning with "EVARANI NIRNAYINCHEDI RA):-

"To be whom can I define you?

How can I praise and extol you?

O! PURUSHOTTHAMA!

O! The Chosen lover of Humanity!

Are you SIVA or MADHAVA or PARA BRAHMA?

For SIVAMANTRA, "MA" is BIJAKSHARA, (the life giving letter)

And for Madhava Manthra, "RA" is the life letter;

I surrender to those great wise intellectuals

Who possess this knowledge of discrimination.

Oh! the Lord of discretion! Oh the Lord

Praised and adored by this Thyagaraja".

'We can't determine what Divinity is; neither can we define it, nor can we praise it. For it is beyond comprehension and expression!

Thyagaraja struggles within his mind how to determine the Lord among Siva, Vishnu and Brahma!

"This mental conflict in the inability to determine is quite unnecessary. Any search to determine this is not necessary. The only resort for man is to lead a righteous life"-- says Thyagaraja.

What is the knowledge of Discretion referred to above?

Some people think that THE PANCHAKSHARI MANTRA is the Supreme to invoke GOD. And they always utter it in reverence to GOD. It is of five letters (PANCHAKSHARI = Having letters). It is NA MA SSI VA YA."

Some other Devotees consider ASHTAKSHARI MANTHRA as the supreme MANTHRA to God. It is of Eight letters (ASTA = Eight). The Ashtakshari Manthra is --

"OM NA MO NA RA YA NA YA."

In "Ashtakshari" "RA" is the BIJAKSHARA. In "Panchakshari" "MA" is the BIJAKSHARA.

Do you know what BIJAKSHARA is? Bijakshara is the letter in a word, by the omission of which the word acquires quite the opposite meaning. Take for example the word, NA RA YA NA. This word means the "All pervading". If the letter "RA" is taken away from the word, it becomes NA YA NA, which means "Not pervading". Thus the omission of the letter "RA" results in the word getting completely the opposite meaning, which is very dangerous. Hence the letter "RA" is said to be life-letter (Bijakshara) in the word, Narayana.

So also in NA-MA-SSI-VA-YA, "MA" is the Bijakshara. When the letter "MA" is omitted, the word becomes NA-SSI-VA-YA. "NA MA SSI VA YA" means "Salutation to The Auspicious God". (Siva = The auspicious God. NAMAHA = Salutation) when the letter, "MA" is omitted, the word becomes NA-SI VA YA, which means God is not auspicious. (NA = NOT. SIVAYA = Auspicious). Thus when the letter "MA" is removed, the word gets a thoroughly opposite meaning, which is dangerous to the expression and its meaning. So "MA" is the Bijakshara in "Panchakshari Mantra".

When the two Bijaksharas of the two manthras, Ashtakshari and panchakshari, are put together, a new word is formed, which is "RA MA". The Devotee who has got this

knowledge is a real Devotee with awareness to the truth. Otherwise the Devotee, who chants anyone of these two Manthras for the sake of chanting and with an expectation to see God, should be considered superstitious and his chantings are in vain.

When we say the new word is RAMA, it does not mean that we should chant this new third word several times every day. This RAMA MANTHRA is not to be chanted. It is to be understood and be followed in action and in life. To observe RAMA MANTRA is not to build a temple for Sreerama, neither to write another book, Ramayana, nor to write "RAMA KOTI" (i.e. writing the word "RAMA" one crore of times). RAMA MANTHRA has a real and valuable significance ! :--

MANTRA means "a good instruction". The sacred word RAMA is a good instruction." RAMA means one who makes all others happy through his good thinking, good word and good action. In actual life you must be a RAMA. "Rama" here is not a proper noun. It is a noun representing a good quality. So the "RAMA MANTRA" directs you to love all and to be loved by all, to serve all for the welfare of the society. A "Rama" is a person who is selfless and who is service minded. He is always happy and he makes all others happy. So Thyagaraja tells us that the only way for MOKSHA (Salvation) is to lead a life of RAMA, of pleasing all. Thyagaraja tells us that a life of selfless service to make the world auspicious and happy is far superior to sitting in penance to God uttering any Vedic MANTRA like Gayathri, Ekakshari, Panchakshari and Astakshari. (I wonder when I hear that there are some "swamis" now, who for their own

vanity and self aggrandisement are coining MANTHRAS of their own names and asking their blind pitiable disciples to chant everyday to get salvation! What should we think of these blind and mischievous Swamis and the blind and ignorant disciples? It has come to my notice that a particular Swamiji is indicating a Manthra with his own name having sixteen letters, SHODASAKSHARI MANTHRA! Being a person of humility and sympathy, I only pity this swamiji and I pity more the blind disciples around him. As a brother human being I only feel shy at the vagary, and I don't like to reveal his name because he is an example of a host of such hypocrites in the society any where in the world, not only in this Vedic land!

The name "Rama", indicates a jewel of a person (PURUSHOTTAMA) endowed with the triple supreme and amiable qualities of Truth, beauty and goodness. He is termed by Sri Ramanuja as BHUVANA SUNDARA MURTI (an embodiment of beauty of mind, word and deed) and is to be imitated, admired and adored. This has the sanction of Geetha in which it is stated that the uniquely well established famed good person of any age is the "standard" for imitation by the people of that age.

Hence the practice of worshipping the real apparent Purushottama is advocated in the Visistadvita siddhanta; God as Purushottama can not be conceived. He is a real wise man who has attained this knowledge of surrendering to the goodness, and acting to help others. Others despite their learning, scholarship and erudition, despite their vain meditations, chantings and penance, are to be considered ignorant. They are people roaming in the darkness; having

eyes they are unable to see the truth, having ears they are unable to listen to truth, having the tongue they are unable to speak the truth and having the mind they are unable to think well and know the truth, which is God. Here you must be quite clear in understanding what God is when we say "God is truth". "Truth" here is not simply a truthful word referring only to speech, "Truth" is the cause of creation, existence and destruction. It is the truth of the universe, the omnipotent Universal life-giving energy, the cause of existence.

Saint Tyagaraja advocates that goodness is the BHAKTHI BHAVA (The path of devotion). He admires the righteous qualities of Rama, the Purushottama, as described by the sage, Valmiki. "Rama" is a model creation of Goodness by Valmiki, which he did with the kindest earnestness to reform the society. Valmiki or Tyagaraja wishes that every man should be a Rama. The man must follow the good qualities of Rama, and possess them and exhibit them in his life, in his contact with other human beings.

Let us now understand how saint Thyagaraja describes the righteous qualities of Sreerama in a Telugu song, "SUJANA JIVANA RAMA" which is rendered into English below:--

O! Rama, of a life of righteousness!

O! The beautified Rama with the ornaments of good qualities!

O! The conqueror of Anger, the embodiment of peace!

O! The admired, even by BRAHMA, The perfect profundity of ALL VEDAS!



O! The neat and pure bodied Rama, with the pleasant fragrance of SRI CHANDAN!

O! The mighty Rama in mind and physic, and in equipment for peace or war!

O! The wide charming eyed!

O! Rama, the wedded to all wealth that you share with us!

O! Rama, the wedded to Sitha, the Jewel of ladies!

O! Rama, the sweet tongued!

O! My Rama, which name-word is the path of salvation!

The Tharaka Manthra or

The Thirumanthra!

O! Rama of a unique biography and History!

O! Rama, the celebrated son of DASARADHA!

O! My dear Rama, noted for a dignified and most righteous discharge of duty or DHARMA!

O! Rama, Thou art really the Jewel of the RAGHU dynasty!

O! Rama, ever praised by this Humble Thyagaraja!"

These are the supreme good qualities of Rama described in the song. To meditate upon Rama means to acquire all these pure and divine qualities and to lead a righteous life of service. Such a person is a real RAMA BHAKTA and not a Sanyasi (monk) who does not have either mental or physical pursuits in the service of humanity. For a real BHAKTHA there is no place for total renunciation, for a stubborn penance, and for a very hard life of physical suffering in an exaggerated austerity. One can be simple and humble; that is all; he need not put on the guise of a monk just to be

recognised by all others that he is a monk. The path of Devotion advocates efficiency in the discharge of his chosen duty with a spirit of happy and voluntary service to the society. He should be happy enjoying the righteous pleasures of life and service and he must strive hard for the enjoyment of life by his brethren. Such a person is in the path of Rama; such a person is RAMA BHAKTHA; such a person is RAMA.

The phrase "THYAGARAJANUTHA" (praised by Thyagaraja) has a very fine real meaning when the word, Thyagaraja, is taken not as a personal proper noun, but as a common noun ! what is the etymological meaning of the word, "Thyagaraja"? "Thyaga" is "KARMA PHALA THYAGAM" which means to refer to a person who is KARMA PHALA THYAGI, dedicated to efficient discharge of duty with a spirit of selflessness. His renunciation is not from duty but from the gains or profits of his work or duty. Then the word "Thyagaraja" means "the king of the Thyagis" i.e. a supreme Thyagi. And God is really admired and adored by a real Thyagi and not by a selfish prosperous person. The eligibility for you to worship God is that you should be a KARMA PHALA THYAGI. So God is THYAGARAJA NUTHAHA, the universal life energy surrendered to and adored by selfless, service -- minded - persons of simplicity and humility. So God is "Thyagaraja nuthaha" and not "Anybody-NUTHAHA".

In these four foregoing songs of Saint Thyagaraja, we find the essence of the Vedantha, the essence of the Geetha, which is a systematised substance of all the Upanishads. In this we have the DIVYA GNANA and the

DIVYAGNA (The Divine knowledge and the Divine Order) of Sri Ramanuja who advocates a life of surrender and service. Hence I call this, the substance of these four songs, **"THYAGARAJOPANISHADH"**, (What Thyagaraja spoke).

Let us recapitulate and revise the substance of Thyagarajapanishad so far dealt with elaborately. Let us now record the gist in nutshell of Tyagorajopanishad :-- "God is all and in all, **CHITH** and **ACHITH**.

"The Divinity is incomprehensible and indescribable; No one deity of the plurality of deities can exactly represent the Divinity or God. Even if we say it is the Universal energy pervading The **PANCHA BHUTAS**, it remains beyond comprehension.

"A righteous life of service is to be preferred to the chanting of any "Manthra" or penance.

"The apparent Divinity just before us is the **PURUSHOTTAMA** (the Jewel of Men) whose qualities we should follow. The Purushottama described in the epic is to be imitated in leading our life."

This is the gist of Thyagarajopanishad. This is the gist of the Geetha. And this is the Divine knowledge and divine Order (**THE DIVYA GNANA & DIVYAGNA**) of Sri Ramanuja through his Visistadvaita philosophy.

"Therefore by "Hinduism - Devotion -- conduct", we conclude that the omnipresent (Vaishnava) power is beyond comprehension, that the **TRIBHUVANA SUNDARAS**, the Epic **PURUSHOTTAMAS**, are for our imitation in life and that we should lead a pure life of action, selfless and servicable."

The good conduct is the good religion; it is the religion of religions. It is the BHAKTI MARGA, the path of Devotion and Universal love. For a person sans good conduct, there is no religion; there is no devotion; there is no realisation of truth; there is no aim, no aspiration; there is no life's fulfillment; he lives in vain; his life is useless to him as well as to the society of which he is one.

This is the truth relating the God and DEVOTION. Understand this TRUTH. Follow this TRUTH in life. This is Geetha Saram conveyed through the wisdom of Thyagaraja, Gana Brahma.

Om Shantihi !

4. WHAT IS SOUL ? (ATHMA VICHARAM)

Catch this truth :

The term, athma vicharam, in sanskrit has two meanings :

Athma is taken to mean "soul" and it is of two kinds, the Jivathma (the individual personal soul), and the paramathma (the Supreme all pervading soul). So "Athma Vicharam" means the search for truth of what soul is.

Athma also means "that which belongs to one self". So "Athma Vicharam" means thinking about himself or about what belongs to one-self, or to be particular and deeper, it means thinking about himself, what he is, his origin and his end. This thinking of oneself in this context of birth, life and death perhaps led the person of the old to imagine a Supreme all pervading self or soul different from or related to his self or his soul.

The word, Athma, in its original etymological meaning should have meant "Of oneself". "Atma Griha" means "my house". "Athma Vishayam" means "my affairs". "Athma snehitha" means "my close friend". The etymological meaning of "Atma" relating to "One's own self" perhaps after a journey of many applications, ultimately came to refer to an abstract power (self) that makes the body live.

So this search of the abstract power, that gives an individual, life, perhaps led the thinker imagine an abstract power absolute, of which his individual abstract power of life is a speck or a part. Thus the "Jivathma" and the

"Paramathma", now the terms for discussion, would have been evolved, and the discussion about The soul (Athma) has been never ending even till to-day. Even if the Supreme genius of Geethacharya, in Bhagavad Geetha, could dispel humanity's doubts about "The soul" in clear and unambiguous terms, the so called scholars and pandits, the priests and some Gurus made it again more and more abominably complex and un-understandable with the tinge of their ignorance, their incorrect understandings of the scriptures other than Geetha, their old customs that had been there before the advent of Vedantha (the Science of spiritualism), their superstitions, their non-understanding of the essence and conclusion of the Geetha and so on.

Hence the need lies here in these Pentagon Essays to discuss "What is soul".

In the context of "Athma Vicharam" the attempt here made is not to define "Athma" for it has been observed by Geethacharya that "Athma" is indefinable. It is only to learn with a clear discretion and discrimination what our ancestors have told about it and what Geethacharya finally has spoken about it.

"ATHMA" has been discussed in the Vedas, more elaborately in the Upanishads, in Brahmasutras, in Geetha and in the Puranas (Epics). But the ideas expressed on this unique subject in all these sources are not similar; they are sometimes inconsistent and sometimes completely contradictory. The struggle about learning "What is soul?" has emanated from among the verdicts of these spiritual intellectuals.

There are different races of people in this world. They have their religions, and each religion has its scriptures. Though individual religions differ from one another in certain beliefs, though the material in the scriptures of different religions is not the same; though different religions have their own conception of SOUL or Athma, yet after all the people of the world belong to one race, the Human race. Man, like any other creature from the ant to the elephant (of course there are smaller creatures than ants and bigger creatures than elephants) is born, lives and dies. Death is certain for any creature, but the period of life is uncertain.

"ATHMAVATH SARVABHUTHANI" (The same Athma pervades all the creatures). According to this principle, it has been the belief of some people that every creature has a SOUL (ATHMA) and all these individual souls are the specks from the "Soul Supreme". (Paramathma).

All the creatures are breathing in oxygen which keeps their life going. Without oxygen no creature can exist in life. The oxygen that is in every creature is in fact a part of oxygen pervading the space or universe. When the whole Universal space is taken into consideration, the total oxygen perhaps is constant like the sea level which is constant in any corner of the world and in any part of the year. If oxygen is life-keeping and life-giving agency or energy, it should be related to the Easwara Shakthi, the all pervading energy which is the Soul Supreme. This is the opinion of some logical thinkers. It is in a way not completely contradictory to the descriptions of Eswara Shakthi, the Universal energy, as given in the scriptures. In this case it is perhaps correct that if the individual life or soul is called "Jivathma",

the all pervading life-giving and life-keeping energy should be called PARAMATHMA.

It appears scientific and logical that the PARAMATHMA (In the above context), which is omnipresent, inestimable, incomprehensible and eternal without a beginning, a middle and an end, should be named Easwara Sakthi, the overlording force. This Easwara Shakthi is one of the Thatvathraya. As a result of describing this omnipresent and over-lording energy, the Easwara, in a figurative language (personification and apostrophe) in the Epic literature, some representative terms crept up as "Bhagavantha, Devaha, Visveswaraha, Brahma, Vishnuhu, Sivaha, Jaganmatha, Easwari etc. in masculine or feminine genders. These Epic terms and names for the abstract unlimited energy gave a twist to the thinking of the man about spiritualism. Strangely the figurative term used for the fact became current and the fact is either forgotten or receded into darkness or to the background.

So resultantly in course of time, in the past, in the Epic period, man left the idea of an unlimited all pervading energy and began to believe that there is a personified God with unlimited powers, that He (the pronoun in the masculine gender began to be used for God (personified) which is a figurative representative word for the Omnipresent energy, which in fact should take the pronoun It in the neuter gender) is responsible for creation, protection and destruction, that man should pray to Him for the fulfillment of his desires, that God determines a rebirth for the person after death according to his good actions or bad actions, that man gets sufferings in this world or in the world beyond

due to absence of God's grace, that he gets comforts here or there owing to God's grace etc. This way of thinking and belief came up in all religions with some similarities and with some controversies in the respective scriptures.

Who can guess the actual time in the far past when life took shape (creature)! Is it possible for any, the scientist or the philosopher, to comprehend the origin of man? That is why creation is said to be eternal without a beginning, i.e. a beginning which is not traceable. In the long past history of the development of man, the time of the aboriginal man is not traceable, the times of stages of his development are not traceable in the context of physical habits as well as in mental growth. The origin of script, the origin and development of speech and language, all these are wonders of the past. How the writings of the scriptures in a systematic and grammatical language had their origin, how language got its figurative style, how the ideas of man were first revealed in speech and recorded in language, all are wonders of the past. Before the advent of scriptures of any religion of any part of the world, how long it took for humanity in the development of thinking and speaking is a point about which we can not be definite regarding the time and the innumerable minute changes of development.

But what is conspicuously apparent is that the scriptures like the Vedas which are said to be the first writings contain references to personal soul (Jivathma) and the Universal Soul (Paramathma).

Even to-day in our country's history the time of Vedavyasa could not be correctly fixed. It is not known when the Vedas took their full shape verbally and then in writing

before Veda Vyasa, who is said to have systematically culled the Vedic literature.

It was Veda Vyasa who in Prasthanarthaya (Upanishads, Brahmasutras and Vedas) showed certain SUTHRAS (Principles or formulae) like "Atmavath Sarva Bhuthani" (The same Atma dwells in all beings), "Thatvamasi"; (you are that) "Ekamevadvithiyam". (It is one without a second) etc. It was Vedavyasa who in the Puranas (Epics) produced stories on the above sutras. The result is that scope is afforded to establish diverse theories regarding the oneness of the similarity between and the difference between the Jivathma and Paramathma. (The personal and individual soul and the supreme and divine soul.)

It was perhaps in the time of Veda-Vyasa himself or a little time after him that one, titled as Charvaka, established in his literature, Charvakam, that there is nothing like Athma existing separately outside the bodies, that it does not enter the mother's womb from outside and that the soul emanates from the growing lump (PINDAM OR FOETUS) in the mother's womb. This philosophy of Charvaka has come to be known as realistic in the scientific society.

Veda Vyasa's ideas about soul are to be taken by belief, where as Charvaka's ideas are adopted by the scientists and realists. The Charvaka philosophy appears like the fore-runner of a strong atheism and also Marxism.

What has been evolved at length is that there is a vast gulf between the two philosophies. Vyasa's and Charvaka's, regarding the SOUL. Their views are quite contradictory. The one says "There is the SOUL", the other says "There is

no-SOUL" in the context of the soul entering the mother's womb from outside. The one says there is a Beyond for the soul after the death of the creature; the other says that there is no Beyond for the soul. The one establishes the theory of rebirth; the other denounces it.

THE TRUTH should be in between these two extremities. That truth, if it is truth, shall get the approval of both these extremists, the atheists and the theists.

To find out this truth the only source shall be The Geetha which is the standard scripture and which is the Last Testament. We do not denounce the scripture; we honour it. We should not be led by some misrepresentators and diverse commentaries; we should for ourselves approach the Geetha with a pure, blank and unpolluted mind; we should for ourselves understand the truth.

It is an undeniable fact that Geetha is the last Testament on Hinduism. It is our standard and our goal. It is our guide, friend and philosopher. Geetha is praised by great wise sages like this in a sloka in Sanskrit (SARVOPANISHADO GAVO). Its substance in English is the following:--

"All the Upanishads put together have taken the form of cow. Lord Krishna (Geethacharya) is the cowherd milking the cow. The milk is GEETHAMRUTHAM, the milk-ambrosia. The man who could drink this Geethamrutham is Arjuna."

The Vedas are chronicles as well as philosophical pursuits. They are in fact a complete account of the life of Aryans, social, ethical and philosophical. They are in a way a

mixture of all these aspects. Vedavyasa made a classification of the combined Veda (knowledge- that which tells you) and divided it into four parts or four Vedas. All the Upanishads put together reveal the ethical and spiritual aspects of the Four Vedas. All this knowledge is presented very briefly in Brahma Sutras and hence each Brahma Suthra has a large purview of knowledge and wisdom. The Bhagavath Geetha which is the sum and substance of the ethical and spiritual knowledge and wisdom of all the three foregoing writings is a very systematic presentation of the philosophy of YOGA, an attachment to the righteous discharge of duty with a detachment from the ordinary and unrighteous lustful ways, an attachment to the really spiritual (SATH), a detachment from the unreal (Asath), an attachment to service with a spirit of selflessness and surrender with a detachment from selfish and lustful actions of ambition and self - aggrandisement. The Geetha is a unique, eminent and spiritual composition in essence dealing with all beliefs of the past upto its time, and depicting the most real and desirable YOGA (KARMA PHALA SANYASA YOGA) which is the path of bliss (MOKSHA) for the individual as well as for the society. It is universal in its content and appeal. It is the last and final Testament on life and its fulfillment. I am telling this repeatedly and at length to explain that the authority and standard for the so called Hinduism (which appears complex with its all - receiving - nature of a Bhagavn - BHAGAVAN, means, a fully matured wise person, a saint who is capable of receiving any thing without the least agitation or perturbation and with a most composed and peaceful manner like the sea whose level is constant despite rain or the flow of rivers into it-is Geetha.

The Hindus believe that the Upanishads are Vedantas dealing with the unique Universal omnipresent energy or agent responsible for creation; (protection) Existence, and destruction (End). The Geetha summarizes the Upanishads in a most systematic development of progress of thought to understand truth and to make personal life and Universal life a bliss. Hence is our approach to Geetha as an authority on YOGA SASTHRA. (The science of attachment to the righteous discharge of duty with a detachment from everything that is evil.) What is evil? Evil is that action which makes unhappy the doer as well as all others connected with him in a way, directly or indirectly.

Let us observe further more how the great sages and Bhaktas value the Geetha as an authority.

"SAKRITH GEETHAMBHASI SNANAM SAMSARA MALAMOCHANAM"-- Leading a righteous life as per the tenets of the Geetha is a thorough bath which purifies the man (house-holder - GRIHASTHA) from the filth of the family life infested with ARISHAD VARGA (the six enemies, the six bad qualities) and the SAPTHA VYASANAS (The seven types of attractions getting us sufferings).

"EVAM SHASTRAM DEVAKI PUTHRA GEETHAM"-- (The Bhagavath Geetha is the only unique science or YOGA. It is complete, perfect and the ultimate). It is the authority on YOGA.

"SARVA SHASTHRA MAYI GEETHA"-- Geetha is the essence of all sciences on YOGA and Ethics.

I have dealt with these observations here about GEETHA to make the pious readers realise that the GEETHA alone

is a perfect authority according to which our present topic in this chapter, what is SOUL, is to be discussed and understood. Let us first learn what GEETHA tells us about SOUL; let us then come to an understanding of the TRUTH about ATHMA.

There is a general or a common mistake committed in the procedure of the study of, and consequently in the understanding of the Geetha. Of course the following of the precepts of the Geetha by man is very rare, for which the improper study of the Geetha, the improper understanding of the Geetha and the improper explanations of the Geetha without touching the CHARAMA VISHAYA (the just and immediate important point) are responsible, the third point being most tragically responsible. The so called great sanskrit scholars with profound linguistic erudition are just leading the people into darkness. Of course they amuse the audience with their sonorous tone, with illustrations and examples, with elucidations and puns, with stories of fun coupled with present circumstances of social and political life etc; they have not grasped the truth of the Geetha as "Surrender and Service"; they do not lead a life of surrender and service; they go on with their scholarship in the name of philosophy for their own ends, personal or selfish or institutional. The requisite qualification for any person to read the Geetha and to understand it is knowledge of Sanskrit language or any language into which Geetha is translated, together with the spirit of surrender and service. Without the latter, the mere scholar is just like an actor on the stage with robes and wings, with face powders and other beautifying material: He acts on the stage for a

few minutes like Rama or Krishna or Nala and goes out of the stage and remains in his own natural ordinary human form and fashion. The mere scholar with his guise of form and speech amuses the audience for a time, gets his reward for his performances, and goes out as an ordinary empty minded person leaving the audience in the same state in which they have first come to the place of the lecture.

Once I had the occasion to attend a philosophical lecture on the Gnana Yoga of Geetha to be delivered by a very eminent Sanskrit and English scholar and orator known for his austere life and propagation of Geetha. I was disappointed, for the lecture was like teaching word meaning in a pedantic way; the mission was ignored about the spirit of surrender and service. I was in fact not in the habit of attending lectures on Geetha, for I can understand Geetha in my own humble way by reading it myself. When you are able to read, you read for yourself a letter received by you from a friend or relative. You do not approach another to get it read out for you. You do it when you are illiterate or when you are blind, full or semi. So also if you are educated you can read the Geetha in any language when you do not know Sanskrit; You can understand it and you can follow it if you have a mind for it.

I remember I attended Geetha Lectures in my sixteenth year for the first time and I got some interest towards Geetha though I could not grasp the truth of it then. After an interval of sixteen years I had the occasion to sit amidst the audience to hear Geetha lecture. During all the sixteen years of interval, I used to read the Geetha now and then. I could

be led to the slight ray of understanding the truth of the Geetha in my forty fourth year when I had the occasion of reading about the Visistadvaita philosophy and the life of Sri Ramanuja, its propagator, I was led to learn that Ekakshari Manthra (Om) is a shortened form of Ashtakshari Manthra (Om NAMO NARAYANAYA) which is called Thiru Manthra (The most Sacred redeeming principle) and which is the substance of the charama sloka of the Geetha, the charama sloka being the essence of Geetha BHODHA. I could grasp that the charama sloka advocates surrender and service; I began to understand Geetha slowly better and better, I could recognise that in every chapter of the eighteen chapters of Geetha, there is a hint at "Surrender and Service," which pervades the whole Geetha. I felt that Anjaneya, who is a symbolic representation of surrender and service, has his head with the loud speaking mouth in the "Charama sloka" with his long redeeming tail extending through all chapters of the Geetha backwards with the tip of the tail appearing at the first word of the first sloka of Geetha, DHARMA.

I began to imagine to see the happy face of PRAHLADA in the charama sloka of the Geetha with all his long struggles against lust and untruth, (symbolised in Hiranya Kasyapa) beginning from the first word of the Geetha, DHARMA.

I could see the face of relief and elation of Vibhishana announcing the Charama manthra of "surrender and service" in the charama sloka of the Geetha with all his struggles against ambition, lust, power and untruth (symbolised in Ravana) beginning from the first word of the Geetha, DHARMA.

I could also see the dominating and enlightening countenance of BHISHMA in the Charama sloka of the Geetha declaring the principle of "surrender and service" with his long life of dedication to righteous duty beginning from the first word of the Geetha, DHARMA, and extending through the eighteen chapters with a progress without any retreat at any stage in the middle.

I could also see the successful and joyful face of Yamunacharya (The religious teacher of Sri Ramanuja of the Eleventh Century) in the Charama sloka of the Geetha. It was Yamunacharya who first discovered the truth of the Charama sloka of the Geetha since the time Geethacharya had given out the Geetha. It was with this discovery of the truth of the Geetha in Charama sloka that Yamunacharya (Alavandar) gave a twist to Religion that religion was meant for surrender and service.

Again I could see the sympathetic smiling and glowing broad countenance of Sri Ramanuja (Yathiraja and Udayavar) in the Charama sloka of the Geetha, for it was Sri Ramanuja who for the first time received the knowledge of Charama sloka or Thirumanthra, and who, without caring only for his own salvation, openly announced it to all people, and propagated the Visishtadvaita philosophy of "Surrender and Service" to the humanity. This alone is the substance of all religions and this alone should be the substance of all religions. It was Sri Ramanuja who supplied inexhausting oil of his interpretation to the wick of Charama sloka which has been vaning and keeping its last breath against the storms of ignorance and indifference, selfishness and cruelty etc. of ages and centuries from the time

of Lord Krishna to the Eleventh Century A.D.; of course thanks to Yamunacharya and Sri Ramanuja, who have kept the Torch of Geetha, The Charama sloka of the Geetha, on the mountain peak! It shall never vane; it shall never get! extinguished; it continues to glow brighter; the moths of disbelief and diverse false ideas get burnt in it; human beings from their dark wells of ignorance, walk out and proceed till they reach the spot of this spiritual Torch, the Charama Sloka."

Oh! I have taken you far and wide into the multifaceted philosophical slopes!! Let me take you back to my narration of my experience at a Geetha Lecture in my thirtyseventh year . . . yes . . . Once I had the occasion to attend a philosophical lecture on GNANA YOGA by a famous eminent swamiji . . .

The programme had already commenced by the time I reached the venue. I could not have been late if it had been my intentioned attendance. I was moving in car along with a friend of mine by the side of the venue; he wanted just to see the swamiji and then go. As I had to follow him there, it happened that I should listen to the lecture of the swamiji. I did not like to leave the venue of this lecture along with my friend who wanted to leave the place after a glimpse of the swamiji. It has been my habit that if I wanted to attend any programme, I would take my place of seating at least fifteen minutes before the scheduled time. Sometimes the commencement would be inordinately late. On such occasions I would leave the place in disgust before the actual commencement. But if I was there sitting at the time of commencement, I would never leave the place till it came to an end. That was my habit.

At the philosophical meeting now under reference, I silently walked towards the front as near as possible to the dais by a side path along the compound wall and took my seat in a chair; there were about fifty chairs only and many of them were vacant. There were about one thousand people sitting on mats or on normal ground facing the swamiji. A young man silently crawled to me half bent, and softly whispered to me that I had to pay a rupee as charge for sitting in a chair! I grasped everything and silently put a rupee note into his hand. I had already noticed, a minute before, some one coming and sitting in the chair, this young man approaching him, and the former silently leaving the chair and taking his seat on the ground! It was a repeated fun, to many others, to those who were occupying chairs legitimately and to those who had occupied the ground from the outset.

There was a prominent gentleman sitting on the dais near the swamiji. That gentleman was not one whom I knew personally, but I knew about him being a prominent one of the same town. He was a prominent person in prosperity and in powerful positions previously. He was known to the general public as a person of self-consciousness thinking too much of his family, his wealth and his exalted life of luxuries. He was said to be in a way miserly in the sense that he was not kind to beggars, neither to his servants nor to any person who approached him for some financial help. But he was said to be charitable by certain types of people - he would ask a pandit to write eulogising poems about him and he would honour the pandit with half of "One hundred and sixteen rupees amount" at a special meeting

convened for that purpose attended by snobs chiefly. He would give some donation for some social institution in the presence of a V.I.P. with the aim of gaining approach to the latter for some future occasion this was the type of that prominent gentleman. He could not boast of any learning in philosophy and his life was thousand miles away from the path of virtue and service. When I saw him sitting near to receive a reciprocatory smile from him when the swamiji himself felt that he was giving expression to an important and interesting point. At the juncture of these two smiles accosting each other, the host of snobs sitting nearer used to show their teeth to draw the attention of the prominent gentleman. I was tempted to ask my neighbour sitting in an adjacent chair why that gentleman was sitting on the dais near the swamiji. I learnt from him that this prominent gentleman had at the outset inaugurated the philosophical programme and he was garlanded by the swamiji also in addition to the garland offered him by the organizers of the meeting !

During my stay there for an hour the swamiji read out and explained the meaning of about four slokas from the Gnana Yoga of the Geetha. Ofcourse his erudition, his scholarship both in Sanskrit and English, his sonorous tone, his eloquence etc. all were really commendable and superb. There can not be a second word on that.

He was explaining certain Sanskrit terms in a skilful way -- with attractive examples -- Buteswara, Sviyaprakrithi, Kama, Krodha etc., the Four varnas, Vikarma, the Dhvandva, Brahmarpanam, Atmasamyama, Yagna, Thatvavettha etc., Incidentally he brought some terms from

Bhakthi Yoga and presented them in a splendid way to the astonishment of all -- Aksharam; Avyaktham, Kutastham, Achalam, Dhruvam etc. It was really a splendid feat in eloquence and erudition. (It is generally said in a comic vein that philosophy is a subject where the speaker does not know what he speaks and the hearer does not know what he hears ! I can't pass a remark on the speaker here, but as one of the listeners I can say the observation is correct) - I saw the listeners bursting into laughter sometimes, nodding their heads and often licking their own lips as if they were relishing the intellectual feast. I was feeling sorry for my inability to relish it so well!

The lecture came to an end and the swamiji left the dais with the prominent gentleman and both of them left in a car; by the time the car started, people flocked towards the vehicle with folded hands and slapping their own cheeks with their own purified and sacred hands!

A young swamiji, who was a disciple of "The swamiji", the Lecturer of the day, came up to me when I was still standing at my seat waiting for the dispersal of the crowd so that I could leisurely walkout without any jostling. This little swamiji, with a fine black beard and hair on the head oiled and dressed well, was once my student in the Intermediate junior class and after discontinuing studies being unable to cope up with the minimum requirements for appearing for the annual examination, became a disciple of the grand swamiji, and having been with him for two or three years acquired some profficiency in speaking about the so called spiritual material as per Geetha. He has taken to the same job of going about the villages to give lectures on

Geetha and to receive rewards or allowances or alms as the case may be. It was understood later that he found this job more comfortable and lucrative than most of his classmates who having prosecuted studies and obtained degrees and diplomas, were still jobless moving about petty political leaders for succour.

This young man (this old student of mine) came up to me with a pleasure and a little sense of pride about himself being a disciple of The Great swamiji and asked me with an encouraging smile, "What sir, how do you feel about the lecture to-day?" I felt embarrassed. I asked him in reply in a soft tone, "What do you feel about it? What is swamiji's mission or instruction to the audience to-day? To what extent are the audience reformed today? With what change of determination will they begin their day's work tomorrow morning in contrast with to-day's morning? What was the conclusion of the Swamiji today? etc."

The little swamiji was blinking at me. I began to whisper to him, for I did not like to draw our neighbours to our conversation, "philosophy is to direct life. Geetha directs us at every stage in every chapter for a life of surrender and service without a stress on this during the course or towards the end of a philosophic discourse, it is useless and purposeless He explained "God is everywhere. He is in you, he is in me. He is this and he is that!" "Then what if", I continued. What if God is every where? What if He is Great etc? What is this knowledge for? If you say that God is in you and in me, you must be capable of developing a universal brotherhood, a universal sympathy, which leads to a pure life of sympathy. When this is not stressed

regarding how you have to reform yourself, what is that pedantic knowledge for? my dear boy, I am sorry you have chosen a life of idleness. You can't keep up this beard for long! for you shall have also other competitors soon!" Both of us left the place later each in our own way.

I was glad to learn a year later that this young man became a clerk in a private factory. When I happened to meet him accidentally one day, I told him, "I am glad you have taken up a life of activity. Be efficient and sincere in the discharge of your duty, and try to see how far you will be capable of being of some help to those who are concerned with you. Remember this is the principle of Geetha which you were lecturing about!" He left me with a joyful expression of gratitude)

Let me come to the main stream : There is a general or a common mistake in the understanding of the Geetha. Though Geethacharya (Lord Krishna) had presented eighteen consecutive chapters (Yogas) in Bhagavadgita, we should not forget that the Geetha is one, one Yogasastra, each previous chapter particularly and all the previous chapters form an introduction to the chapter on hand. The first chapter is an introduction to the second; the second clubbed with the first form an introduction to the third chapter. So also for the last chapter, the eighteenth chapter, the seventeenth chapter is an immediate introduction and all the consecutive chapters from the first to the seventeenth chapter form the full introduction for the last chapter. Actually for the last sloka of the Geetha, the charama sloka (Sarva Dharman Prithyajya), the whole

Geetha is the introduction. The whole of Geetha is one long lecture on Yoga Sasthra. It is the essence of all the Upanishads (The Vedanthas) and it is one long Upanishad told by Krishna to Arjuna and is to be called Sri Krishnopanishad. It is simple ignorance on the part of a scholar to think he has mastered this yoga or that yoga of the Geetha. These Yogas are not water tight compartments. They all put together form the spinal chord leading to the mind. It is wrong to arrange lectures on Geetha on a particular chapter alone. I often hear that lectures on Geetha are arranged once only on Gnanayoga, only on Bhakthi yoga etc. These two seem to be thought of by the people as most important. Many of the scholars seem to have learnt these two chapters only well to enable them to give lectures on these two yogas. They may be lectures of a linguistic nature to engage the audience in a way. The people constituting the audience are not at all taken to the spirit of the Geetha. The Geetha should be understood as a whole.

There is a fine and apt relevance established between one chapter and the two chapters going before and going after. The second chapter cannot be grasped without reading the first just as the fourth multiplication table cannot be learnt by the child without mastering the third.

In chapter 1 of the Geetha, "Arjuna Vishada Yoga", Arjuna's indecision, his bewilderment and Krishna's attempt to turn him to the Truth are given.

In chapter 2 Sankhyayoga, the truth of existence, the creation and death are described. The essential need for action or Karma is shown.

In chapter 3 Karma Yoga, the proper discharge of duty (Karma) is explained. As a result of proper and skillful discharge of duty the person must attain Gnana (knowledge tinged with wisdom).

In chapter 4 Gnana Yoga, it is shown how man should come out of ignorance (Agnana) and attain Gnana.

In chapter 5 Karma Sanyasa Yoga, The discharge of Karma with proper Gnana is a preparation for Karma Sanyasa Yoga which is to be understood as Karmaphala Sanyasa Yoga (renunciation from the fruit of action and not from action— An active life with a spirit of service and not an idle life.) This spirit of action for service is obtained by a person who has got an understanding of what Jeevathma is and what paramathma is.

In chapter 6 the Atma Samyama Yoga, the discipline of the Atma in relation to the Jeevathma and Paramathma is cited.

In chapter 7 Vignana Yoga, the properties of Paramathma are cited. It is also indicated that a person of this knowledge becomes unaffected by controversial forces of nature or his circumstances of life.

Dear Reader, are you not following with interest how each chapter is leading you to the next chapter? Is it not like a continuous biography? It is in fact a continuous regular and systematised progress of the development of the mind followed by the relevant consequential righteous actions.

Chapter 8 tells about how Paramathma, the soul su-

preme, is Akshara parabrahma is the Eternal soul supreme. The knowledge that you are one with this Eternal omnipresent energy leads you to a state of Moksha (Bliss free from any bondage).

In chapter 9 the knowledge of soul supreme as the overlording and presiding omnipotent energy is given to the person who is in the path of Moksha, and who is devoid of selfishness and hatred for others. This chapter is aptly named "Rajavidya Raja Guhya Yoga" (The knowledge Supreme, Sacred and secret) because it is the knowledge to enable you to understand the mystery of the working or progress or the being of this universe.

In chapter 10 the manifestations, all and innumerable, of the overlording omnipresent force or energy, are presented to the wonder of the reader or listener. It is stated that the omnipresent energy is in every atom, and so you can conclude that the omnipresent energy is not in you in a particular quantity and in a particular place; it is in every atom or molecule of your body, in what velocity and density you do not know. This is the Vibhuthi Yoga ("Vibhuthi" means manifestation.)

In chapter 11 The Viswarupa (the total manifestation of the whole universe) is presented to the person who has by now attained the knowledge of the omnipresent energy in Chith as well as in the Achith aspects of the Universe. He now begins to recognise the kinship existing between one being and the other not of one species but of the whole universe.

Dear Reader, it is hoped that you follow in what a wonderfully methodic way and in what a logical and psychological method the progressive doses of knowledge being imparted in the consecutive chapters of the Geetha.

In chapter 12 Bhakthi Yoga, to the person, who has become a sarva Bhutha priya, (one who loves all and hates none with an awareness of kinship), the real interpretation of Bhaktha (Devotee) and Bhakthi (Devotion) is presented to the bewilderment of the superstitious scholars and the hypocritical swamijis, and to the enlightenment of the logically and scientifically thinking people. The real Bhaktha is described as an active worker, selfless, serviceable and the qualities of a Sthitha Pragna Yogi, who is unaffected by all dual controversies.

In chapter 14 the knowledge of the body and the soul, their inter relationship and interdependence the attachment to and the detachment from the body of the soul, is given to the Bhaktha or The Sarva Bhutha Priya, who is now mentally qualified, and prepared to receive the knowledge of chapter 14, Kshetra - Kshetragna Yoga. (Kshetra - Body - Kshethragna = Soul.)

(Kshethra = Nature, Kshetragna = Purusha the omnipresent Energy)

A very superior knowledge of the Body and Soul is given in Chapters 14 and 15.

In Chapter 15 (Purushottama Prapti Yoga) The Bhaktha Superior (The superior Devotee) is taught to identify the omnipresent Easwara Energy as Purushottama, the jewel of the Human Beings, a Thribhuvana Sundara endowed

advocate reciting everyday a particular Yoga and so on and so forth. Very few wise people are seen advocating that we should live Geetha and not simply read and recite Geetha.

Strangely we find certain pandits, scholars, the so called Gurus and Sanyasis discussing and arguing which Yoga is to be preferred, Karma Yoga or Gnana Yoga or Bhakthi Yoga? Can there be a greater ignorance and foolishness than this? What about the other Yogas in respect of this foolishness! Where are these great men? Where are they leading the common man? These great people are having their day and they pass for learned and wise men! How should they be punished for their corruption, for their hypocrisy, for their misguidance? They should be named, they should be discarded'

There is the delicious chutney prepared with chilies, salt, tamarind and some other things. If we begin to say which is good chillies or salt, which is best salt or tamarind, what is the answer? We want chutney and not separately each ingredient!

WE drink and enjoy water. Water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. If you begin to question which is better oxygen or hydrogen, what is the answer?

The relation between any chapter of the Geetha and the gist of the Geetha is similar. We want the gist!

That is why Sri Ramanuja lays stress on the Charama Sloka of the Geetha, with Upaya (plan) and Abhaya (Fearlessness-Bliss).

"Svadharmā Gnana Vairagya Sadhya Bhakthaika Gocharam Narayana Parabrahma"- says Periyalwar or

Vishnuchitta."The supreme omnipresent force (The Divinity) can be understood only through the path of Bhakti, and how is this path of Bhakthi to be caught? -- By discharging your righteous duty (Karma) in the proper way, you get the Gnana; with the help of real Gnana you attain detachment from the ordinary ways and this is real vairagya or Thyaga. From this state of Tyaga you attain the real Bhakthi by which alone you understand the paramathma:.

While one Yoga is a step to the other, what is the meaning of these empty pots making much sound regarding which yoga is better ? Karma Yoga or Gnana Yoga or Bhakthi Yoga?!

There are some so-called scholars who say that Adisankara preferred Gnanayoga to Bhakthi yoga and that Sri Ramanuja preferred Bhakthi yoga to Gnana yoga. These pitiable creatures do not know the A B C of Sankara and Ramanuja ! The Charama sloka as per Sankara's commentary of Geetha is the last sloka of the Eleventh chapter of the Geetha, "Mathkarmakrin mathparamo" is explained more elaborately in the next chapter of the Geetha, the twelfth chapter, Bhakthi Yoga!

The preference of these ignorant scholars is just like each one of the six men of Hindustan touching one part of the elephant and saying that the elephant was that part alone !

So also there are different versions about "What soul is in our scriptures." Diverse opinions are expressed by different people. But there seems to be no clear understanding about soul in many. The different versions given

(1-42) "Intercaste marriages and intercasteism result in the sufferings for the caste itself. The parents(Pithrudevas) lose protection (from their sons) by way of food and drink (Pinda-Udaka) and they become ineligible for Swarga. (Su+Varga- A happy society)." there are the words of Arjuna.

Arjuna is a Symbol for an ordinary man . Krishna is a symbol for an Acharya or Guru.

The belief expressed by Arjuna that the parents whose sons get involved in intercaste marriages lose prospects of Swarga, should have been much in vogue in the epic times. This was the observation of Arjuna, an ordinary man of custom and superstition. It was not the opinion of Lord Krishna.

By this superstitious observation of Arjuna, the superstitious scholar or swamiji or Guru is interpreting that the parents, who are in heaven after death, should be given Pindodakas (Food and water which have acquired an unauspicious meaning by their reference to the burial ground or funeral ceremonies) by their surviving sons, in the absence of which the parents in swarga lose their eligibility to remain in swarga (heaven), and they have to go to Hell (Narakaloka).

This interpretation of the sloka breeds superstition about the Beyond, the hell and the heaven, and the importance of funeral ceremonies and the annual death ceremonies, the Nitya karma for ten days after death, the monthly ceremonies etc. This is not the correct interpretation.

The proper and meaningful interpretation universally valid and approved for all time is this :-- The relation and

contact of children, born to parents of intercaste marriage, or of a second marriage etc, are not so thick, affectionate and binding or respectful as those of children of parents of the first and one and the same marriage of the same caste couple. In this case there is a wider and stronger and permanent relationship existing among families of the same caste. There is a bondage and an affection. The old parents are sure of protection from their son by the law of society. If a widowed mother, after begetting a son, takes a second husband even of her own community, can this stepfather expect a treatment from the stepson similar to that which is received from a legitimate son ? If the second marriage is of inter-caste nature, the bondage between the step father and the step son will be more strained. So can the father expect from an illegitimate son or a step son food (pinda) and drink (udaka) in his old age? Does he not lose swarga? (A happy plane of life - a status of a line of comfortable men). So the parents of illegitimate marriage, second marriages and inter caste marriages cannot be considered as belonging to swarga (Su + Varga: good and systematic class). They actually belong to Durvarga (Bad society). This is so, chiefly in a capitalist economy of a caste based society. But the situation in a communistic society regarding this type of marriages or illegitimate production of children is quite different, for in this society there is no question of a son giving protection to his old father, no question of supplying food (Pinda) and drink (Udaka) to the old father, because the State takes that responsibility. This is why the interclass marriages are a general failure in capitalist society, more so with middle class and poor class people.

This is not the opinion of Lord Krishna. This had been the view of the philosopher for a long long time even before Krishna from the prevedic period through the upanishadic period upto Krishna's time. This sloka gives the ancient belief of the people about rebirth and transmigration of the soul. But we find Sri Krishna's critical opinion about this in slokas 11-27, 28, 29. Before going to these three slokas of Krishna's opinion, let us clearly discuss the truth of the above Sloka, 2-21.

By the above Sloka, man immediately thinks about the body of an old man, which is weak or emaciated sans eyes, ears and teeth and unable to move. The sensory organs are not active. The man feels that life is miserable and troublesome for himself. Naturally, being unable to bear the physical sufferings and the untold indifference of others towards him, the person prefers death, for he is unable to enjoy anything with his present old and useless body, for sometimes he may even be unable to eat and to drink and even to move a little. In such a wretched condition it is quite reasonable that the old man prefers death. That is alright.

But what about the death of a young man in the full bloom of his youth, of a powerful youth-soldier, of a baby etc.? Does this young man, who has become a victim to an accidental death, prefer to leave the present body and to take a new body? If every dying man takes a new body, should not the population be constant? Further, for one, who believes in the transmigration of the soul, there are the Heavens and so many as seven heavenly worlds and there are the Hells and so many as seven under worlds as per the Epics! In this case there is possibility for the

population to grow less and not to grow more! What about the growth of all other creatures which are also said to have souls! Try to understand how far this sloka is true. Lord Krishna only cites this as a common belief that had already been there,. He gives his correct opinion in slokas II-27,28,29.

(2--27) "Death is certain for everybody who was born; for the person that is dead, a new life is certain as per the belief that birth and death are unending sequences. In this case also there is no need for you to be sorry about the battle that brings about deaths."

Here the important points are not birth and ,death but the way how life should be lived. Everybody knows that death is certain, But nobody knows about an after-life. The former is apparent, and the latter is a belief. The Geethacharya, who is skilful and psychological in his approach, does not directly and strongly condemn the popular notions and custom. He appears to honour the custom, he slowly presents it in the consideration of the listener and then in the end shows the truth, in the light of which the listener is led to leave the superstitious view.

2-28 "All the creatures are born from out of some unknown energy, live for sometime, short or long, and then die and disappear into that unknown energy. Hence there is no need for sorrow about death."

This is reasonable, logical, of common sense, scientific and true. This is Geethacharya's view and teaching. This is our authority. He says the creative energy is unknown. The creature alone during life till death is seen. That is all. There

From this it is quite clear that any word and every word in the Vedas is not an authority. The wise intellectual reads the Veda and tries to understand and follow it with discretion. Hence what all has been said about soul in any scripture is not our authority -- Sri Krishna's word alone is final and authoritative. He himself says in sloka 2-29, that nobody has a clear idea of what soul is though every saint or scholar has been talking about it from mountain tops. The sloka 2-28 should give us a satisfaction that all logic about the so called "soul" is useless and unnecessary. We should try to lead a good life. That is all.

But yet in Atmasamyama Yoga and the Vignana Yoga there are certain references to soul and transmigration of the soul. It should be noted that they are not the personal views of Lord Krishna. They have been the diverse views expressed in diverse ways by the different upanishadic saints. Krishna does not contradict them again and again for he has already made himself clear in sloka 2-29.

In Vibhuthi Yoga, Rajavidya Raja Guhya Yoga, and in Viswarupa Pradarsana Yoga, it is made clear that the omnipresent Vaishnava Energy is manifest in every creature and in every activity and conduct of the creature. He says, "I am also the contradictories-- I am life, I am death. I am fame, I am defame. I am the skill in the warrior, in the saint's meditation, in the poet, in the gambler etc. What more examples do you want that there is not a separate individual soul as transmigrating. The soul is the highest and the most sensitive and powerful aspect or feeling of the living creature, especially the man. It is like the electric bulb that burns with the help of the electric current. When the current is

absent, the bulb stops burning. The burning aspect of the bulb is not having an individual quality and does not go out anywhere.

The soul is the feeling of "I" in the man, which is absent from almost all other creatures in that degree.

"Ahameva Param thathvam"-- says Thirukkachi Nambal, Sri Ramanuja's first spiritual Guru. "It is that omnipresent aspect that is said to be "I" or the "Soul" or the "Athma".

In Kshetra Kshetragna Yoga, Geethacharya exhorts man to understand and recognise that the Athma Energy in him is a part of the omnipresent energy. It is from the raining cloud that there are different pits, pools, tanks, rivers, the sea etc. on this world. The water gets everywhere a little evaporated, half evaporated or fully evaporated from the existing quantities and joins the cloud above. Where is the individual existence for all these in an eternal way?

We need not break our heads on this imaginary subject soul, Athma. It is just like measuring the sky with your cubit! That is why Lord Krishna removes you from all these controversial aspects of all the scriptures, which he has also cited in the Geetha very many times, and directly leads you to a clear path of discarding all these ways, all these ideas, etc. and to accept the principle of surrender and service.

"Athma" is the feeling of the mind of awareness of himself "This is I, this is mine."

"Moksha" is detachment from "Dehabhava", detachment from selfishness.

Thirukkachinambi, Sri Ramanuja's first spiritual Guru, tells, "Dehavasane Moksham cha". Moksha is the absence of feeling about one's own body and one's own comforts or one's own sufferings.

The scriptures of Nammalwar, the last and the greatest of the Alvars (who lived in the eighth century A.D., at Thirunagari on the banks of the river Tamraparni in South India) tell like this, "Athma emanates from the body. Athma lives upon Athma. Athma lives in Athma. The body holds the Athma. The Athma makes the body live and feel and think. The Athma undergoes the effects (feelings) of the sufferings and comforts of the body. The Athma attaches itself to the body."

There is no body without the Athma; There is no Athma without the body. Without the property of Athma-energy, without the feeling of the Athma-energy, without the existence of the Athma- energy in the body, the body is said to be dead, without the body the Athma has no place to remain or exist or to emanate.

From these three sources, from the slokas 2-28, 29 of Lord Krishna's Geetha, from the suthras or Sukthis of Nammalwar, from the truths of Thirukkachi Nambi given to Sri Ramanuja, the man, who is clever and wise, with proper meditation, will have to understand what "soul" is - what "Athma" is.

Athma is purely a scientific and psychological term and not an ununderstandable and incomprehensible spiritual term.

In fact all knowledge and wisdom regarding "Athma"

should only lead to a life of humility. Simplicity, sympathy and service with a spirit of Universal brotherhood.

Very often I am repeating the points about Athma in this chapter. Why? Because the grass roots of superstition and the age long false notions are such. Even if the grass becomes dried up in summer and it is removed by scraping the ground with a spade, yet the grass peeps up with all energy and brightness as soon as the first shower of rain falls. That is so with the superstition and age long notions. Just as the father repeats his instruction often and often while sending his evader-son out on some work, so also I am often infested with the fear that my readers also run the danger of going back to their notions, whose tightening bonds are strong and powerful; The readers may be sympathetic to my earnest repetitions !

I am not an atheist to say that there is no "Athma". I am not a theist to believe that the "Athma" is something spiritual that enters the mother's womb from outside and that it transmigrates to another womb after the death of the person. So I do not say there is no Athma; and I do not say there is athma in the wrong sense. I say there is "Athma" and my meaning of "Athma" is different, but true.

I have already told that the meaning of the word, "Athma" is the feeling or awareness of the thinking mind that "I am", "It is mine" etc. This was the original meaning and it is the true meaning. Examine the meaning of Athma in the following words :-- Athmanandam = one's own happiness; Atmaparisodana = self - introspection; Athmaja = one's own son; Athma Sakshi = self witness to his own deed. Athma Jalam = His own water (urine) etc. So "Athma" = I, my or mine. "Athma Bhava" = The feeling about himself.

The embryo in the mother's womb acquires life and the power to grow of its own accord owing to the combined effect of the five elements put together. The embryo, which grows for a month, becomes foetus, and grows in fatness day by day with full life, and when it comes out of the mother's womb into this world, it is called a baby or a creature. So every creature of any species is like this from the ant to the elephant. Though every creature has life, it is only the human being which acquires Athma Bhava (The feeling of "I" "my" "Mine") as it grows. This feeling of the mind is the superior quality of life. The superior thinking of human being, different from all other beings, is this feeling of "Athma Bhava".

It is in some quadrupeds, more so in a monkey, that there is the feeling of Athma Bhava very momentarily and it vanes suddenly. That is why animals do not have a perfect feeling of their own place of residence, their own collections of things etc. In certain cases these are present which are like instinctive actions.

If we separate a cow from the herd, it does not feel the change. If a master, who had kept the cow for ten years, sells it away to another master, the cow does not feel the change. It does not feel its separation from the calf nor vice-versa. It means the animal does not have Athma Bhava, the feeling of "I-mine". But in human beings the Athma Bhava is apparent even from months' age. You give a big packet of peppermints to a baby of three years, you cannot take one again from the baby, for the baby is selfish and assertive, the baby does not like separation from the mother, whom it owns.

So this unique and superior feeling of Athma Bhava is in the human being and it is this awareness of Athma Bhava in the human beings which is responsible for their selfishness, aspirations and development. It is this aspect of human beings that is responsible for all human societies or institutions, from the family up to a world organization.

This "Athma Bhava" in the individual human being, which fosters selfishness, asserts more and more selfishness and does anything for its own comfort irrespective of others' conditions, is called "Durathma" (evil soul). this "Athma Bhava" which develops and sublimates within itself a good will for service to others, which has got feelings of kindness, sympathy and cooperation, is called "Paramathma" (a good soul.)"

The universal self which is all-pervading is "Paramatma" for the natural forces always do good equally to all and they are constant in their properties and gifts. The sun which is one of the five elements of Nature (Pancha Bhuthas) shines on the good man as much as it shines on the evil man. So also is any natural force which is pervaded by the Universal omnipresent Vaishnava energy and which is rightly called Paramathma and this Paramatma is one and the same.

The Athma Bhava, which is dual in character, being selfish or selfless, is of two types in individual human beings as Durathma and Paramathma respectively, the Athma Bhava generally and originally being called Jeevathma. The Athma energy which binds together any two atoms of physical material is the Athma energy that gives rise to life, the

capacity to grow and to move in vegetation and in creatures and the Athma energy in the latter is called Jeevathma.

"Athmavath sarvabhuthani"-- is a scriptural quotation which has already been mentioned once. "The same Athma dwells in all the creatures"-- is the meaning. We should understand from this that it is the same omnipresent energy that makes any creature live; it is the same supreme life force that is responsible for the existence of any individual creature. There is no possibility to presume individual souls here. Does this Scriptural quotation refer to the so called knowledge of the Soul or does it refer to Ethics?

There was a time thousands of years ago when man in his crude nature imagined the existence of a personified God or Goddess (not one) and he thought of getting gifts from the deity by offering animal sacrifices. It was imagined by him that human sacrifice was the most supreme of all sacrifices to invoke the mercy of the deity. We have instances of human sacrifices in Epic stories. There is a reference for this in the story of Jadabharatha in Mahabhagavatha, for example. Even now we have instances of such atrocities being performed with the influence of some superstitious Swamijis.

It would have been that a great kind sage once upon a time in the Vedic period might have taken into his mind the serious atrocity of human sacrifice and that he would have tried to stop it with an ethical spirit. But he should move psychologically and in a convincing way. He would have announced this Suthra or Principle-- "Athmavath Sarva Bhutani." "As all the creatures have got within themselves

the same Athma, you can give any animal sacrifice to the deity. Any animal sacrifice is as good as human sacrifice. By this we should not conclude that the sage advocated animal sacrifices. It should have been his main aim to stop immediately human sacrifices. How could it be possible for him to denounce all types of sacrifices at one time immediately? How was it possible for him to denounce plurality of gods? You can imagine the fate of radical reformers or even the scientists against customs and traditional beliefs in every part of the world in olden times ! So wise saints would bring in reformation slowly and steadily little by little.

So in course of time on account of the propagation of this Suthra, man stopped to a large extent the practice of human sacrifice, and he began to offer other animal and bird sacrifices to the deities. Then the merciful and wise saints would have again propagated like this, "The athma in the animal is the same as the athma in man. Just as we think our life precious, we should also think any other animal feels its life precious. Instead of offering animal sacrifices, flowers, fruits and other eatables can be offered to the deity."

Thus the Sukthi, "Atmavath sarvabhuthani" seems to have first originated not as a spiritual saying about jeevathma and paramathma, but as a guideline for ethics and for kindness to all.

It was on this principle that Buddha had advocated universal brotherhood and kindness to animals. So what is aimed at is even this Sukthi is not about the so called Athma as maintained in the puranas with the aspect of transmigration. It should be inferred that religion is chiefly meant

for social reformation. "Man should be good. He should know that he should be good. At least it is better he is made to be good even out of some threat like God fearingness. God fearingness seems to be a device by which goodness for the sake of goodness can be infused. It is on account of some social laws and penal code man is prohibited from doing certain social evils. To that extent the criminal code has a deterrent effect; out of fear of detection, trial and consequent punishment man is afraid of committing social evils. So also we find people observing good ways of life sometimes due to their belief in God punishing them and their belief in "The Beyond".

Yamunacharya, Sri Ramanuja's spiritual teacher told clearly for the first time after Geetha's advent, that religion is for social service. Geetha tells all through that "Karmaphala Thyagam" (Activity with a spirit of surrender and service) is the most important for our life and bliss. While the purpose of religion is this, it has been thwarted by superstition that religion is to know God and to reach God etc.

Sri Dayananda Saraswathi, the founder of Aryasamajam gives certain Vedic terms, Yagna, Homa, Sraddha, Tharpana etc. fine meanings for adoption in life. They are also similarly explained in the Geetha. But unfortunately the thwarted so called spiritual applications for these social and moral terms have come up to the surface. The superstition has always been the enemy of the truth.

Please be clear that the word, superstition is not at all associated with spiritualism. I admit both the words with their clear meanings with a realistic and scientific outlook.

All knowledge of the Universe regarding the contents and properties of every element of the five elements (Pancha Bhuthas) and all knowledge of physical and chemical nature of every aspect of the universe including all energies and the incomprehensible life energy is called "Spiritualism". This is also a scientific term. It deals with the spirit or energy pervading each atom of the Universe. This total amount of knowledge regarding the universe is constant in quantity which is infinite, and this universal knowledge is "Spiritualism". That amount or fraction of knowledge which man could attain and master with actual experiment, experience and realisation, with all deductions and inductions, with all applications for life etc. is called "Science". Science is ever growing and growing. It is the mental and physical effort of man. It shall ever develop. Its search and development will never stop because spiritualism which science is investigating is constant and infinite. Hence if spiritualism, the universal knowledge is symbolised as a circle, science the acquired knowledge, which is a part of spiritualism, is a segment of the circle with the two bounding radii almost touching each other. Superstition is that which is against science and truth; It is against spiritualism which is truth. Spiritualism is understood and explored through science which is opposed to superstition. That science and spiritualism are antagonistic to each other is a vain talk. The spiritualist has got an emotional intuitive grasp of the limitless universe which drowns him again into wonder and bliss, and hence the spiritualist lacks expression to explain the universe as a whole. The scientist has got a measured grasp of the universal knowledge which has its own limitations, and the scientist is able to explain his knowledge (Science)

in clearly defined terms. Horizon, east and west, the north and south, the sky etc. are spiritual terms for they are beyond our catch; they are only to be comprehended in terms of incomprehension. Hence the spiritualist and the scientist are friends, the latter's aim is knowledge, the former's end is bliss. The scientist jumps over the fence of wonder and bliss when he invents or discovers, and falls into limits from limitlessness. Science with all growth ever remains in its smallness. It is infinite in relation to spiritualism; in its largeness it is infinite.

According to Manusmrithi in chapter on Brahmacharya (3-70,81 & 4-21). two types of yagnas are to be necessarily performed :--

(1)Brahma Yagnam-- The performance of this Yagnam (productive performance or project) constitutes mastering of Vedas (Scriptures) and sastras (sciences), teaching Vedas and sastras to the disciples, worshipping the omnipresent force in the morning and in the evening, and mental concentration in a specific physical posture.(Padmasana)

(2) Deva Yagna :-- This yagna constitutes service to the learned and the wise, company of the learned and the wise, purity in mind, word and deed, charity, helping in the development of literature and arts etc.

The above two yagnas are to be performed by man two times a day, morning at sunrise and evening at sun-set.

There is a third type of "Yagna" which is called Pithruyagna, which every householder (Family man or Grihastha) must perform every day, at noon. Nobody can be exempted from this.

The performance in which the elders (like Devas, Rishis, old people, learned people, parents etc) are served with devotion is called the Pithru Yagna.

There are two aspects in the performance of the Pithru Yagna-- (1) Shraddha (2) Tharpana.

What is Shraddha? Shrath means Truth (Satyam). The process by which Shrath is understood is called Shraddha (Interest). The action of performance which is done with Sradddha is called Shraddha.

What is Tharpana? The Sradddha with which the elders like the parents (Pithru Devathas) are satisfied and made happy is called Tharpanam.

This Tharpana is performed to make happy the living patents and elders and not at all to make the dead parents happy. This is what Dayananda Saraswathi tells in his book, Sathyardha Prakasika.

The Sathapada Brahmana cites four types of Tharpanas (1) Deva Tharpana (2) Brahma tharpana (3) Rishi Tharpana and (4) Pithru Tharpana. These four are daily duties of a Gruhastha (family man)

(1) Brahma Tharpana :-- Brahma is a highly learned person who has mastered all the four Vedas thoroughly. The wife of a Brahma who is as learned as her husband is called Brahmani. The performance (Bath, food, water, bed and other services) by which a Brahma or Brahmani is satisfied and made happy is said to be Brahma Tharpana.

(2) Deva Tharpana :-- Deva is a learned person just below the rank of a Brahma. The wife of a Deva, who is

equally learned, is called Devi. The devoted performance with which a Grihastha can satisfy and make happy a Deva or a Devi is called Deva Tharpana.

Deva does not mean an angel of the heavenly world. Deva or Devara means the same, so also Devi or Deveri. There is a word which is current in Telugu also-- Jangama Devara -- This is a sanskrit term-- Jangama = moving, nomadic. Devarà= Deva= learned scholar. So Jangama Devara means a learned scholar who does not take a fixed residence or a fixed native place but goes about the country from place to place propagating wisdom and knowledge. When people have neglected their duties the words, by which they were called, lost their meanings, acquired strange and in a way to say, meaningless meanings, for today "Jangama Devara" means a man of that community, Jangama, and preferably a beggar. So also the words Brahma, Brahmani, Deva, Deveri etc. lost their original sacred and realistic meanings.

(3) Rishi Tharpana :-- A "Rishi" is a great Learned Sage who takes on to himself the responsibility of educating young boys. His wife, Rishipatni, is also equally educated and learned, and she teaches and educates young girls. The performance of service to "Rishi and Rishipatni" and making them comfortable and happy is called "Rishi Tharpana."

(4) Now let us come to "Pitru Tharpanam" about which there is a great confusion and an untold digression. The word "Pitru" stands for father or parents and all other elders related to the family by blood or by service. They include very many as detailed below, not only father and mother:-

- (1) "Soma Sadas" who are experts in spiritual and physical knowledge.
 - (2) "Agnishvattha," who has understood the qualities and powers of "Vidyuth", Electricity etc.
 - (3) Barnishada, who is a highly learned person.
 - (4) "Rakshasa", who protects your property.
 - (5) "Somapa", who gives medicines and cures the diseases and shows ways of health.
 - (6) "Havirbhujā" who conserves education and knowledge and who lives upon milk and fruits.
 - (7) "Aryava" who gives you good instructions for life and who lives upon milk and ghee.
 - (8) "Sukalika" who comes for charity and tells you proper timings for discharge of items of work.
 - (9) "Nyayakari" who gives judgements to punish the criminals and to reward the good people.
 - (10) "Father", who has brought you up with food, comforts, education, vocation etc.
 - (11) Father's father (grand father) Pithamaha (if he is alive).
 - (12) Prapithamaha (the father of Pithamaha (if he is alive).
 - (13) Mother, who has brought you up with food and comforts and with all care.
 - (14) Pithamahi (father's mother).
 - (15) Prapithamahi (mother of Pithamaha).
- Besides,
- (16) Wife, who assists you in all your work.
 - (17) Sisters.
 - (18) Relatives.

(19) Cousins.

(20) Other great people who visit your house.

(21) Old people who come to you for food.

(22) "Athidhi" who calls on you for food without previous invitation on your part or previous intimation on his part--

The above categories of individuals, to the extent they are available in your own household, or to the extent they happen to call on you, deserve your service. They deserve your kind treatment with food, water and shelter to take rest sometimes. The "Grishastha" with the assistance of his wife should try to make them happy with all hospitality. Of all the above, the parents who are immediately present in your house, and who are dependent on you and who are responsible for your development are Gods present before you. All the above categories of people and particularly Mata (Mother) and Pitha (father) are called Piturdevathas. It should be the duty of every Grihastha (House holder) with the help of his wife, every day by noon, to give a bath to his parents, to give clean clothing to them, to give them food and water (pinda, udaka) to afford them comfortable bedding and to afford them all satisfaction and happiness. This pious, sacred, humanitarian daily duty of a Grihastha is called Pithru tharpana.

You must understand how sacred and good this duty of Pitru tharpana is to a son, what a fine custom it is in the interest of peace and happiness of family and society etc.

The ignorant priests in course of time gave an unhappy twist to this Vedic custom: the result is that it has become a

belief in the Hindus that Pithru Tharpanam is to the performed once in a year for the dead father or mother. Superstition still remains in the context of the performance in this meaningless way. The so called theist falls into this superstition and calls it a spiritual action, which is wrong. He does not understand the meaning and the purpose of Tharpanam, The atheist does not care to explore the origin of this sacred custom and performance, and with a shallow mind denounces this custom. While the former is dark minded, and latter is shallow minded both are wrong. You must understand the meaning and purpose of Pithru Tharpanam correctly and perform it to your living parents This is the scientific approach to spiritualism and not the belief in superstition and blind custom, It is a sorrowful affair that the Hindu Society is steeped in superstition in so many aspects of life. There are some, posing as learned scholars, directing the Sanathana Dharma (Traditional Custom and beliefs) into falsehood and superstition; there are some others who openly and thoughtlessly declare themselves as enemies of sanathana dharma.

When the priest or the scholar or the religious head interpreted Pithru Tharpana as a performance (ceremonial) to satisfy the departed souls of the parents who are in the other world, immediately the belief about Athma and the transmigration of the Athma took root. A wrong philosophy crept in. We are now coming to the subject of this chapter on "What is soul "(athmavicharam-soul exploration). The ignorance and wrong traditional belief is at fault, not the priest or the Swamiji. As the blind man is led by the blind, the ignorant priest is guiding the ignorant man; that is the tragedy.

Though Geethacharya explained through Geetha that Paramatama or Parabrahma pervades all animate and inanimate atoms or aspects of the universe, though that all pervading energy is termed as universal Athma or soul, though Sri Ramanuja in his Visishtadvaita commentary of the Geetha explained the Easwara energy of the "Thatvathraya Gnana", yet the ignorant priest or the ignorant traditional scholar is unable to get out of the wrong belief about the so called Soul . This is bankruptcy of philosophy. The philosophy in itself is not bankrupt! The wrong interpretation has reduced the meaningful into the superstitious.

The inconsistencies and the controversies in Prasthan Thraya are also responsible for the wrong understanding about "ATHMA" as already observed. But the scholars who are intellectuals twist their interpretations somehow or other and convince the ignorant followers. They talk bombastically about unity in diversity and diversity in unity. But they are always in diversity; they support diversity; 'the result is unity is not recognised and the philosophy has become chaotic.

The same electricity flows; there are different types of bulbs, different machines etc. etc. working with the help of electricity. We see the diverse applications and diverse aspects of the electrical energy but we do not see the electricity. this is an example for diversity in unity.

The seed germinates under certain conditions of the interaction of the five elements (Pancha Bhuthas). This energy which makes the plant grow does not enter the plant from outside as the electricity enters the bulb from an out-

side agency through wire life emanates from out of the plant. So also life emanates from out of the foetus in the mother's womb, either of any creature or human being. Life is emanating from within every plant or creature. This is an example for diversity in unity.

It is particularly true that the life in the human being acquires such power of self consciousness in the human being of an awareness- "This is I, this is mine" - this awareness makes the human being supreme over all other animate objects or creatures. This feeling of the human mind is called "ATHMA". It emanates from the supreme life of man, and as the life energy diminishes under certain circumstances, this feeling of "ATHMA" also diminishes and when life-power diminishes completely the creature is said to stop functioning, and it is an end to the creature or the death to the creature. The body+ life= creature. Creature-life=body.

Every theistic religion in the world had a sincere attempt to dispel wrong notions and wrong beliefs; but it so happened that custom and superstition predominated over reason and religion. Religion should be for the realisation of the truth. Religion is an exploration for truth.

Whatever the diversity of ideas regarding Athma in all the Scriptures before Geethacharya, Geethacharya explained in clear terms in Vibhudhi Yoga and in Visvarupapradarsana Yoga and also in Kshethra Kshethragna Yoga that "Bhagavath Sakthi or Bhagavantham" constitutes all, moving and not moving, all, every atom, space and all energy with diverse expressions and effects. While the last and final Testament, The Geetha, tells, like this, diversity of Gods

and Goddesses, diversity of names and worship- diversity alone survives, reigns supreme!

There is the oil saucer, there is the wick, there is the flame. you have lighted the wick with a burning match stick. There is the conducive atmosphere for the flame. The wick is burning bright. Suddenly due to force of weather the wick is put out. Where has the flame gone ? Has it gone to the match stick from which the wick was lighted at first? No! So also the feeling of Athma or the power of life ceases to exist under lack of certain circumstances. The body ceases to function. This is death! Where has the life gone? It has gone nowhere! The life is generated in the body due to certain functions of the body with in and without. Under certain conditions the life is no longer generated and kept up. This is about death and about life and about Athma!

A small candle is burning, cover it with a basket; the candle no longer burns; why? there is no supply of the required air. When it was burning, there was the required air in the required quantity. Supposing there is a sudden forcible wind; the candle is put out; why? there is the air in a greater quantity than is required. So the burning goes on under certain circumstances. When it is in the Foetus stage, it grows and grows under certain conditions of production of life-energy from within the body. The life energy acquires varied and unknown powers under certain conditions. This is all about life and Soul.

"Jathasya Maranam Dhruvam" - "Having been born, death is certain to any creature." The Sanskrit scholar, the philosopher, with a great gust, with an awareness that he is learned and wise, utters this sentence as a very important

Sanskrit quotation from the scriptures about Birth and Death! What is the fun of this? Who does not know this? Does not the beggar, or the criminal or whoever know it? Is there anybody who thinks that he would not die? Except great creations of the poet like Hiranya Kasyapa or Ravana etc. Do you require knowledge of scriptures to say "Death is certain,"? - - - . Vain talk gains ground on a platform for philosophical discourses!

Everybody has got the so called "Athma Gnanam". Knowledge of himself that he is sure to die; that he does not know when and how. Nobody need teach him this knowledge. What is lacking is wisdom and morality! The man knows that he dies, that he does not take with him any of his belongings. Why should he be selfish and cruel? Why should he have hatred for others? Why should he not live and allow others to live? Why should he not think that this alone gets him and the society peace and happiness? This wisdom, this morality man knows! But he does not ponder deeply on them! There are the physical urges of lust and pleasure to which he is a victim! - - - . What I am aiming at expressing is that the knowledge of the so called Athma etc. is meant for an ethical purpose. The ethical purpose is the spiritual purpose! You earn money; you enjoy comforts - This is an ordinary action. You earn money by foul means; you have caused harm to others, you want to enjoy only for yourself; you do not like that others should enjoy life - This is an evil action. You work righteously; you earn money; you allow a great part of it for the enjoyment of others; you are selfless. Hence your action is moral; it is spiritual. That is all. "Spiritual" is another term for "moral". A spiritual

understanding is a deeper understanding. "If I illtreat him, how would he feel? "This kind of thinking beyond the immediate physical appearance is "spiritual thinking".

So Athma Vicharam (What is Soul?) should lead you for a better way of life, here in this world, and not to imagine about an unsurveyed geography of an imaginary world, the Heaven!

I support "Athma Vicharam" - I admit the question "What is Soul?" I expect you to have a scientific understanding of your existence here; I expect you to have a logical understanding of the use and application of the word Athma or Soul. I expect you to be moral, or good or spiritual (deeper and not shallow) in your thinking, in your talking and in your doing.

Epics describe Heaven, Hell etc. "Vaikuntam" is a heavenly place of Bliss according to Vishnu Purana. The Alvars, who knew the depth of Devotion as delight, who were not at all superstitious, instead of denouncing "Vaikuntam", they said, "Thirumala is Vaikuntam; Sreerangam is Vaikuntam". They were fascinated by the beauties of nature around the place of the temple, by the meanings and implications of the form of the idol, by the mission the idol is said to give to the people. They could understand and appreciate that the Ranganadha idol of Sreerangam is a symbolic representation of the whole universe and that the Venkateswara idol is a symbolic representation of the ideals of surrender and service. Hence such a place with such a symbolic representation of truth is a place to sublimate man to better ways of true and happy life, and hence such a place is called Viakuntam by Alvars, Vaikuntam in this world. Vaikuntam

means a pure white shining place: a place of pure thinking, and pure happiness and pure knowledge and wisdom. The life of a good man is Vaikunta. while the meaning of Vaikunta is such even according to Alwars in their writings, it is strange that the priest, the preacher and the ignorant scholar continue to establish a superstition about it for people who blindly follow them.

While in some upanishads it is described that the life or Athma in every creature is a part of the universal soul energy (Brahmam or paramathma), it is strangely and graphically described in Jadopanishad that the Athma leaves the dying person in Sukshma Rupa in the size of the thumb and travels from one heavenly world to another heavenly world till it reaches Vaikuntam on the eleventh day, and that the Soul will have to be fed with Pindodakas from the surviving son from this world, or else the soul will have to go to the under worlds (Naraka Lokas). That is why, according to this Jadopanishad, the custom of Nithya Karma (Daily ceremonies for the dead every day for ten days after death) is there in vogue and on the eleventh day Vaikunta Samaradhana ceremony is celebrated by the surviving son.

Swami Dayananda Saraswathi in his famous work, Sathyardha Prakasika, criticises vehemently this false and wrong custom of Nithya Karma and Tharpana for the Soul in the other world? He questions the Sukshma Rupa of the Soul! The Pindodakas offered by the surviving son are here alone, and they are offered to the crow. The Soul is said to have come to receive the offerings in the shape of a crow! And he condemns the folly of this custom which is a result of blindly following a particular scripture and the ignorance

of the meaning of Plithru Tharpana Manthra as already described in this chapter.

On account of this Jadopanishad the false notion of the transmigration of the soul is strengthened. It is a tragedy of human customs!

The custom of Nithya Karma was originally practised by the purohit (Brahmin) class, for they were the custodians and followers of the scriptures. Later it spread to the Royal families, for the kings had to be honoured and they had every facility to celebrate the rituals. Then after a very long time the vaisyas, who were rich, wanted to enjoy the dignity of having the ability and sanction for this Nithya Karma ceremonies. Now it is being followed in all communities depending upon their status in society and the priest is ready to conduct the ceremonies who ever pays him the allowance in cash and kind (Dakshinas).

Thus this false and wrong notion of the soul also is considered as knowledge and wisdom by a section of the society.

According to this Jadopanishad, by Nithya Karma the Soul is saved from sins. In this case every person is said to have committed sins! The priest argues that some sins would have been committed even without the knowledge of the doer on account of lack of awareness of the actions, sometimes in childhood.

Hence the problem is how to unify knowledge of truth from diverse scriptures of one and the same religion, from diverse scriptures of the different religions of the world!

Different customs prevail among different sects, different races and nationalities of world population.

As far as a Hindu is concerned, he should at least follow the scripture of his religion, which is agreed upon as the paramount truth and tenet. The Geethacharya has enumerated different beliefs which prevailed in the society in his time and prior to that, and he has given his own thoughts while summing up a particular idea or custom. I have also quoted in this chapter what the Geethacharya himself tells about Athma (Soul); and we have to follow it. The Geetha's version about Atma is really scientific, is of common sense too and it should influence our thinking.

Geethacharya says, "The ancestors, the sages, the yogis, the Tharkikas, the Scholars, all struggled for ages to understand and define the Athma but in vain. It is something beyond anybody's comprehension. The substance of what all I have said about it is that it is incomprehensible. Hence you need not bother about it. The struggle is too much and in vain for the impossibility." The suggestion is that you should follow morals and lead a moral life that brings you and your society peace and happiness. You are further enlightened about "Nithi Marga" (The path of morality) in the succeeding chapter, which is the Charama Vishaya (the last and most important tenet) of the pentagon essays of this volume.

The water which we drink is a compound of oxygen and hydrogen. Is this point told anywhere in any scripture of the world? It is described as an element, one of the Pancha Bhuthas. When the Greatest Sage could not understand

the composition of the water that he drank, what is the fun of these people exploring the soul incomprehensible, and giving it a shape, a quality and a habitation? It is all unsurveyed geography that has polluted human thinking and corrupted human customs and manners.

Geethacharya while explaining the limitlessness of the universal soul graphically maintains thus - "I am everything seen in the universe, moving or not moving - I am the mountain, I am the creature, I am the river, I am the veda etc. etc. etc." Then in the second stage he says, "I am the Himalaya among the mountains; I am the human being among the creatures, I am the Ganges among the rivers, I am the Sama Veda among the Vedas etc. etc. etc.". Thirdly he says, "I am the loftiness of the Himalayas; I am the flowing speed and energy of the Ganges; I am the kind of the human beings; I am the music of the Sama Veda etc. etc. etc. Fourthly he says, "I am the thinking in the man; even in the gambler; I am life; I am death; I am fame; I am infame; etc. etc. So to sum up, Geethacharya maintains that the universal and all pervading energy in every atom is the Athma or the Paramathma that is responsible for all existence in any form and in no form. Therefore in quite clear terms Geethacharya has defined the Athma as incomprehensible.

This knowledge should lead us to a spirit of surrender and service - No hankering after the Beyond and After-Life!

Even in Geetha (which has with in it some flaws) Vyasa says, "I am the moon among the stars." Evidently his understanding was that the moon was bigger than the stars! And such sages tried to define the incomprehensible

energy. So any scripture is to be read and understood realising the proper implication and purview.

At last to sum up under this Chapter on "Athma Vicharam", we arrive at the following conclusion and wisdom -" The Soul Energy (The Athma) is incomprehensible and indefinable. It emanates from the growing body. It is the omnipresent energy. The Athma Gnana in man is the feeling of self consciousness. The knowledge of Athma should lead us to a good life".

This is the truth relating to "Athma". Understand this truth. Follow this truth in life. This is "Geetha Saram". (The essence of Geetha).

5. The Path of Morality (NITHI MARGA)

Please understand this truth :-

The scripture of any religion can be divided into two aspects, (1) The Divine and (2) the moral.

The divine aspect deals with God, His omnipresence, His description, His qualities, The creator, the creation, the relation between the creator and the creation, the origin, the middle and the end of the individual aspects of natural phenomenon, devotion to God, worship of God, Papa and Punya (sin and virtue), the way to win God's appreciation, the salvation etc.

The second aspect, namely, the moral aspect deals with the principles of Ethics which man should observe in his life's journey for his well - being and for the well - being of society.

In the part of the scripture dealing with God, it is stated at the outset that God is beyond perception, expression and comprehension, and so indefinable. Then again strangely enough God is conceived of in a human form, with moderations, with superb beauty, grandeur and power. He has a wife, a kingdom with several angels as his servants. There is another aspect of Godhood which is a superb human being called the Incarnation of God like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. For these two types of Gods, namely God in heaven is conceived of in a human form, and the superior human being of this world with daily worship conducted by the priests.

In the so called Hindu philosophy embodied in Prasthanas comprising of the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Geetha, there are discourses and discussions about the human soul and the Divine soul (Jivathma and Paramathma)

The ideas and beliefs expressed in the scripture of different religions regarding Divinity and soul are not the same neither similar in some cases. They are sometimes far diverse. Sometimes these ideas expressed in different books of the same religion are also not similar. For this strange situation, Hinduism is a conspicuous example.

There are different sects in Hindu society having their own beliefs and sentiments, the Saivas, the Vaishnavas, the Sakteyas, the Kapalis, the Pashandas, the Asthikas, the Nastikas etc. The religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, the Charvakam etc. also had some type of origin in Hinduism. The later movements like the Brahma samaj, the Arya samaj etc. flourished here. The Vedantha was interpreted as Advaita by Sri Sankara and as Visishtadvalta by Sri Ramanuja and Dvaita by Sri Madhva. And above all the beliefs, the practices, the customs, the modes of worship and the rituals which had been in practice among the people of the pre-vedic period still persist among the people everywhere now in urban areas as well as the rural areas, more predominantly among the so called Panchamas and the tribals. The ideas about God and religion are diverse in all these sects though they all claim that they are Hindus. Hence there is no need to feel for the absence of similarity in this aspect of religion in the different scriptures of the world.

When all religions assert one God, why is not there unity in the ideas about God? Where is then the place for diverse descriptions of God, His Kingdom, His deeds etc? Do you think all these diverse ideas are true? How? Then all these should be facts! Are they? These stand or seem to stand eternally as unsolved problems. This is after all about Divinity as described in one aspect of all religions.

Then what about the second aspect of all religions namely the moral aspect? The scriptures of all religions express similarity in this aspect. These most desirable precepts, namely, respect for elders, respect for parents in particular, love and sympathy towards the children, the meek and the suffering, kindness to all, truth, charity, tolerance, selflessness, impartiality, feeling of brotherhood etc. are stressed in every one of the scriptures. Almost all races of people observe to some extent many of these good sentiments. Hence as there is similarity in the path of morality as expressed in the scriptures of all religions, there is truth about this path of Morality, which is desirable and necessary for individual happiness and for society; safety and peace.

The path of Morality is the boon bestowed on people in general by any religion in particular, which has two distinct aspects, The Divine and The Ethical.

Without the tenets of Ethics, there can not be discipline among people, in any society and organisation; there can not be any development in society - no comfort, no safety, no happiness, no peace whatever. Life here in this world is governed by Ethical tenets. This is what we actually experience, what we actually observe, and what we actually

realise. For such people as strongly believe in The Beyond or the After-life and the transmigration of the soul, the after life or the rebirth depends directly on the papa (Evil or Sin) and the Punya (the good or the Virtue) of the individual in his life here according to their religion and Epics, and so the knowledge of the Beyond is unnecessary. Precisely what is needed is that they should lead righteous lives here to ensure a happy Beyond if there were one, the so called "The Beyond".

There is a sloka in "Bharthrihari subhashitham", the meaning of which you will find enlightening :-

"Let me worship and pray to all the Gods! But it is said that they all are subordinate to the God supreme, who is the creator; hence let me leave the gods and worship the Creator-God only. But the scripture says that God rewards you in accordance with your good or evil deeds! Hence let me worship my own duty. As we enjoy after all the fruits of our actions, I have nothing therefore to do with God supreme or The Creator. I understand and believe that Discharge of Duty is greater than worship of God. Hence I do worship Duty".

This stanza indeed gives us a graphic picture of Humanity's journey to spiritualism in a fine, realistic and logical and convincing way. The history of humanity in its mental and spiritual activity is finely described here :

Thousands of years ago the human race was worshipping phenomena of nature and the forces of nature which were considered stupendous and unconquerable. Their worship of nature perhaps was an outcome of their fear for

natural forces like the wind, the storms, the rain, the floods, the mighty earth, the ocean and the sky, the hot and brightening sun, the moon, the planets etc. Man had imagined a presiding deity for each of the natural forces later like the God of wind, the God of rain, and so on. Man had imagined Goddesses also; and worship of plurality of Gods came into vogue. This appears to have been the thinking of man anywhere in the world once upon a time. In our country particularly the worship of natural forces developed into worship of plurality of Gods by the beginning of the Vedic period. This was the reason, for any Vedic performance, the worship of the plurality of Gods was observed - Worship of Vigneswara, Navagrahas, Ashtadikpalakas, the trinity Gods, the trinity Goddesses etc. There arose in course of time temples and modes of worship to the plurality of Gods etc. The worship of the plurality of Gods continued unabatedly and authoritatively till the time of the upanishads and the Brahma Suthras.

During the period of the upanishads the ideal of one supreme God, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, whose aspect and glory is inexpressible, invisible, and incomprehensible, gained ground among the learned thinkers. The Brahmasutras began to define spiritual terms and spiritual actions. This was indeed a tremendous twist in spiritualism which continues even to-day with the authority of the Prasthanas Thrayam.

The idea of oneness of God, rather the upanishadic definition of God supreme, in our country was prior to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, two thousand years ago, and Mahammad fourteen hundred years ago, propagated the

oneness of God in the western countries. But it is a pity and a tragedy that plurality of Gods still persists in India in many quarters while in the Christian and the Islamic worlds the oneness of God was believed and observed subsequent to the prophets, with a bitter hatred for plurality of Gods and for the races of people observing plurality of Gods and their idols, which people are termed by them as unbelievers and heathens.

After the period of the upanishads, long long before the advent of Buddha in India, it was Lord Sri Krishna, the Geethacharya, who summed up the knowledge and the wisdom of the upanishads, and clearly evolved the philosophy of one supreme soul and the principle of surrender to it. Though the upanishads evolved the truth of one God, the omnipresent force or energy, different ideas were expressed in them regarding the Jeevathma (The human soul) and the paramathma (the divine soul) and the inter relationship between them. Clarifying the diverse views, Sri Krishna in his Geetha, made clear the relation between the paramathma and Jeevathma. The wisdom of the Geetna could be sucked only by a few learned thinkers later, and many of the truths of the Geetha were misrepresented by the pedantic scholars steeped in superstitions due to their age long customs and beliefs and due to their incapacity to move from the accustomed dusk to the bright enlightenment. It is always a capacity for one to change with discretion to truth, but we find it often not the case. Hence a continuous fight between Superstition and Spiritualism, Universal truth and science, always exists.

The wisdom of the Geetha, which is surrender to the universal soul and the spirit of sacrifice and service (Saranagathi Bhava and Karmaphala Tyaga which in essence put together is the Moksha Bhava) did not reach the common man, nor did the so called learned scholars practise it. It was only the twelve Alvars, who lived during sixth to eighth centuries A.D, that propagated through their life and their devotional songs and Pasuras the two fold wisdom of the Geetha, surrender - cum - service (through their pure and selfless lives imitated by devotional people associated with them in their terms). Later the Munithraya established the Devotional way of the Alvars by collecting the writings of the Alvars and by producing literature regarding the wisdom of the Geetha as practiced by the Alvars. The Munitharaya constituted Sri Nadhamuni, Sri Yamunacharya and Sri Ramanujacharya, of whom Sri Ramanujacharya whose life period was from 1017 A.D to 1137 A.D. established the Visishtadvaita philosophy based on the knowledge of Thatva Thraya, and effectively propagated the wisdom of Ekeswara, surrender to the omnipresent Ekeswara (The Vaishnava life force and energy) and service to all creation. Sri Nadhamuni, who established the Vaishnava Mutt for the first time in Srirangam in the tenth century, started the Vaishnava movement when the Advaita philosophy of Sri Sankaracharya was dominant among the Vedic scholars. Sri Sankara belonged to the previous century.

Though Sri Sankara, who lived about 150 years before Sri Ramanuja, propagated the Advaita siddhanta as the essence of Vedanta, he appeared to admit all types of worship and all types of Gods owing to the social

conditions and the beliefs of the people then, by admitting all the six main religions that were practised in the country in different regions in the name of Shanmathasthapana. Perhaps Sankara felt it difficult, and dangerous too, to denounce any of the existing faiths and religious practices that were followed in the country, in principle against the theory of Advaita. The result was in spite of Sankara's commentary of the Geetha, and his theory of Advaita, the worship of the plurality of Gods and Goddesses including Grama Devathas in all diverse forms continued till the time of Sri Ramanuja. It was common that reformers were always victimised by the people of superstitions. It is clear that in our country the Vaishnava Siddhanta (The theory of the one omnipresent God) has done a lot in establishing the theory of oneness of God and Man's surrender to it.

The Advaita philosophy, Thathvamasi, (you are that) slowly came to establish the Suthra, Ahambrahmasmi (I am that Brahma), which was wrongly interpreted and followed by the scholarly community asserting their superiority over others. The Varnashrama Dharma and the caste distinctions came to be valued more and more. The eligibility to study Vedas, to perform certain Vedic performances etc. devolved upon a particular caste as a right, duty and privilege, and as a result the spirit of the Advaita siddhanta was destroyed. Against this background Sri Nadhamuni wanted to establish the principle of the omnipresence of God and the need for surrender to it, which was termed as the Bhakthi Marga (Devotional path). The Vaishnava siddhanta does not allow the plurality of Gods. It advocates universal brotherhood under a universal

fatherhood, the omnipresent life energy, the Easwara. In Vaishnavism there is no place for one to feel superior to another fellow-being.

Though the mission of The Geetha is sacrifice and service with surrender to the omnipresent soul, and love and sympathy to all, this wisdom had been underground for a long time; and it was Yamunacharya, the spiritual teacher of Sri Ramanujacharya, who had renamed the Vaishnava Mutt of Srirangam as Visishtadvaita Mutt, that first gave a twist to the religion that religion was meant for social service with a universal love. Sri Ramanuja, his spiritual heir, took it on to himself as his responsibility to preach the Visishtadvaita Siddhanta that every person, a product of Thatva Thraya, irrespective of caste, sex and class, is eligible for "Prapathi Yoga" which shall lead him to Karmaphalathyaga in discharging his duty with a spirit of selflessness and sacrifice.

The meaning of the sloka of Bharthrihari given above is the essence of the Geetha, which is Karmaphalathyagam.

The Bhagavad Geetha, through a sloka (No.12) in Bhakthi Yoga tells that Kramaphalathyaga is far superior to thapas. (Service with a spirit of surrender and service is far superior to penance).

Why should you imagine the unknown, the Beyond? The results of penance are not known to anybody! Why do you tread on unknown ground in the darkness? Hence follow the path of peace and happiness for you and for the world by following the doctrine of Karmaphala thyaga.

So the path of morality, shown in the Geetha, is paramountly important.

In almost all the eighteen Yogas of the Geetha, the importance of an ethical life is stressed. The slokas from No. 12 to 19 of the Bhakthi Yoga clearly dispel the superstitious view of devotion, and explain in unequivocal terms the importance of the ethics. A real devotee is defined as a person of all good qualities. No importance is cited for the uttering of God's names without knowing their meanings, and for worship of God with flowers and offerings. These ideas are made more clear, logical and scientific in the first chapter of this book.

Sometimes it inevitably strikes to the mind of a thinker that certain religious ideas about God, the Beyond etc. have been employed to lead the man to render good deeds atleast with the attraction of a happy state after death! In this case the discovery of religion is laudable, though in essence and practice religion had bred up superstition in thoughtless people through the distortions caused by immature scholars and wrong interpreters, though the scriptures were well-intentioned!

In MahaBhagavatha, Prahlada gives "THE NAVA VIDHA BHAKTHI MARGA", with which one should surrender to the omnipresent, and be a gentle and pure person (Sajjana). So here also stress is administered on a pure ethical life. All the Bhakthi margas should manifest themselves in the gentle life of the individual.

The sages had stressed the need for surrender in order to develop in the man the spirit of selflessness and service.

But the tragedy and the irony are that the so called devotees, many of them, who are devoid of proper

understanding and thinking, are only stressing the value of worship of idols, selfish prayers for getting boons, the reading of epics or scriptures in a superficial way, the construction of a small temple or a mandiram etc, and they are not at all stressing the importance of efficient and righteous discharge of duty with a spirit of sacrifice and service. It is just like an idiotic student reading a big guide book from the first page to the last page without noting the important and expected points for the examination.

There is a stanza in Telugu Bhakthi Geethamulu, where a real and sincere devotee explains how God is to be worshipped. Please follow the development of thought with care, understanding, realisation and appreciation :-

"Are these blossoms, the Lotus, the Lily, the Jasmine, the scented tiny Jasmine, the sweet scented Oleander, the Leucas, the Chamomile and the Nyctanthes, fit for thy worship, O! The Omnipotent and the saviour? Nay! The only three flowers, precious and fit for thy worship are the pure white blossom of duty, the sweet scented flower of kindness and the attractive multihued and multipetalled blossom of knowledge supreme".

This explanation of genuine worship of the Lord is meant to dispel the practice of idol worship and to foster a real love for God as against a superstitious belief.

This is a revolution in thinking and evaluating the existing customs and practices.

The path of enlightenment and morality shown by the great thinkers seems to have been dedicated back to them; the result is, superstition persists in all its glory unhampered!

Bharthruhari in the second sloka of his Subhashitham maintains, "My good words get themselves digested in their expression itself".

The sages, prophets and acharyas, who were victimised by the superstitious people in their own times, would have imagined that at sometime in future their doctrines of truth would gain ground. It would have been their mental satisfaction in spite of the harassment they were victimised to. It was the fate of the scientists also. The real spiritualists who were moralists, and the scientists who were realists, were victims of superstitious people. The superstitious people even now, though they are scholars and pandits, should be considered barbarous if they can not realise the truth.

The full substance of the sloka of Bharthruhari cited in the foregoing para is this, "The scholars are malicious and full of hatred; the prosperous and the powerful are proud and self conscious; the others are either prohibited from reading the scriptures and Ethics or too ignorant enough to be taught. Hence my ethics will remain buried in my own expression".

Why did the great sage Bharthruhari express this deep despondency? Perhaps it was his own experience or the experiences of the sages who lived before him.

Man reads Geetha. His reading may be confined to one chapter per day. Let it be so. He learns from the Geetha lectures - What? He wants to worship God and to offer him with devotion either pathram (Leaf) pushpam (flower) phalam (fruit), Thoyam (water) as per a line of a sloka in Geetha without knowing the context; and he ignores the

most important line of the Geetha, "Dhyanath Karmaphalathiyagam Sreyohi. (Discharge of duty with a spirit of selflessness and service is superior to penance!) What a bankruptcy of understanding exists quite contrary to the gospel!

Man often reads and re-reads the whole of the New Testament of the Holy Bible. He speaks with emulation and vigour about the miracles and mysteries of God and His son, but he ignores The Sermon on the Mount, which is the most important, guiding and directive chapter of the Bible, which explains the desirable conduct and character of the human being to be friendly even to the enemy and to be serviceable to the foe. This is the fate of all the sermonisings! "Sermon on The Mount" is a hardnut to crack (not to lecture about, but to practise) both to the preacher as well as to the listener. It is only a supreme conduct of selflessness and service that can authorise and embolden a lecturer to speak about sermon on the mount or The Theory of Karma phalathiyaga; The lecturer also cannot expect great appreciation from the audience who mainly constitute wrong doers and hypocrites. Hence the so called spiritual lecture always stoutly deals with God, worship and belief and stealthily leaves the ethical conduct, namely, selfless and serviceable discharge of duty. The result is ignorance and superstition and fostered among the people who are, ofcourse most of them, originally ignorant for multifarious reasons, the heredity, environment, lack of education etc.

It is indeed easy for the traditional Geetha lecturer to speak about the Vibhuthies (Manifestations) of God and about prayers to Him. The lecturer dresses himself in the

traditional manner and utters the name of God with seeming devotion, which is of course easy to do. The hypocrite breeds hypocrisy in the hearers who have no powers of discretion. The ground-and-preparation-and-practice of ethical life is Life itself and not talks.

What the sages of long ago meant by some spiritual terms has gone deep underground. There are now two extreme sections, one supporting the spiritual terms strongly without knowing their etymological meanings and their delineations and implications, and the other downrightly denouncing them. This is a very unhappy situation pervading through centuries and decades of centuries.

Take for example Daiva Bhakthi (Devotion to God). One section believes that God supreme dwells in a particular Loka creating all, administering the whole universe, and rewarding and punishing the righteous and the unrighteous respectively; hence prayer to God relieves a person from his sins and gets him Moksha, i.e. release from bondage, and a habitation in a heavenly kingdom, and so on and so forth. The other section proclaims from housetops that there is no God and hence no place for prayer and worship.

But the truth is different - What is it? There is God which is neither a Master, nor a Mrs. nor a Miss but a mystery. It is not a single being or a personality. It is the force of Being or the life. It is an energy, omnipresent, holding the atoms together and emanating life in the wombs, the buds and the seeds. I believe in that omnipresent and ever existing energy and I surrender to it. It means, that I love each creature glowing and growing with that energy, which in other words is called Devotion to God. So worship of God means

service to the beings in which the divine energy dwells. Hence love of God means love of all beings. Therefore I believe in God and the worship of God. This makes the individual happy and peaceful and happy and progressive. This is the explanation for God and the worship of God. I do not know who cannot approve of this explanation? Will not all people feel then that God's worship is necessary? The Theists and the Atheists shall honour this explanation. This is what is explained in Geetha also!

Hence it is essential for us to understand what the Geetha, the Last Testament of the Hindu scriptures, tells us about the path of Morality. There is not any falsehood or hypocrisy here. There is not the impossibility to observe these Ethical Doctrines provided you have a will and a determination. It is morally incumbent on every human being to follow the Ethical Doctrines of the Geetha.

The substances of the selected slokas of the Geetha chapterwar and numberwar are given below in simple prose to enable clear understanding. Further comments and explanations are given within brackets.

Chapter 2 - Sloka 2 - When the opportunity for inevitable discharge of your duty comes, there should be no wavering in your mind nor timidity in your heart.

2-3. In the discharge of your duty, any hesitation or negligence is to be considered mean and heinous.

2-14. Like the changes in the atmosphere, comforts and sufferings come and go. You have to bear them both with tolerance and equanimity. (15) Such an individual as receives joy and sorrow with a spirit of equanimity is said to be Dheera, and salutation shall be for him.

(Moksha is salvation which is release from bondage. The release from bondage is the state of happiness or Bliss in this world and now).

2-31. You had chosen a duty on to you yourself, and you should not leave your duty at the time of demand.

2-46. How much water of a big tank is required for you to have a morning bath? So is the amount of need for a thinking person in Vedas.

(You need not follow in practice each word that you read in the Vedas or scriptures. You should read the Vedas, understand the universal truth and follow it.)

2-47. Renunciation of work or action is not desirable; you have to renounce the fruit of your well-discharged duty with a spirit of selflessness and social service. (Geethacharya denounces idleness here.)

2-50. The Yoga is to be defined as the skill in the discharge of duty.

2-55. The person, who is able to keep under control the desires, is said to be The Steady willed person (Sthitha Pragnaha). (56) Such a person of strong and steady will is not broken-hearted in troubles nor overjoyed in comforts. He is not a victim to the emotions of lust, fear, anger etc.

(The Geethacharya hints here that with a correct decision and an unflinching will, you should strive hard to achieve the desired goal).

2-62,63. One, who is a victim to lust and desires, gains attachment to them; lust and ambition are the offshoots of this attachment, which give rise to malice and wrath; the

result is a state of mental delusion. The delusion results in loss of memory and understanding, which causes loss of discernment. The loss of intellect and discernment is the total loss or decay of the personality.

(The last stage is equal to that of an animal. The Geethacharya graphically explains the evil effects of evil desires.)

2-66. A person, who is devoid of a strong mind and a steady will, suffers loss of intellect resulting in loss of power of thinking. For him there is no peace and so no happiness.

2-72. Man should shun his six internal enemies, namely, The malicious wrath, The Miserly Avarice, The blinding lust, The overwhelming pride, and the burning Envy. The person, who has attained this Brahma Nishta, will ever be in a Bliss even at the moment of death.

(Brahma is the person who has mastered the knowledge of the Four Vedas. The way of life of such a learned and wise scholar is called Brahma Nishta. There is nothing orthodox about this term, Brahma Nishta).

3-13. Those who first offer their wealth and food to the Devas, and then enjoy the remaining food are out of sin. Those who are selfish and wish to enjoy their belongings for themselves are sinners.

(Devas include all the elders namely the learned and wise scholars, the parents, the Gurus or the teachers, the Godfather, the guardian, any person who has rendered you any help etc. and the guests. Papam means a sinful act which makes neither the doer nor the other happy. Punyam

means a good action which makes the doer as well as others happy. There is no place for any superstitious ideas regarding angels of the other heavenly world here. While the meaning of the word, Deva, is so simple, thwarted scholars speak of Devas as celestial beings, giving thus rise to conflicting sects, one believing in Devas as the angels of the other world, and the other denouncing them as such. Both these sects are extremists and both are in utter darkness).

3-25. A really educated man is he who is selfless and works for the welfare of the society. He, who is selfish and always works for his own comforts regardless of others' welfare is really uneducated, though he is a linguistic scholar of several books.

(Mahatma Gandhi used to like this sloka of the Geetha very much and he used to quote it often in his talks).

4-28. The performers of Yagna are three fold - those who perform the Yagna of wealth, those who perform the Yagna of penance and those who perform the Yagna of learning the scriptures.

(Yagna means a productive work, a project or a seminar. But strangely the pedantic orthodox scholar is interpreting Yagna as something like an offer with rituals to the imaginary Gods of the other world.)

4-33. (The Yagna for material wealth is of course quite essential in the comfortable journey of life.) But the Yagna for knowledge and wisdom is superior to that for wealth, for any action or experiment should ultimately mature itself in production of knowledge and wisdom.

4-38.39. There is no wealth in all this world which can equal knowledge. Such knowledge and wisdom are got only by performing good and righteous deeds with proper understanding of their implications and their purpose. It is only by a clear and perfect knowledge that man attains peace of mind.

(Knowledge is power attained by actual experiences in the performance of good deeds.)

4-40. He, who is devoid of wisdom and sincerity of purpose, and who dwells in doubt and suspicion, is bound to meet with failure in life (failure in material life as well as the ethical life of satisfaction and happiness).

4-45. He, who can recognise the oneness of Gnana Yoga and Karma Yoga, can alone realise the truth. The pure wisdom and knowledge, obtained by the discharge of duty with a spirit of selflessness and service, crown the person, with the spirit of detachment from the worldly shackles. He is strong-willed and can not be perturbed by any external circumstances.

5-10. Easwara does not receive either your Papam or Punyam (sins or virtue). People are in a delusion due to their ignorance.

(Easwara is the lording and the over lording life force or life energy symbolised or personified. The existing superstitious belief is directly and sharply axed by Geethacharya here. There are some ignorant people who consider the omnipresent energy as a personified Masculine God, who on prayers and worships pardons their sins! There are people who believe that God, pleased with their prayer and

worship, rewards them with comforts here and now, and with Bliss in the other world after death. There are some others who maintain that God punishes the evil - doers and rewards the righteous persons. These ignorant views are axed by the Geethacharya in this tenth sloka of the fifth chapter. Please examine carefully the substance of this sloka which is a guide line in our darkness of superstition).

5-18. He alone is the real learned scholar who is capable of treating alike, with the same love, sympathy and regard, a highly educated and cultured learned person (Brahmana), the useful and sacred milk-yielding cow, the mighty huge elephant, the dog and the low caste person living upon the dog's flesh.

(For a really learned and wise scholar, no creature, however mean, is detestable. He is the real learned scholar who is capable of treating alike all with love and with no trace of ill will or dislike. Geethacharya wants you to understand that a linguist or a person of letters who has merely mastered very many books is not a really educated person; One who shows kindness, affection and sympathy equally to all is the real learned person. It is not proper to call any person, with some bookish scriptural knowledge, a learned pandit. We have to realise how Lord Krishna tries to dispel from our minds the deep rooted superstitious ideas.)

5-22. The worldly and physical comforts after all, in the end, get sorrow and dissatisfaction, Every comfort or pleasure has a beginning and an end. It is real knowledge alone that lends you unending and everlasting bliss.

(The Geethacharya hints here that your main pursuit in life should be for realisation of the truth).

6-16. Yoga is possible only to a person who takes a balanced diet. Neither should you eat less nor more than what is just required for the body. Neither should you sleep for longer hours nor keep yourself always awake.

(It has been already learnt in the previous chapters that Yoga is the skill in performing a righteous action . . . Yoga is the firm mental attention on the work performed. It is a state of mental equilibrium despite any internal or external changing conditions or circumstances. Yoga should not be understood as the posture of a hypocrite pretending to be in meditation with closed eyes. It is Yoga when a scientist sits at his table or elsewhere calmly and steadily deeply meditating about a phenomenon. It is Yoga when a sage, like Valmiki, sits silent meditating upon the fate of humanity or upon the ways by which society can be happy and peaceful. Such Yoga on the part of the scientist or a sage brings forth an invention or a discovery on the part of a scientist or a piece of Ethics or a piece of useful literature from a sage. So the value of Yoga should be properly understood. It is essential for any wise thinker or doer. But beware, Yoga is not idleness; it is on the other hand a mental activity, alertness and awareness guiding the proper performance of the deed on hand. This is Lord Krishna's warning to superstitious people, the ignorant people, the hypocrites, the immature scholars and the poor and pitiable people deceived and misguided by the hypocrites and the immature scholars. Half knowledge without wisdom is dangerous to the person concerned as well as to the society influenced by him.)

6-46. The person, who does his work always actively and sincerely with the spirit of selflessness and service, is far superior to the learned scholar and the sage in penance. Such Karma Yogi alone attains the Bliss.

(The Karmaphalathyagi is the active doer with the supreme spirit of selflessness and service, helps the development of society. The learned scholar should lend or impart his useful knowledge to others and assist their improvement. The man in real meditation or penance should be prepared to teach the truth to the common people. Such learned scholars and really wise sages are also to be considered Karmaphalathyagis. The Geethacharya advocates here good and useful deeds, good and useful knowledge, and good meditation to seek the truth for common good and development).

There is no direct ethical teaching in chapters 7 to 11 of the Geetha. But the spiritual thoughts contained in them do incite indirectly the spirit of selflessness and service in life. That is the purpose of divine knowledge.

12-12. Knowledge is superior to mere physical experience or action. Deep and sincere meditation to realise the truth is superior to knowledge. But Karmaphalathyaga is superior even to meditation or penance, for it is this selfless spirit of service that gets peace, comfort and happiness to the society.

12-13. (See how Geethacharya in the 12th Chapter of Geetha, The Bhakthi Yoga defines a Bhaktha or a devotee.)

A good person, without hatred towards any other and with kindness and friendliness to all, who is devoid of lust and egoism, who is neutral to sorrow and joy, who is neutral to troubles and comforts, and who is completely patient and tolerant, is a real bhaktha.

12-14. A righteous person, who is ever self contented, self restrained, and self determined, and conducts himself well, is a real bhakta.

12-15. He, who is of no fear and danger to others, who is not timid out of ignorance, who is within his reasonable limits in the expressions of his joy, anger, fear or any emotion, is a real bhaktha.

12-16. He, who is not ambitious, who is not selfish, who is of pure mind, who is efficient in the discharge of his duties, who is neutral and not easily influenced by fluctuating circumstances, who is ever contented and joyful, and who surrenders to goodness and to the omnipresent force, is a real bhakta.

12-18. One, who is so magnanimous and of a full mind not to feel the difference between friends and foes, who receives alike honour and insult with a calm and composed mind, who is unperturbed by comforts and troubles and who is unaffected by the climatic changes, is a real bhakta.

12-19. That person of equanimity, who receives alike with a composed mind accusations and admirations, who is calmly contented with what he gets by a righteous way, and who is of firm determination for discharge of his duty or for a good cause, is a real bhaktha or devotee.

(Bhakthi means supreme and pure love without a tinge of selfishness; Hence a bhaktha is a person who has love and sympathy to all beings which are, like himself, lighted by the same omnipresent force or energy. Hence devotion to God, which is the omnipresent force, is quite essential for individual happiness and liberation, as well as for the society or the world. While devotion to God is defined and described in this fine way in the Geetha, and while good conduct and character alone are stressed as the requisite qualities of a true bhaktha, the aboriginal customs that were in vogue, before the scriptures were produced by the wise sages, and the thwarted practices among the people, indicated in some scriptures or epics also, influenced by age long ideas and customs, still have the upper hand over the wisdom imparted in the Bhagavadh Geetha. Uttering the names of God, doing penance and worship in a blind way for his own imaginary benefits in the other world, do not qualify one as a Bhaktha. The old and meaningless interpretations are still propagated as religion which has not the sanction of the Geetha. The knowledge and wisdom of the Geetha is eternally valid based on truth, which is for the welfare of the whole universe, not of a part of our globe.

The path of morality has been touched directly or indirectly in every chapter of the Geetha. And this path of morality is "Karmaphalathyaga", is the renunciation of the fruit of your well performed duty or work with a spirit of selflessness and service and surrender. This supreme knowledge of the Geetha, this unique wisdom of the Geethacharya, can be first understood through a reading of the Geetha not by a mere scholar, but by a person of the spirit of self-

lessness. Hence one should have this mental and pious qualification besides the linguistic and literal ability to understand the wisdom of the Geetha. When the understanding by the reader, and the interpretation by the so called learned scholar are thwarted, the question of following the moral precepts of the Geetha does not arise.

You will realise it so strange to hear from me what I have heard from a radio broadcast from a South Indian broadcasting station under the Sukthi Mukthavali programme rendered in Telugu; you know Sukthi Mukthavali programme deals with some moral or religious precepts or principles. I humbly submit that I wondered at the audacity and boldness with which the scholar rendered his short speech in that Sukthi Mukthavali programme which is as follows :-

"Bhakthi Yoga is the easiest to realise God. By this Yoga, the bhaktha wins God to his side surely and easily (Let me intrude here a little. Has this speaker realised God to be so bold enough as to indicate this method? Is it not shameful on his part to speak about the easiness and surety of a thing which he himself has not attained? Is it perhaps the way of many a speaker on religion and God? Is it not like the lame limping person demonstrating to the young energetic and active youths the way of fine and dignified walking?) you, listeners, follow this sloka of the Geetha, which means - "if anybody offers me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a cup of water with due respect and devotion, I receive it with pleasure and admiration, and I enjoy it". This is what God has himself spoken in sloka 26 of Chapter 9! See what an easy path the Bhakthi Yoga is to realise God? - you have your dinner; chew thambulam (Pansupari) and

happily when you thus complete chewing and enjoying pansupari, just utter this word, "Krishnarpanamasthu" which means "This is offered to Lord Krishna". That is all! the pansupari is considered to have been offered to God, and God is happy and satisfied! O! have you realised the efficacy of Bhakthi Yoga?" - This is the radio broadcast which I heard on a fine morning, and which clouded me with gloom and wonder of sorrow and disgust. I could not decide whether I should weep or laugh at this short discourse. I know more than ninety nine percent of the listeners might have admired this Sukthi Mukthavali radio programme! This is the tragic plight of religion in discourses; this is the tragic flight of religion and of truth through humanity! Please examine the results of such explanations of Geetha and of the existence of such religious teachers! Are they enlightening the people or blackening their minds?

Let us now examine the meaning of the above sloka, which was thus shamelessly given to the millions of listeners by the so called pandit!

"Offering a thing to God means not putting the thing before the idol of God! It means on the other hand, offering the thing to any being or fellow being which is also lighted up by the same omnipresent (Vaishnava) energy in the same manner as your mind is lighted by the same force! This offering of a thing is not done, or should not be necessarily done to a chosen person, and it may be given to any being or person who at that time by accident is ready to receive it from you for its or his need. Such an offering, unexpectedly received by the person in need, gives a lot of inexpressible joy to him."

When the intention of the Geethacharya is that you should be selfless and be sympathetic towards all others, the scholarly interpreter is strangely bold enough to render such a monstrous meaning!

God is not only described as the omnipotent energy, but it is also described as "Anantha Kalyana Guna Prapurnam", which means "an energy having all good and auspicious qualities. This energy is the provider of every thing in Nature. And, what is the fun of giving offerings to such an omnipotent energy? As the word God (Vishnu = omnipresent, Allah = All - in all) could not be defined by one meaning, the galaxy of sages, through ages, used different meanings which are spoken in the scripture as Sahasra Namavali, the one thousand names depicting one thousand good qualities or properties! That is why this omnipresent force, God can not be defined narrowly. While this is the religious instruction of the sages, man still continues his ancestors' meaningless and superstitious customs of offering to idols and inhabiting the omnipresent limitless energy in the shape of idols within the four walls of dark temples!

The spirit in offering something to God is the spirit of selflessness which teaches you that the fruit of your performance should be enjoyed not only by you and your kith and kin (heirs) but also by any other fellow-being who is in need of it. By such display of selflessness you make others happy, i.e. you make the God in others happy. God is the universal soul of which yours is a speck; your soul is that feeling of awareness and consciousness in you enjoying or

undergoing the comforts and troubles of the physical body which is pervaded by the Soul energy!

I feel it relevant to remind you of a story which most of you might have known. The author of the story, his nationality, his language, his religion etc. are not necessary here, for they are not important. But the religion which the author belonged to, I may furnish with pride and joy - I call it universalism or the Truth :-

"A cobbler - old and lonely, spending all his daytime in mending old wornout shoes at the door of his small dwelling facing a busy street in a town - a person always uttering the name of God like the beadsman - a person with a strong aspiration to see God!

One night the cobbler had a long dream : God appeared and told him that He would visit his residence the next day at any time between 6 A.M. and 6 P.M. The joy of the cobbler on waking up from his dream at that dead of night can not be described.

The cobbler could not resume sleep later as he was overwhelmed by the desire to see God. He was awaiting the coming of dawn to rise up and to be prepared to receive God. The duration was to him like a century in his anxiety. At last it was day break.

The old cobbler kept his hut clean and neat; he kept at a sacred corner of his room fruits and flowers to be offered to God when he visited him. In his anxiety he could not take his usual breakfast. He was sitting at the door watching every person on the road thinking if one of them would be God. Any well dressed person often attracted his attention, and he used to gape with wide open eyes.

It was 8 A.M. A person was walking towards his door; the cobbler noticed him to be a lame beggar when the latter approached him. Though he was generally charitable to beggars each day and would not send them away without giving them alms, this particular day he could not spare time to attend to the beggar in his anxiety to wait for God, and so he pertly asked the beggar to go away. He was gazing and gazing at each person till 1 P.M., when a leper came to his door. With disgust and a bit of anger he asked him to go away thinking that his stay any longer might distract his attention to watch God's arrival. He had no breakfast that morning; he had no mid-day meal too. How could he leave the place of his watch? It was nearing 6 P.M. There was snowfall; it was chill and dusk. There was a light squall of cold wind.

The old cobbler was looking at persons walking on the road with piercing eyes. A person appeared to be walking towards the cobbler's house in the dusk. The cobbler at first thought that it must be God, for it was almost day's end and God had told him in his dream that He might visit him at anytime during the day time from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. The person walking towards his door was too old, sunk and shivering and tottering, half bent down, with rags covering his body. He appeared to be dragging his own body with great struggle and labour. The cobbler was disappointed to see him near. In a second he turned him out, for it was crucial last minute or so for the arrival of God!

It was dark; it was night fall. God did not come. The cobbler lost all hopes for God's arrival, for it was past sunset. He was not only disappointed but also sad; he was

almost in despair; to add to this the poor old man had starved all the day-time; neither he had taken a morsel of food nor a drop of water. He could not take his supper even, in his despair and disappointment.

He closed the door of his house, but did not bolt it. He had his old cot just inside near the door. He stretched himself on his cot and was almost in a swoon owing to his weakness, old age and starvation. He was in deep slumber the next moment. The lamp was burning bright. Just near there were the fruits and the faded flowers! His head was turned to the gate white asleep. Perhaps he thought that he should be ready to invite God in if He knocked at his door at night. God was the ruler of the world, and perhaps he could not spare time as per his promise to visit the cobbler before 6 P.M. He might turn up late!

The cobbler, who was in deep sound slumber, had again a dream in which God spoke to him thus - "I kept my promise and visited you not once but thrice during the day, once at 8 A.M., again at noon and thirdly at 6 P.M.; And thrice you drove me out. What can I do then? You insulted me; you were unhospitable to me, rather you were cruel to me!"

The cobbler woke up with a shock. It was already sunrise; he had overslept. Normally he used to rise up from bed at dawn; but to-day he woke up late owing to his swooning slumber. He was bewildered at his own ignorance! He could not recognise "The Daridranarayan" who had come to his door thrice.

Mercy or kindness is divine and they who are in need of this divine reception are Daridranarayanas, the beggars,

and not the Raja Narayanas, the affluent people. Wisdom dawned on the old cobbler. He understood by his own experience what God is! - This is the story that should cleanse the minds of the superstitions people and the superstition-supporting scholars.

13-30. Nature is responsible for all actions. He who has this wisdom, realises that soul is not the subject of action.

(Nature is of two kinds - the outer nature, and the inner nature. All the physical bodies, which we see, are of the outer nature - for example our body is of the outer nature. The life force and the soul force, that pervade our body, constitute the inner nature - The senses, above all, the consciousness and the awareness, "I am - this is I - this is mine" constitute the inner nature which is called "Athma Bhava", the egoism. The physical body performs actions, having been influenced by the physical environment, the changing circumstances of the physical environs, and the motivations of the thinkings of the mind. Thus results of the actions are borne by the body and the soul. Out of carelessness or volition, suppose you have cut your own finger with your knife: your body suffers the physical loss of the finger and the loss of blood; your soul suffers from the pain of the cut. The power of consciousness, the soul, which emanates from the physical body depends upon the body, lives upon the body, suffers the pains and comforts of the body and gets annihilated as the body is destroyed. This makes you feel the reality as against the superstition that soul is responsible for all the actions of the body; And this makes you feel the importance of the path of morality).

14-5. "The Thrigunas" namely the Satva, The Rajas, The Thamas, are born out of the physical body.

(The Sathva Guna is the instinct and the aspiration to do good. The Rajo Guna is the instinct and the aspiration to do something with a sense of pride, domination and self aggrandisement. The Thamo Guna is the instinct and the ambition to harm others and to do anything for his own gain with a spirit of selfishness and cruelty. The individual is prompted to do such actions as are prompted by his instincts and ambitions which are purely due to the properties of his bodily humours. These Thrigunas are influencing the thinkings of the mind. These again control the soul or the consciousness in thinking, in speaking and in doing. Hence the evil or the good of the "Thrigunas" makes the soul evil or good. This is a simple thing to say that the soul undergoes evil or good feelings based on the actions of the body. Thus the physical body, its Thrigunas, the evil or good actions, the happy or unhappy feelings are all inter knit. This thesis gives rise to the science of the human body, physiology, and the science of the human mind, psychology.)

In the fifteenth Chapter, "The Purushottama Prapthi Yoga" the path of morality is not touched directly. But indirectly the knowledge of this chapter tends to make the person aware of himself and makes him wise and serviceable.

16-1,2,3. The qualities of men are broadly divided into two classes : "Deva" qualities and "Rakshasa" qualities.

Courage, purity of mind, the determined will and struggle to achieve knowledge, charity, self-restraint, productive and

serviceable work, the knowledge and the wisdom of the scriptures i.e. the Vedas and the Sastras, meditation and penance in pursuit of truth, impartial and straight path of conduct, kindness to all, sympathy to all creatures, truth, benevolence, selflessness, magnanimity, a tender mind and word, hesitation and shyness to commit anything unrighteous, enlightenment, endurance and patience, purity in thought, word and deed, not to contemplate evil or harm to anybody, appreciation and admiration for others' good actions, and such other auspicious and good qualities come under "Deva Gunas".

(So it should be inferred that Devas are those people who possess good qualities and do good actions for the welfare of the society; it is wrong to think that Devas are "Gods inhabiting a heavenly world - this was a wrong primitive idea of all the races of the world before a regular thinking of oneness of God, the universal life energy, began.)

16-4. Hypocrisy, arrogance, pride, ostentation, a wrong and unsympathetic attitude towards others, malice and cruelty, harsh speech, cruel thinking, and cruel actions, ignorance, unscrupulousness in mind, word and deed, and such other evil qualities and tendencies which are most undesirable for the individual and the society are classed under "Rakshasa Gunas".

(Hence Rakshasas are people among us living side by side with the Devas, who are evil in mind, word and deed. Rakshasas are in fact not a separate race with monstrous appearances living in a separate underworld as depicted in the Epics of any corner of the world.)

(This is again a condemnation of the Epic Depiction of "Devas" and "Danavas" as two different races with eternal feuds. The truth is that we, people, are classed under two types, the Devas who are good and the Danavas who are evil and cruel. These terms, Devas and Danavas, are found in the Indian Vedas; But in the old Persian Vedas, which are known as Zandu and Avesta, of a race of people of a different civilization living in the plains of the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers, who were contemporaries of the Aryans of India, the Persians called themselves "Danavas" meaning "good people", and they called their enemies "Devas" meaning "bad people"! This is the jugglery of words. Whatever this jugglery is, it is clear that the Devas and Danavas are two classes of people who were inimical to each other. Hiranya Kasyapa and Prahlada, Ravana and Vibhishana, Kamsa and Krishna, who were contemporaries, are proper examples to say that Devas and Danavas are two classes of people of this world alone. Geethacharya dispels the superstitious beliefs of the people in respect of Devas and Danavas as beings of two different worlds, Swarga and Pathala.

16-12 to 18. (The Geethacharya gives a detailed account of the activities of the Rakshasas who are evil minded.) The Rakshasas or the people of Rakshasa gunas are entangled in strong and tight bonds of ambition and greed; their minds are infested with lust and malice; they try to amass wealth and enjoy comforts by any unjust and cruel methods; "O, I have just achieved this ambition; I shall succeed in my next ambition; Oh, I have got this wealth now; I shall get more wealth soon. Now I have seen the

end of this enemy; I shall put an end to all other enemies in no time. I am independent; I am luxurious; I am a saint and an adept; I am wise and learned; I am all powerful; I have all comforts; I am correct and righteous; Mine is a family of great renown; None is my equal; I have performed so many Yagnas and Yagas of spiritual value and greatness; I have rendered so many charities" - This is the way how a person of Rakshasa gunas speaks proudly and openly. Such a person is caught in the net of lust, pride and ambition. Ofcourse he always dwells in evil or Naraka. These people of Rakshasa gunas flatter themselves; they are profusely evil in their pelf, pride and power; They are not at all sensitive to the feelings of others; they perform certain charities not out of love but for self aggrandizement. They are ofcourse highly proud and egoistic, cruel and physically powerful, lusty and malicious, jealous of others and they commit anything for their selfish gains without any regard for others' feelings or inconveniences or troubles. Such people in the end seek their own destruction, of wealth and name and they are classed or considered by the society as the lowest and heinous creatures.

(Examine carefully how Geethacharya drives you to detest an evil person, how he indirectly inspires you for the righteous way of life. Narakam is the suffering which is to be undergone here and now for your evil.)

16-24. (The Geethacharya gives you a direction as to the principles you should follow in the discharge of your duties) :-

First decide for yourself with keen discrimination whether the deed you are going to perform is good or otherwise.

Then follow the established and approved standards of the Sasthras (well-established sciences on wisdom and experience) or follow the principles and guidance of the most established exemplary person of your time and of your society.

17-2,3,4. (Man should perform his actions of duty with proper shraddha, which means attentive, zealous and devotional interest. See how Lord Krishna describes shraddha, and Thamasa shradda.

The "Sathvikas" worship the presiding deities of the natural forces like Indra (the king of the Gods) Varuna (the God of rain), Agni (the God of fire), Vayu (the God of wind) and so on.

The 'Rajasas' worship the Yakshas (heavenly angels) and the Rakhasas (who are noted for strength and power).

The "Thamasas" worship the departed souls and evil spirits.

(Geethacharya does not advocate or stipulate that these types of people should perform their worship like that. This is what has been there in vogue in his time i.e. prior to the pronouncement of the Geetha. These three types of worship were the outcome of the age long superstitions and beliefs and customs. Geethacharya is the advocate of oneness of God, the omnipresent life-force or energy; he does not admit the so called invisible Yakshas or the angels and the Rakshasas. He does not approve of the worship of the dead, Though Geethacharya does not approve of these three types of worship (for he advocates only the spirit of selflessness and surrender to Vishnu, the omnipresent

energy or force) he hints how mean and ignorant it is for a section of the people to worship the dead.

Geethacharya disapproves all these three types of worship which were in vogue as per the vedic traditions. The Vedas are in fact suppliers of history of the ancient people, their manners, and customs as well as guides to spiritual thinking and ethical life. Hence Geetha is to be studied with great care and discrimination; it is wrong to think that every sloka gives the personal opinion of Lord Krishna. In his citations of authorities, experiences etc. you should be careful enough to discover his concluding and summing up thought and guidance.)

17-5,6. They are persons of improper thinking who subject their bodies to starvation and penance against the tenets established in the Sastras and suffer both mentally and physically. They take to this Hata Yoga (obstinacy) with a superiority complex of mind due to their egoism, pride and hypocrisy. Such people are of Asura Nischaya (people of improper decisions without discretion).

(It is described in the Puranas that penance is superior to any other human performance to attain knowledge, wisdom and divinity. Lord Krishna dispels the superstitious ideas relating to penance. Indirectly he indicates here that selfless service and surrender, and not penance, are required of really learned and wise people.)

17-7. Food, Yagna (productive work auspicious to all), penance (proper composed meditation to grasp the truth and the way of life) and charity are to be necessarily performed by all persons. And these are of three types, the

superior, the ordinary and the inferior. (In the following slokas Lord Krishna renders the scientific, meaningful, imitable and useful aspects of these four activities).

17-8,9,10. (Food is of three types according to its quality, usefulness and efficacy)

The items of foods, which build up, develop and enhance your health, strength, energy and longevity, which are relishable, tasty and conducive to your constitution, which make you comfortable, pleasurable and healthy, are called Satvikaharas (Foods of the first class or superior variety).

Those items of foods, which are bitter, sour, saltish excessively, which are too hot, severe and rough giving rise to morbid thirst, displeasure, unhappiness, illness, ill health, and diseases, are Rajasa foods. (second class or ordinary type relished by people of Rajasa gunas)

Those items of foods, which are not fresh and hence not tasty, which are of the previous day, and are foul smelling, which are already touched and half eaten by some others, which are not neat, are Thamasika foods. (Last class or inferior quality relished by people of Thamasa gunas. The terms, Sathvaguna, Rajasaguna, and Thamasaguna, have already been explained previously.) (The Geethacharya advocates Sathvikahara which helps development of physical health, and physical and mental health and strength.)

17-11,12,13. (In these three slokas Lord Krishna gives an account of the three types of "Yagna". It has already been explained that Yagna is productive work for general welfare).

That useful work, which is performed as a matter of duty, which is done with a spirit of selflessness and service, and which is executed with proper interest, effort and sincerity, is called "Sathvika Yagna".

(So it is to be understood that the work performed with selflessness and servicemindedness is Sathvika Yagna.)

Rajasa Yagna is that deed done by a person against his own stipulated duty, without proper advice and guidance, without charity or liberalism towards others and without a regulated plan or interest.

(The reader with carefully examine how beautifully and scientifically and meaningfully Lord Krishna describes the three types of deeds or Yagnas. He wants to wipe of the superstitious views of the people about Yagna as given in the Puranas as if they are separate special performances of a ritualistic nature to invoke God etc is a personified God.)

17-14,15,16. (In these three slokas, Lord Krishna brushes out from the minds of the people their wrong ideas about penance as if it is a Hatayoga performed to attain God etc. He gives a very scientific and social significance to penance, Thapas. Observe carefully the following classifications and definitions.)

Thapas (penance) is of three types, namely, Sariraka Thapas (physical or bodily penance) Vak Thapas (the penance of speech), and Manasika Thapas (The mental or spiritual penance).

The physical or the bodily penance constitutes the worship of the learned and wise saints, the elders and the

learned scholars, the purity of mind, word and deed, the pure and frank conduct, kindness to all and the path of service, knowledge and the truth.

Vak Thapas constitutes fine speech about truth and good advice that gives pleasure and happiness to the listeners and not at all causing any hindrance, fear or haste to others, and the study of the scriptures and the sciences (Sasthras) with proper and correct understanding.

The Manasika Thapas is the pure and keen thinking and meditation fostering the purity of mind, gentleness, righteousness, silence and solitude and a calm and balanced behaviour.

(Try to understand, dear readers, what a fine meaning and explanation Lord Krishna gives for Thapas. Incidentally he lays down a fine code of conduct against the superstitious and pedantic idea of "Thapas sitting on a hill under a tree by a streamlet near, away from fellow men closing eyes first and then the nose, which is only a physical practice, without food, exposed to the sun, the rain and wind till one sees God! The Geethacharya lays importance only on Ethics and a life of service. He, very indirectly heckles at the ignorance of truth in the form of orthodoxy.)

17-17,18,19. (The Geethacharya is again classifying Thapas into three types from the standpoint of the method of observance).

"Sathvika Thapas" is observed bodily, vocally, or verbally and mentally with a determined will and plan and without a desire for self gain and self aggrandizement.

"Rajasa Thapas" is observed for getting honour, respect, praise, presents and adorations from others. It is observed with pride, self consciousness, and ostentation.

"The Thamasa Thapas" is observed out of ignorance and without a definite plan. It is begun somehow with all lapses; it becomes troublesome even to the doer; in the end it turns harmful to the doer himself as well as the others.

(Please try to understand how admirably Geethacharya guides us to good actions with proper knowledge, plan and estimation of the outcome. Please also examine how enlightening and truthful this is when compared with the darkness into which we are pushed by the improper understanding of the Puranas and the superstitious scholars, and the priests who unfortunately for us happen to be our spiritual leaders!)

17-20,21,22. Charity is of three types :

Sathvika dana, Rajasika dana and Thamasika dana.

Sathvika dana is the best type of charity, given to others as a matter of duty, sympathy with a spirit of selfless service or it is what is given as a mark of gratitude. And this dana is made taking into account with proper discretion the proper time, the proper place and the proper person and the proper purpose.

When a charity is given not with a service motive or as a return of gratitude, when it is given with an expectation to receive more profit, and when it is given not joyfully or sincerely or sympathetically but out of some pressure or force

or with an ambition to get name and fame, it is called Rajasa dana.

Thamasika dana is the charity given without taking into consideration the proper person, place or time and the desirability of the person to whom it is rendered. It is given to a person not out of regard for him but as alms to demean him; it is given to undesirable persons for undesirable purposes.

(Please examine how beautifully Lord Krishna describes Thapas, Yagna and Dana as aspects of good character and conduct).

18-2. It is the opinion of elders in a traditional way that Sanyasa is renunciation of action or Karma.

Sages with keen discretion maintain that Thyaga is renunciation of the fruit of action.

(The first is meaningless and the second is what is required for the peace, development and happiness of the world according to Geethacharya. Geethacharya takes into account all the ideas and customs in vogue at that time and finely and delicately puts his view point as a conclusion, which is the truth which we ought to follow.)

18-3. The learned and the wise sages maintain that we should discard only evil actions. The good actions like Sathvika Thapas, Yagna and Dana should always be performed. (These good actions render joy to the doer as well as the others. They purify the mind of the doer.)

18-7, 11. Renunciation from all actions is out of question and out of possibility. Man has to render certain actions out

of nature and necessity for his own existence. This renunciation from action is only a result of or a symptom of ignorance. (This should be termed as idleness.)

Hence, for a man to exist, renunciation from all actions is impossible; he should renounce only the fruit of his actions; such a person is termed as Karmaphalathyagi.

(Lord Sri Krishna repeatedly advocates action, and action too with a service-mindedness.)

18-14. For a successful and productive discharge of duty, there are five factors. Take for example cultivation of land :-

1. The place of action (cultivable land)
2. The person doing the action or Karma (The Agriculturist)
3. The means of doing the work. (The tools and instruments such as the plough etc.)
4. The series of operations. (Tilling, sowing, watering, weeding, harvest, thrashing, collection of grain into bags etc.)
5. Divinity. (The incomprehensible omnipresent life. -force or energy emanating from out of the five elements, the Pancha bhuthas)

(These five aspects of Karma or work are common to any Karma or work or project that any person undertakes according to Varnashrama dharma, which in modern times is only choice of profession. The Karma is successful and fruitful only when these five aspects are there, and are mutually favourable. The Geethacharya hints that the fruit or result will be nil in case any of these five aspects is absent or is not satisfactory.)

18-16. While the way, the means, and the progress of Karma are such, the foolish person without proper understanding and discretion thinks and tells that the soul alone is responsible for any action performed by the doer. Such a person, though a scholar, should be considered blind in the knowledge of Karma i.e. Karma Gnana.

18-23,24,25. The Karma or the work is of three types :

That righteous action, done with a sense of selflessness and without being influenced by lust, and hatred, which is performed according to the established principles and guidelines, and which is done for the good of the society is general, is termed as Sath Karma or Sathvika Karma.

That action, which is performed by a person with a selfish end for his own comforts and with a feeling of pride and egoism, is called Rajasa Karma.

That work, which is begun by a person without taking into consideration in advance the probable effects good or evil thereof, the danger and development involved therein, without considering if it is of any harm to others, is termed as Tharmasika Karma.

(How well Geethacharya advocates a good action, its process and its good effects!)

18-26,27,28. The Kartha (the performer or the doer of an action Karma) is of three types according to the Karma (work) which he chooses to do.

The Kartha (The performer of action) who is unaffected and untouched by the bonds of society, or family, who is without the evil ego, who is bold, pleasurable and zealous,

who is not enamoured of the result and who is prepared to receive any result alike, is called a Sathvika.

The Kartha, who is hasty and emotional, who is overwhelmingly anxious for the fruit of his endeavour, who is miserly and is prepared to harm others, who is not pure in mind, word and deed, and who is easily prone to joy and sorrow on the slightest provocation or stimulus, is said to be a Rajasika.

The Kartha, who is fickle-minded, who is obstinate, who is of evil thinking, prepared to harm others, who is idle, grief-stricken and insane and foolish is termed as tamasika.

18-30,31,32. In the choice of action in the execution of action, in the spirit of receipt of the fruit of action, and in the general performance of the action, the Kartha (Doer) should be of keen mind, and intellect. According to this tenet the mind or intellect of the Doer is of three kinds.

The mind of the Doer is said to be Sathvika, whose understanding is proper and clear in respect of the effort or cessation of performance, whether the action is desirable or not, whether there is danger or safety in its execution, and whether there is bondage or freedom involved in its outcome.

The mind of the Doer is pronounced to be Rajasika whose understanding is quite the opposite in respect of legitimacy or desirability of the work to be performed.

The mind of the Doer is said to be Tamasic, who considers the unrighteous action as a righteous one, and who considers every undesirable thing as desirable.

(This deals with the mind or the thinking or Buddhi, which is the motive force for all actions of the individual.)

18-37,38,39. Comfort or luxury is of three sorts :

That which is repulsive at the outset and gradually grows agreeable, attractive, comfortable and pleasurable is said to be Sathvika sukha, the best type of comfort.

That comfort which is most pleasurable at the outset and gradually turns to be repulsive and dangerous to the Doer himself is called Rajasika sukha.

That trivial comfort which lasts for a short while or which exists for the Doer intermittently, which rouses the emotions of the Doer at the beginning, during the course and at the end of the performance, is said to be Thamasika sukha.

18-42,43,44. The courses of actions, involving within them the unique desirable qualities of tranquility, selfrestraint, meditation for the realisation of truth, purity, patience, tolerance, straight forwardness, knowledge of the Nature (Prakrithi), knowledge of the soul (Purusha), wisdom in understanding and discrimination, and the theism of the omnipresent divine force and energy etc. constitute Brahma Karma, the supreme course of action.

The courses of actions involving within themselves courage, enlightenment, heroism, efficiency, perseverance, charity, and predominance etc are said to be Kshatra Karma.

Agriculture, cattle breeding, trade and commerce, etc. constitute Vysya Karma.

Service to the above three categories of persons is called Sudra Karma.

(These four types of Karma or action have nothing to do with the so called castes among the Hindus. Geetha is universal teaching and does not belong to a particular race of people. For example, if Karl Marx advocated communism or Buddha advocated kindness to all - these principles of life do not belong to particular races. For example in the above four categories of Karma, if the Sudra Karma is absent, all other three Karmas automatically come to a stand still.

Hence this division of Karma was contemplated for the allround development of society as a whole. In course of time the people, doing particular type of Karma, came to be called by the name of that Karma for the sake of easy recognition - the sorrowful aspect is the development of water tight compartments of castes, one thinking superior to the other and one hating the other, which is nothing but ingratitude.

Each type of Karma is quite necessary for the society, the priest and the cobbler (one can avoid the priest but not the cobbler) and there is no place for pride of action. The Brahmana is one whose main avocation is acquisition of knowledge, for the good and use of all, and he requires the assistance of other three classes of people. So also any class of people requires the help and support of the other three classes of people. Service is paramountly important, whatever class it belongs to, and it is to be respected most and universally. There is the unique quality of selflessness in service. There is the feeling of Moksha and release in a selfless service. Yamunacharya, the spiritual teacher of Sri Ramanuja, lays great stress on service as the most and

primary essential purpose and essence of religion. He says that whenever a Vaishnava (one who believes that the universal soul or life energy is omnipresent and omnipotent) sees another Vaishnava, irrespective of age and social status, he should accost the other with a happy greeting, "Adiyn" which means "I am your servant or dasa".

So the Sudra Karma is in fact most supreme as it is service to others, There is more scope for selflessness in Sudra Karma than in any other; and selflessness alone is the way for Moksha bhava.

In the society of persons of actions belonging to these four classes, the Sudras are the pillars of the society. Just as persons of the above four types of classes constitute a full blown society as per the scriptures, there are four aspects of Karma in each individual person, who is an institution by himself. The mind or the brain doing the function of thinking is the Brahmin part. The Heart which is the seat of feelings chiefly the courage is the Kshathra aspect. The hands which are means of working and earning are of Vysya aspect. And the feet which carry the entire body are of Sudra aspect. Without feet there is no function of the person.

So how can you think that the feet which support the rest of the body to be inferior to the other aspects? Lord Krishna tells that the four classes of people are called so as per their qualities and functions and have nothing to do with the manmade agelong meaningless and cruel so called water tight compartments of four casters - chaturvarnas.

The Panchama varna is the greatest and strangest peculiarity in the Hindu society. It does not find a place even

in the Geetha. It is a term created after the Geetha in the epic stories; perhaps some people from the hillside and from the far off forest places might have migrated towards well-established villages or towns, janapadas, which contained then only chaturvarnas, and perhaps they were not allowed to dwell in the villages owing to their backwardness and hence they might have established huts in small groups outside the well-established villages. As these new migrants could not be admitted into any one of the chaturvarnas, they should have been called to belong to a Varna (Class) beyond the established chaturvarnas (four classes), newly named as Panchama Varna (additional fifth class). These so called people, the Panchamas, contacted different well-established villages, from different places with different gailic languages, cultures and customs and hence we see even to-day many subcastes among the so called untouchables, the Panchamas. And it was Sri Ramanuja in the eleventh century who first declared that the Panchamas were not to be disregarded and insulted, and that they should be treated as brethren on par with others. He called them Sri Vaishnavas or "Harijans" for the first time in the meaning that "they were also people created by the same creating Force, Hari. (Gandhiji adopted the same word in the twentieth century) Sri Ramanuja called a Harijan, Sri Vaishnava, or Unnatha Kulaja or Unnatha Kulattar. The so called Panchamas were also Hindus and also natives of the same country and of the same religious faith, and if all others are Vaishnavas believing in the omnipresence of God, they who are also Vaishnavas in that sense are superior Vaishnavas, Sri Vaishnavas. The so called Panchamas work hard; they are innocent, they do not know

how to deceive others; they received the ill treatment and insult from other four communities, who in fact are ungrateful to the former who offer their services to the other four communities as agricultural labourers as producers of so many things useful to all other four classes. Hence by their good character, conduct and service they are superior to all the other four classes, and so Sri Ramanuja called them by the name of Unnatha Kulattar (Tamil) Unnatha Kulaja (Sanskrit).

Even in Mahabhagavatha, Vyasa, while describing the chaturvarnas, declared that all the four classes were created by the same God; all the four classes came out or emanated from the same God (the universal omnipresent energy or force) one from God's mouth, one from His heart, one from His hands and the other from His legs, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Sudras respectively. Here also it is understandable how one class is superior to the other when all of them have emanated from the same creative energy. How foul it is to dishonour and insult a person who renders service where as he deserves respect, gratitude and honour. The mother cleans the rectum of her baby carefully and lovingly. You clean your own rectum cleanly and neatly with great care. The scavenger on the other hand cleans the latrine used by others; it is not known how the scavenging work is mean, whereas infact people have to remain thankful and grateful to him for his services. Similarly the surgeon who removes the pus from your wound and dresses it, the midwife who conducts the delivery of the baby, the servants who render us healing and comforting service as well as

the scavenger remain to be respected and honoured for their services. Your gold is only King Midas gold! It is service that makes one great, that certifies one to be good etc.

18-48. The duties which you have inherited as per your family tradition, shall be taken on to you. You need not consider them inferior or superior to others. Just as the live red hot coal is covered outside by smoke and a thin cover of ash, so also any Karma or work has some blemish attached to it. Here the Karma seems to belong to "Kula Vritti" which a person gets as a family tradition according to Varnashrama dharmas, which were perhaps strongly in vogue in the time of Geethacharya. And hence he hints at person accepting the duty of his caste or of his family tradition to be discharged effectively and sincerely. But he does not mean it to be applied for all time, for all races of all parts of the world.

After all, with such strong deep roots of Hindu caste system, to day in India, the caste duties are fading, and there is a clear example of a caste brahmin with in the knowledge of this author, having six grown up sons; the first son is an engineer, the second son is a doctor, the third son is a contractor, the fourth son is in the Navy, the fifth is a prominent businessman in textiles and the last son who had been of ill health since childhood, who was later married to his maternal uncle's daughter had to accept inevitably his family job and he has become a purohit of the village as a successor to his father. Where is the Varnashrama Dharma? It appears more in the lectures of the pedantic pandits on unassimilated Geetha knowledge who only know the

meaning of Sanskrit words and who are quite ignorant of the real meanings of the slokas. Hence the question of the traditional family duty does not arise. And this Sanskrit scholar or the so called Geetha lecturer, earning money by distributing greater ignorance to the masses of ignorant people, wants that his son should become a doctor or an engineer in U.K or U.S.A. and he does not like his son to become a beggarly scholar or lecturer or priest.

Further the Varnashrama dharma is not a universal practice as the human languages, customs, manners, dress, food, beliefs etc. are not universal. But the human beings are universal; and two factors of any human being are universally common, namely, the birth which is accidental and the death which is certain, the time of which is unknown.

The essence here is that you must be careful in the choice of your profession, that you should stick on to it under any circumstances, that you should develop your skill and sincerity in it and that ultimately you should render your duty keeping the general welfare in view without being thoroughly selfish. The greatness of a person is not in the duty or job he holds, but in the way how he does it. It is at this context that Arjuna who shirked his longago-chosen duty at the time of need was warned by Krishna not to deceive his conscience and not to betray the society.

Let us take the example of a Government servant or a high paid officer. The Government officer should in a democracy feel that he is paid by the sweat and labour of the people indirectly, but not by an abstract agency. He is a servant of the people and that he should be grateful to them

and serve them. There may be an officer who is not efficient enough, who is not industrious and sincere, who cannot dispose of matters in time, who takes a bribe and does the work favourably to the briber. There are similar officers who take bribe from two people and do a favour to the man who has given a higher bribe; there are again some public servants who take bribes and again trouble the bribers in so many other ways. There may be an officer who is efficient, honest, industrious and scrupulous in the discharge of his duties with service mindedness. So observe the difference among these men, who are quite different from one another in ability, in sincerity and in service mindedness.

The Gospel of the Geetha is that one should be careful enough in the outset itself in the choice of his duty and when once this is done, he should never shirk to discharge his duty effectively under any circumstances, unlike Arjuna who shirked his duty first and who had to be persuaded by Geethacharya with exhortations to him in the end as an essence that discharge of duty efficiently, sincerely and with a spirit of selflessness and service was paramount for the fulfilment of life. The question here is not at all Krishna advocating Arjuna for fighting; Krishna was for peace. The essence is that when opportunity demanded that you should discharge your duty, you should not shirk causing self-deceit and betrayal to your master or dependent etc. If Arjuna did not like to fight at the required moment, he should not have chosen to be a warrior at the outset - he could have chosen some other job of administration, cooking or that of a barber etc.

A well established society or a state with a proper Government expects every one to do his duty well- more so in a democracy. If people stop discharging their duties properly, mostly at the required times, the society will not have progress - there will not be law and order. Destruction and defame await such a state.

Here in Geetha Arjuna, battle etc. are taken only as examples. Battle is specially chosen for a duty because it is most imminent and can not be avoided if it so falls upon - The result will be defeat or destruction. There is not any other duty so drastic as war. Hence war is taken for an example for inevitableness of duty. Arjuna stands for a person of pure (white) mind prepared to discharge his duties, in the end, as per the dictates of a good teacher Krishna. The real points here are "any person in general, his chosen duty, his evasion, his incapacity, his ineligibility or otherwise". Lord Krishna stresses the need for the discharge of duty with a service mindedness which alone gets a person Moksha bhava (the feeling of mental freedom and Bliss).

The path of morality, the code of conduct, shown in the Geetha is meant for all the humanity and not for any section or race of human beings. The code of conduct regarding selflessness and discharge of duty, given in the Geetha, concurs with its counterpart of any other scriptures of any other religion of any part of the world. This oneness, this aspect of good conduct emanates from the theory of the so called spiritual Advaita (Not Two) and this truth, spiritual and social, should be understood by any sane and thinking person, who should feel that he is a citizen of the world or the universe. It is undeniable that of all the scrip-

tures and ethical sciences, the Geetha presents a complete commendable common code of conduct to all, and this presentation is universal regardless of caste, sex, religion and language or nationality. Hence Geetha is respected and followed by all.

In all the eighteen chapters of the Geetha and in all the seven hundred and one slokas of Geetha, you do not find "a proper name for God, a personified form of God, the name of a temple (Devasthanam), the name of the idol (Vigraha) the method of Puja (Archana), the Prasadam, the word Hindusim, the proper name of a country, the method of penance, the method of prayer etc. etc. All these terms are Pre-Geetha, relating to so many diverse religions, pre Geetha and Ante Geetha.

Four sons come out of the same mother's womb, are brought up by the same mother, but in the end they present four distinct personalities in character, conduct and discharge of duty.

Even great saints born in different parts of the world at different times relating to diverse religions, cultures, and languages tried to unify the truth and beliefs - Geetha paramountly advocates surrender and selfless duty - New testament of the Bible stresses repentance and surrender and service; - The khoran says the religion is "Islam" which word means Surrender.

I am unable to understand why these pedantic so-called scholars and so-called leaders of religion create differences and unrest among the people who are pure, innocent and ignorant. (So also the present day Indian politician is using

and misdirecting the good, innocent young students for his own purpose which is selfish and ignorant. When students, whoever they are from first class upto Ph.D. Class, are under the influence of their teachers, teachers of efficiency, sincerity, integrity of service mindedness with a dedication for universal peace, harmony and happiness will reap real joy and profits of education which are means for the happy development of humanity.)

(As the sage and poet Bharthruhari tells in his Sloka", I consider discharge of duty superior to worship of God", the path of morality shall be the resort to people for their own individual happiness, for the happiness of the society and of the world).

18-66. This sloka is the charama sloka of the Geetha; the last and the most important sloka of the seven hundred and one Slokas of the Geetha under its eighteenth chapter on Yoga. It is also called "Thiru Manthra", "the most sacred advice". This Sanskrit sloka, the charama sloka was reduced into a shorter form, "Astakshari Mantra", eight lettered Mantra, which is "Om Na Mo Na Ra Ya Na Ya", (Here it should be understood as eight syllabled Manthra.) This eight syllabled Mantra is made shortest as Ekashari Manthra, one lettered advice (single syllabled advice) which is "Om". "Om" in it has got (. ^ ,) U mA in the international phonetic scripts which means that the universe is made up of the physical substance, the creatures and the incomprehensible energy all pervading, and that we have to dwell in a spirit of surrender. This Ekakshari is also interpreted with the above three components meaning the all pervading force, the creatures and the physical substance, and the teacher or Acharya

who teaches you this truth.

The Sanskrit charma sloka is transliterated into English script owing to its philosophical importance :-

"Sarva Dharman parithyajya
Mamekam Saranam vraja,
Aham thva Sarva papebhyo
Mokshayishyami mashuchaha".

The same charama sloka is given in Devanagari script:-

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य
मामेकम् शरणम् ब्रज ।
अहंत्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो
मोक्षयिष्यामि माशुचः ॥

This sloka is given as the sum and substance of the Bhagavad Geetha, which is the essence of all the Upanishads, the Vedanthas. Most of the devotees (bhaktas) in a traditional way give its meaning like this :-

"Even if you do not or can not follow all the principles (Dharmas) of the Geetha, if you but surrender to me (God) I will remove all the sins from you, and grant you salvation. You need not further be worried".

This meaning is to be interpreted in a more realistic way and in a scientific way. This sloka is given as the last word of Ethics touched in every chapter of the Geetha. Follow this interpretation of the charama sloka which is free from dogma, superstition etc.

"So many Ethical principles to be followed in the proper discharge of your duty (Dharma) have been told to you;

Whether you are able to follow them all or not, follow this one supreme principle, the charama mantra, - that is - become completely selfless. When you are selfless, there is no sin which you can commit. Naturally you are released from any attachment. You will be in Bliss. If you follow Dharma, there is no need for to worry or feel sorry for."

This is the real and universal meaning of the charama sloka which any individual in the world should follow. This is the essence of all religions. This is the essence of The Religion, which means realisation of Truth. In the first part of sloka a proper plan (Upaya) is cited; in the second half the Abhaya (needlessness for fear or assurance for happiness) is assured. So this is the charama manthra showing Upaya and assuring Abhaya. This upaya is nothing but discharge of duty with a spirit of selflessness and service. "This is the moral path given in the Geetha".

There is a fine interpretation of the charama sloka as well as the Geetha as a whole with seven hundred and one Slokas :-

"The first word of the Geetha is "Dharma" (or duty). The last word of the Geetha is "Masuchaha" (Don't be sorry). When these two words are culled, we get "Dharma - - - Masuchaha". It means - "Duty - Don't worry". It again means that if you do your duty well, your need not bother about any other thing or outcome; you shall be free, safe, bold and in Moksha Bhava". (The blissful feeling of freedom from sin and bondage).

The greatness and fulfilment of life depends on efficient discharge of serviceable duty. The efficient discharge of

duty lies in the spirit of selflessness and service to others. This selfless service is the source of happiness for the individual as well as for the society and the world.

This attitude of selfless service-mindedness has been hinted repeatedly in the Geetha, The Last Testament, The Golden Guide for human life and its existence.

This is the Truth; understand this truth; follow this truth meaningfully and scrupulously in life. This is "Geetha Saram."

"Om Santhihi"

THE TRUTH OF HINDUISM

(PENTAGON ESSAYS)

DEDICATED TO

The Truth



