

# INDIAN CULTURE

Editor  
**S.Nagaiah**



**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams**  
**Tirupati**

# INDIAN CULTURE

(A COLLECTION OF EASSAYS)

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**S.Nagaiah**



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**INDIAN CULTURE**  
**A Collection of Essays**

Edited by  
**PROF. S. NAGAI AH**

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**FOREWORD**

Indian culture is one of the richest and most diverse of its kind in the world as it has stimulated the growth and development of several philosophical systems and religious thoughts. This culture has exercised considerable influence over the spiritual life of the people all over the world.

The present volume is a collection of lectures delivered by well known scholars at the religious educational center set up by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams in 1980. The lectures were aimed at inculcating religious ideas and ideals enshrined in our scriptures into the minds of the educated. The book covers a wide range of topics focussing upon our culture, philosophy and Vedanta.

We hope the students as well as the general readers find it interesting and useful.

In the Service of the Lord

  
**L.V. Subrahmanyam** I.A.S.  
**Executive Officer**  
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## **INDIAN CULTURE**

**- I.V. Chalapathi Rao**

India is a home of people of different religions, racial origins, sects, creeds and ways of living, with a common culture running through all the ages - each generation expanding and altering what it has received from its predecessors. It will be seen from a close study of history that the sub-continent of India has been one cultural unit throughout the ages, cutting across political boundaries and linguistic barriers. The cultural heritage of India is a multi-faceted diamond representing a bewildering diversity of thought and an infinite variety of forms. The essence of this culture is its catholicity - the idea that it is possible for two or three persons to sleep together keeping their heads on the same pillow and having different dreams. As Professor Pratt said, “mutually contradictory creeds can and do keep house together without quarrel within the wide and hospitable Hindu family”.

Spiritual life is the oxygen which sustained and held India together and kept its culture alive despite frequent inroads of foreign civilisations. The core remained unchanged although there were peripheral changes. Its most challenging and distinctive feature is that religion became science. The Upanishads (The breath of the eternal) maintain that science is the greatest which makes man know THAT which never changes and by knowing which everything is known. This science of the soul dealing with the secret of birth and death, may rightly be regarded as a national characteristic showing the vitality of its culture. India lives today in spite of visible degeneration and depravity all round, political and social, because these spiritual and cultural values are still kept alive in the national consciousness.

India's culture is closely interwoven with spiritual values. The truly cultured man is not driven by instincts but guided by reason, untouched by emotions and momentary stress. He lives in the consciousness of the welfare of the world. Renunciation should not be misconstrued as negation of action, but unselfish conduct. Vivekananda said, "Here activity prevailed when the very fathers of the modern Europeans lived in jungles and painted themselves blue, even earlier when history has no record..."

In *India through the Ages*, Jadunath Sarkar says : "India's geography has always influenced its history. Each race, dynasty and school of thought contributed to the common store of culture through many centuries and lost their identity by being transformed and assimilated into India's cultural heritage just as millions and millions of small insects have given up their bodies in building up the coral reefs on which many of the Pacific islands stand today secure from storm and tempest. From early times the internal isolation was broken and a pan Indian community of customs, ideal and culture was created by certain agencies."

The sources of cultural integration are identified as the following

- a) The pilgrim student
- b) The wandering mendicant
- c) The career - hunting warrior
- d) The ambitious kings / military conquerors
- e) The son-in-law / daughter-in-law imported from neighbouring countries from the centres of aristocracy.
- f) The holy rivers
- g) The great, sacred cities.

Our solution to mankind's ills is renunciation - unworldliness. Swamy Vivekananda said - "The good live for others alone. The wise should sacrifice himself for others... Go to hell yourself to buy

salvation for others. Great men are those who build highways for others with their heart's blood". Kumarila said in '*Tantravarthika*': "Let all the sins of the world fall on me and let the world be saved." Commenting on the *Mundaka Upanishad*, Sankara said : "He who has reached the all - penetrating Atman enters into the all." Thus the value of the Indian culture diminishes if it is divorced from spirituality.

In his poem 'Bharata Tirtha', Rabindranath Tagore pointed out in attractive language the principle of 'unity in diversity' underlying India's culture. He said that different people came into India from pre-historic times to the modern European history and as a result of their joint efforts we have today a composite culture. Not only people who lived within India's borders but also those who belonged to several races who came into contact with India through accidental encounters in history, have contributed to its diversity. We find evidence of this in pre-historic Indus Valley Civilisation which flourished over four thousand years ago. We find that its foundations were laid in Vedic civilization. It is a pleasing cocktail of blood and race, speech and patterns of thought and inter - play of ideologies. In the final analysis it is an evolving culture - not something that ever attained completeness or finality and ceased to grow from then on.

The examination and expression of good through society are distinctive features of western culture. The keynote of India's culture is "charity in spirit and hospitality in mind." Its distinctive features are splendid unselfishness and emphasis on the individual (as key to society). In order to reform society, you should transform yourself. The Mughal rule and the British rule brought certain new influences which led to cross fertilization of cultures. The integration of cultures does not mean the merging or submerging of one culture into another. Western culture retains its basic feature of outward expression - going outwards to conquer external nature. India's culture possesses the power to perceive the underlying spiritual unity of all things.

Western culture is mainly engaged in transcending physical limitations. India's culture makes it possible to transcend mental and spiritual limitations. Western culture tries to justify the ways of science to man. India's culture will retain its basic idea that the aim of man is to manifest the divinity within him, transcending mental and spiritual limitations. But this ability to probe the inner recesses of the mind (internal nature) would automatically lead to great activity and striving for social welfare. "Social good will thus become the expression of the underlying spiritual unity." ('India's Cultural Heritage' published by Ramakrishna Mission).

Rome stood for politics, Greece for art and India for Eternal Spiritual Values. The standard - bearers of the Indian Culture are not military heroes or men of wealth or monarchs and ministers but sages (wise men) like Vyasa, Yagnavalkya, Uddalaka, Janaka, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi and Aurobindo who believed in simple living and high thinking, conducted researches in the greatest of all sciences namely the Science of the Soul and discovered the hidden secrets of life.

Dr. Radhakrishnan calls culture "the fragrance of the soul." It is the harmonious development of the human spirit whose components are search for truth, cultivation of a sense of beauty and practice of virtue. Culture is not mere upper class upbringing or external polish. The Radhakrishnan Commission on university education defined culture as "intellectual alertness, receptiveness to beauty, humane feeling and social enthusiasm". Culture is the best expression of a nation's soul and every nation has its own distinctive expression. It is chauvinistic for any person to think that the culture of his own nation is greater than that of any other country.

Rajagopalachary defined culture as "the habit of successful self-control." It is the sum total of the way of living adopted by groups of human beings and handed down from generation to generation. Each

nation has its own separate pattern of culture. There is much that is common between all the nations and at the same time there is something that is peculiar to each of them. Literature, art, religion and science taken together and at their best would reflect culture. Literature and art are a socializing and edifying experience of the artist, which would be passed on to the reader, spectator or listener. Culture is a social virtue manifesting itself in consideration for the feelings of others and respect for others' rights. It moulds and refines the behaviour of people in a gentle and imperceptible manner. The Government regulates people's moral and civic life through its police force and law courts. Culture restrains people from improper behaviour through its internal force. It trains and elevates the senses and discourages over-indulgence. Rajaji says, "The standard placed by the people accepted by its collective conscience as foot rule for measure and judgement should be taken as the culture of a particular nation or the community rather than the factual condition. Semantically speaking, it is the standard of behaviour set before a people and kept up steadily by the enlightened among them."

What are the chief characteristics of Indian Culture? We get glimpses of this from the scriptures and classics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Dharma (right conduct) the truth may be considered as basic tenets of Indian culture. The *Ramayana* proves this. Sri Rama is the embodiment of truth and dharma. Dharma may also be viewed as duty. The *Bhagavad Gita* enjoins the performance of one's duty without expecting a reward. Harischandra sacrificed everything for the sake of truth. Yudhishtira said: "Truth is my mother. Jnana is my father. Daya is my friend. Peace is my wife and mercy is my son". These qualities are sine qua non of Indian culture. Kaushika, the proud and angry Brahmin, had to eat the humble pie and learn dharma from Dharma Vyadha, the untouchable met-seller. These great men courted misery, suffered difficulties, humiliations and the pangs of separation for the sake of truth. A single lie would have

saved Harishandra from all the sufferings. Had Dasaratha gone back on his word given to his wife Kaikeyi, the story of the *Ramayana* would have taken a different turn. When Draupadi asked Yudhishtira why he persisted in following Dharma which caused pain and suffering to him and to all of them, he said, "I love the grandeur of the mighty Himalayas because it is so majestic although it has nothing to give me."

Unselfishness, sacrifice and renunciation are important components of Indian culture. In the *Mahabharata*, Indra asks Yudhishtira to abandon the dog that had followed him faithfully and mount the celestial chariot that would take him to Heaven. Yudhishtira declined the offer saying: "Never let me be joined to that glory for whose sake a loyal dependent must be abandoned." He saved the lives of his cruel step - brothers, Kauravas, when they were imprisoned by Gandharvas. When Bhima and his other brothers called it misplaced generosity, he rebuked them saying, "As against strangers we are a hundred and five."

After successfully answering the perplexing questions of the Yaksha (the Guardian Spirit), Yudhishtira was granted a boon, the life of one of his dead brothers. He thought over the matter carefully and then replied, "May the cloud - complexioned, lotus eyed, broad chested, and long - armed Nakula, lying like a fallen ebony tree arise." He explained the reasons for his choice as follows: "If Dharma is set at naught man will be ruined. Kunti and Madri were the two wives of my father. I am surviving, a son of Kunti and so she is not completely bereaved. In order that the scales of justice be even, I ask that Madri's son revive." An uncultured person in those circumstances would have asked for the life of one of his own brothers, Bhima or Arjuna.

Janaka, the philosopher - king was the favourite disciple of Yagnavalkya. This made the other disciples jealous. One day news

came to the heritage that king Janaka's capital city, Mithila was burning. There was panic everywhere. In spite of the fact the lesson was in progress, the other disciples ran away to save their own belongings from the flames. But Janaka did not leave the place. He continued to listen to the teacher in rapt attention. When some one asked him why he was not bothered about his burning city and his own palace, he smiled and said: "When Mithila burns, nothing of mine burns." His jealous friends, who went to retrieve their humble belongings like kaupina (piece of loin cloth), felt ashamed of their own conduct.

Respect for women and looking upon other women as their own mothers are the noble characteristics of Indian culture. When Lakshmana was asked to recognize Sita's ornaments dropped by her as marks of identification, he could not do it. He attributed his failure to the fact that he never looked at his sister-in-law above the portion of her feet. In the *Mahabharata*, Nakula felt, "One who regards the wives of others as his mothers, who looks upon money as balls of earth and who treats all other beings as he treats his own self is the real seer and the knower of Brahman."

One can identify a cultured man not only by his conduct but also by his conversation. Seldom he speaks harsh words. Only once Rama spoke cruel words to Sita. It was on the occasion of her being brought before him after Ravana was slain in the battle. Then Sita said, "Why do you utter these harsh and unworthy words like an uncultured man speaking to an uncultured woman?"

In *Taittiriya Upanishad* we have the first convocation speech. At the conclusion of his course the teacher gives his parting message which is a mirror of our culture. He advises the student to speak the truth, practice Dharma and do work for the welfare of the world. Its essential part is the injunction that mother, father, teacher and guest

should be shown the highest respect. *Matru devo bhava, pitru devo bhava.*

Likewise Charaka advises the doctors not to be mercenary. Not for money, not for any earthly object should one treat his patients. In this the physician's work excels the work of the others. This positive ideal of dedicated service is greater than the Hippocratic oath, "I will not give poison to anyone" etc.

The ritualistic side of Hinduism insists that female is absolutely necessary to complete the image of the Divine. Every deity has a female Counterpart in Hindu temples. Worship of the goddess is an important part of religion. The highest flights of Advaitic philosophy are associated with Sri Sankaracharya. But no hymns are more fervent and poetical than Sri Sankara's hymns to the Divine Mother in all Her forms. In social life woman is a complement but not a competitor to man. She is the queen of the home.

Renunciation is another distinctive feature of the Indian culture. Lord Krishna while discussing the higher philosophy of renunciation, refers to the difference of opinion that prevails among scholars on this subject. "There are learned men who say that all kinds of fruitive activities should be given up, whereas other sages say that sacrifice, charity and penance should never be given up." Although he refers to the difference of opinion on this matter, he gives his judgement and final opinion which clinches the issue: "Sacrifice, charity and penance are never to be given up. They must be performed by all intelligent men. They purify even the great souls. All these noble activities should be performed as a matter of duty, O son of Pritha."

Kindness and compassion should not be limited to fellow human beings. They should be extended to birds, beasts and the vegetable world. Even the tiniest creature is entitled to courtesy and kindness. There is a story to prove this in the *Mahabharata*. As a chariot was

rolling fast on the battle field of Kuruskhetra, a worm crawled out of its way. The charioteer noticed this and asked, "Why do you too cling to life, O worm?" The worm replied: "We worms too have our joys and sorrows like men and we too love life." What is not in the *Mahabharata* is nowhere!

The chief glory of the Indian culture is its universality. History has not been able to trace its origin. Hence it is called "anadi" (beginningless). It has always been in existence and it shows no sign of death. Hence it is spoken of as "sanatana" (eternal). It is called vaidic, although it has assimilated subsequent additions, because it found its expression in the Vedas. Professor Pratt said: "Not only Hindu religion but the whole culture of the Hindus has been growing, changing and developing in accordance with the needs of time and circumstances without losing its essential and imperishable spirit." In addition to catholicity, it has tolerance. 'Yogavasishta' says, "All the diverse doctrines and paths originating at different times and in different countries, however, lead ultimately to the same Supreme Truth, like the many different paths leading travelers from different places to the same city." The *Bhagavad Gita* says: "How so ever men approach me, even so do I accept them. This broad mindedness is the quintessence of the Indian Culture."

The process of assimilation has been going on in the Indian culture through the centuries. Like a sponge it has absorbed some of the finest elements of foreign cultures and has grown. In ancient times, there were cultural exchanges between Indians and the Greeks. It absorbed the culture of Christianity later. In the Muslim and Mughal periods, it received certain elements from the Islamic culture, although Islam came to India in a hostile mood. Now in the modern times it is absorbing all that is the best in the west. There is nothing in the Indian culture which looks upon the development of modern science as undesirable. It has its support in the Vedas

because in Chapter 10, section 155 (3rd mantra) of the Rg *Veda* there is a sloka which gives support to science and technology. It says, “Technical science is a wonderful thing. It removes poverty, brings in prosperity. O poverty - stricken man! Acquire technical knowledge, and through the help of technical science, remove poverty and want.”

Thus it is a culture which is at once ancient and modern, humanistic and scientific. There is little that is narrow or parochial in it. From time immemorial Indians called their culture “*manava dharma or manava samskriti*” (human culture). Arnold Toynbee, the great historian said : “At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way. Here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for human race to grow together with a single family and in this atomic age this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.”

\* \* \*

## THE VEDAS

- Dr. T.N. Ganapathi

### 1. The Place of Religion in Society

Any discussion of the Vedas must follow a preliminary note on the place of religion in society. Is religion a segment of our living or is it the centre of our living? This question is to be answered before we enter into any other questions. In this world there are people who refuse to give any place for religion in society. They consider religion as the opium of society. This is so because the present age is an age of doubt and despondency. It has been observed that nine out of ten in many societies are indifferent to religion. Even the ten percent of people pay only a lip service to religion; but this is true not only of religion. It is the same with politics, economics, and even science. We are in doubt whether socialism or communism or liberationism or secularism, which particular “ism” is the best form of political life. Democracy is considered to be the remedy for the ills of politics. But the remedy has become worse than the disease. It is Lord Bryce who said that democracy has only one merit namely, that it provides for the counting of heads instead of the breaking of heads.

We may think that science at least is free from doubt. The characteristics of science are (i) to be specific, (ii) to be public, (iii) to be impersonal and (iv) to be concerned with facts. But recent developments show that the indubitable elements in science are fast disappearing. Where there was once certainty doubt has crept in. The theories of modern science are like the grin of the Cheshire cat where there is no cat to own it. As Prof. Eddington has put it:

“We have chased the solid substance from the continuous liquid to the atom, from the atom to the electron and there we have lost it.”

Lin Yutang, the famous Chinese thinker says :

“The scientist knocks and the door refuses to open. He hunted matter and lost it in the electron; he hunted life and lost it in the protoplasm; he hunted mind and lost it in the electronic brain waves.”

One author in the “Reader’s Digest” has beautifully summarized man’s progress so far:

“Man now knows what is on the other side of the moon, but still cannot tell what is in the back of his wife’s head. He can send a message round the world in a fraction of a second but cannot speak the language of the fellow in the next state.”

In short, human powers have outgrown human experience. This is because of the excess of reason at the expense of faith and religion. As Pascal has said, the two excesses are equally dangerous - he is to exclude reason, and the other to admit nothing but reason. That is why all the gadgets of science have failed to secure a lasting peace and happiness to man in society. True happiness is not related to these things only. In this context one is reminded of Carlyle’s remarks:

“Will all the financiers and upholsterers and confectioners of modern Europe undertake in joint - stock company to make one shoe - black happy? Not more than one hour or two. Try him with half a universe and he will set to quarrel with the proprietor of the other half.”

For the shoe - black has a soul which is not contented with these material wealth alone.

If we have a deep look at our present society today we find there is doubt and despondency. “There never was a time when so many people were so uncertain about so many things as at present”. This is so because we have failed to understand the true place and

value of religion in society. We must make religion the immanent principal of society. God should be the major central principle or value of society and all other values of society, if they are to be deemed as values must centre round this major value - God. All the other values of society may enhance the standard of living; but only religious values make our living *qualitative*. Unless one puts the principle or religion at the centre of society one cannot attain true social equality, or universal salvation; nor can we speak of real service. Hence a truly religious man cannot be indifferent to society. If any one is indifferent to society, then he is not truly religious.

True religion is the religion of love. It is a love that expects no return. We should not look upon God as a mere municipal authority who does good to us if we pay our taxes regularly. The various religions, if properly understood, emphasize the truth that religion is unrelated love, a love that knows no bargain. But if one becomes a fanatic he thinks that his religion alone delivers the good. Sri Ramakrishna used to describe this attitude by saying that ‘every one thinks that his watch alone is showing the right time and all others not.’ One friend went to Mulla Nazurudeen’s house as his guest. The Mulla’s son was eating then. First he was eating with his left hand; then after some time he began to eat with the right hand; after a few seconds he was seen eating with his left hand. The guest was shocked. The Mulla scolded his son for this and told him that he should eat only with his right hand and not with the left. To this the son of the Mulla said that it made no difference whether one ate with the right or the left since the mouth was at the same distance to both and what really mattered was that the eating should continue.

The various religions are the different bathing ghats in the river of true spirituality. Our differences are because of the terrain. But our innermost essence is colourless; it is the same. In India we have a name for the *sannyasin*. We call him *Vairagi*. This means colourless.

To be religious one must have faith -- *Sraddha* -- in one self. Religion means belief and faith. It happened that when Alexander came to India he met a sannyasin. He asked him, 'Do you believe in God? How do you believe without seeing him?' The sage laughed and took Alexander towards the market place. There, a small boy was flying a kite and it had gone so far away in the sky that it was not possible to see it even. The sage stopped there and asked the boy: "Where is the kite? Because, you cannot see it, how do you still believe that the kite is flying?" To this the boy said: "I can feel the pull of it." And the sage said to Alexander "I can also feel the pull of God." One has to feel the pull. The pull has been called by many names. The pull is one, but the sages have called it by many names.

Having given a general view about religion let us approach our study of the Vedas in a spirit of faith and belief. We shall begin our study of the Vedas with a general understanding of what is meant by Vedic culture.

\* \* \*

## 2. The Scope of Vedic Literature

Hindu culture is in essence the Vedic culture. What is Vedic culture? It is the way of life shown to the world by the saints and sages of India. It embraces both the materialistic and the spiritualistic aspects of human existence. Its philosophical and psychological concepts coupled with its prevalent institutions, customs and manners enable the individual to view life steadily and as a whole, to differentiate between appearance and reality and to determine the relative importance that should be paid to the various aspects of existence in the different stages of life.

Vedic culture has its mine of information and knowledge in Vedic literature. The principal constituents of the literature which contributed to the growth of Vedic culture may be classified as follows :

- i) The four Vedas;
- ii) The nine Brahmana Granthas;
- iii) The eleven important Upanisads;
- iv) The six Vedangas;
- v) The four Upa - Vedas;
- vi) The Bhagavad Gita; and
- vii) The six Darśanas.

The *four Vedas* are the Rg veda, the Sama veda, the Yajur veda and the Atharva veda. After the four Vedas come the Brahmana Granthas. These Granthas contain the meaning of particular mantras, in what ritual a mantra has to be used and how to use it and what is the result of the use. Each of the four Vedas has its own Brahmana Granthas. The principle Brahmana Granthas are as follows :

- i) Aitareya, ii) Kaushitaki, iii) Sankhyayana, iv) Shatapatha, v) Panchavinsha, vi) Shadvinsha, vii) Tandya, viii) Jaiminiya and ix) Gopatha.

Next to the Brahmana Granthas come the *Upanisads*. The word 'Upanisads'. The word 'Upanisad' is derived from the two prefixes, 'upa' meaning 'near' and 'ni' meaning 'very'. The root 'sad' means 'to sit'. The word as a whole refers to that knowledge which is derived by sitting at the feet of the preceptor. According to Sri Sankara the root 'sad' also means 'to destroy' and so 'upanisad' means 'to destroy' ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit and thereby cutting off the bondage to earthly existence'.

The principal Upanisads are eleven in number.

They are :

- i) Isa, ii) Kena, iii) Katha, iv) Prasna, v) Mundaka, vi) Mandukya, vii) Taittiriya, viii) Aitareya, ix) Chandogya, x) Brhadaranyaka and xi) Svetasvatara.

After the Vedas, Granthas and Upanisads, there developed another branch of Vedic literature known as *Vedangas*. *Anga* means the limb. Thus Vedanga means the limb of the Veda - body. These are works which are regarded as auxiliary members of the Vedas. They are designed to help us in the correct pronunciation and interpretation of the text as well as the employment of the right mantras in the respective ceremonies.

They are six in numbers.

- i) *Siksha* - the science of proper articulation and pronunciation;
- ii) *Chandas* - the science of prosody;
- iii) *Vyakarana* - grammar;
- iv) *Nirukta* - etymological explanation of difficult Vedic words;
- v) *Jyotisha* - astronomy; and
- vi) *Kalpa* - ritual.

Kalpa is the most important of the Vedangas because it stipulates and amplifies the personal duties of both the individual as well as the institutions pertaining to the family and society. The Kalpas are also known as *Sutras*. There are three broad kinds of sutras

They are :

- i) Srauta sutras; ii) Grihya sutras and iii) Dharma sutras.

In addition to all these, there are the four *Upa-Vedas*. They are:

- i) Ayurveda - - medicine;
- ii) Dhanurveda - - military science;
- iii) Gandharva veda - - music; and
- iv) Silpa or Sthapatyaveda - - architecture.

Each of these four Upa - - Vedas is attached to one of the four Vedas. Ayurveda is attached to the Rgveda, Dhanurveda to Yajurveda, Gandharva veda to Sama and Silpa to Atharva.

In this connection it would be worthwhile to mention a reference in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (7.1.1) where sage Narada had approached Sanat Kumara for being initiated into *Atma Vidya*. When Sanat Kumara asked him as to how far he had proceeded in his studies, Narada stated his proficiency in the following eighteen subjects.

They are :

- i) Rg Veda;
- ii) Yajur Veda;
- iii) Sama Veda;
- iv) Atharvana Veda;
- v) Puranas;
- vi) Pitri Vidya - nursing;
- vii) Rashi Vidya - mathematics;
- viii) Daiva Vidya - extra mundane science;
- ix) Nidhi Vidya - economics;
- x) Vakyo - vakya - logic and philosophy;
- xi) Ekayatana - ethics / politics
- xii) Deva Vidya - knowledge regarding the deities;
- xiii) Brahma Vidya - knowledge regarding the ultimate existence;
- xiv) Bhoota Vidya - physics;
- xv) Kshatra Vidya - military science;
- xvi) Nakshatra Vidya - astronomy;
- xvii) Sarpa Vidya - toxicology; and
- xviii) Deva Jana Vidya - psychology of the upper, middle and lower classes.

Narada said that though he had learnt so much he was only a *mantravadi* (one who had the knowledge of books) and not an *atmavid* (one who has the knowledge of Atman). Narada approached Sanat Kumara to acquire *atmavidya*. *Atmavidya* is the knowledge which is the basis of Vedic culture.

The six darsanas constitute another important branch of Vedic-cum-Sanskrit literature.

They are :

i) Nyaya; ii) Vaishesika; iii) Samkhya; iv) Yoga; v) Mimamsa; and v) Vedanta.

The Vedanta philosophy has two main divisions - non - dualistic and monotheistic. Advaita is the non - dualistic school. Under the monotheistic schools we have the following *five Vaishnava Schools*.

They are;

- i) Visistadvaita of Sri Ramanuja;
- ii) Dvaitadvaita of Sri Nimbarka;
- iii) Dvaita of Madhava;
- iv) Suddhadvaita of Vallabha; and
- v) Acintyabhedabheda of Sri Caitanya.

The six darsanas form what is called the Vedic or astika systems. In addition we have six *non-vedic* or nastika systems.

They are :

- i) Carvaka or lokayata darsana (materialism)
- ii) Jainism;
- iii) Vaibhashika (direct realism);
- iv) Sautrantika (indirect realism);
- v) Yogacara (idealism); and
- vi) Madhyamika (nihilism)

The last four are Buddhist schools.

The darsanas are, no doubt, difficult. They are meant only for the learned few. For the common folk another class of sastras was brought out by the Hindu sages. These sastras are called *puranas*. We have eighteen puranas in all, They are :

i) Vishnu Purana; ii) Naradiya Purana; iii) Bhagavata Purana; iv) Garuda Purana; v) Padma Purana; vi) Varaha Purana; vii) Brahma Purana; viii) Brahmanda Purana; ix) Brahma Vaivarta Purana; x) Markandeya Purana; xi) Bhavisya Purana; xii) Vamana Purana; xiii) Matsya Purana; xiv) Kurma Purana; xv) Linga Purana; xvi) Siva Purana; xvii) Skanda Purana; and xviii) Agni Purana.

A portion of the Markandeya purana is well known to all Hindus as *Devi Mahatmyam*. Like the puranas, the *Ramayana* and Mahabharata are the two great Itihasas of the Hindus. A portion of the *Mahabharata* is known as the *Bhagavad Gita*.

There is yet another group of sastras known as *Tantras*. They dwell on the sakti (energy) aspect of God. The texts of tantras are usually in the form of dialogues between Siva and Parvati.

In some of these, Siva as the teacher, answers the questions put by Parvati. These texts are known as *agamas*. In others the goddess Parvati is the teacher answering Siva's questions. These texts are known as *nigama*. There are numerous tantras of which sixty four are said to be prominent. The tantras are also called *Sakta agamas*. Allied to the tantras there are the *pancaratra agamas* of the Vaisnava and the *Saiva agamas*. Of the Pancaratra samhitas 215 separate texts are mentioned. There is a traditional list of 28 saiva agamas. In addition it is said that there are 207 upagamas. Each agama consists of four sections - (i) philosophy; (ii) mental discipline; (iii) rules for constructing temples and images; and (iv) religious practices.

So far we have seen the panorama of Hindu culture which is Vedic in essence. In the words of D.S. Sarma :

“The Veda is the main source. It is the fountain - head of all Indian culture. Its rituals and sacrifices lead to karma - mimamsa. Its upasanas lead to the bhakti - doctrine. Its

philosophical speculations lead to Vedanta. Its Metaphysical disquisitions lead to the logic of Nyaya. Its accounts of creation lead to samakhya. Its descriptions of religious ecstasy lead to Yoga. Its conception of the cosmic law of rta leads to that of the moral law of karma. And its kings and rishis are the starting points of our Itihasa and puranas. We may even say that its occasional protests against sacrifices lead to Buddhism and Jainism. Thus all our secondary scriptures, namely, the smritis, the Itihasas, the Puranas, the Agamas and the Darshanas develop one or other of the numerous aspects of the Veda.

Hence, a detailed study of the Vedas is a must for understanding Hindu culture.

\* \* \*

### 3. The Literature of the Vedas

The Hindus divide their literature into two classes. (i) *Sruti*, 'What they have heard with their ears' or revelations and ii) *Smriti*, 'What *their fathers* transmitted to them' or tradition. The Vedas are called sruti.

The word 'Veda' is derived from the Sanskrit *vid* to know. Sayanacharya has defined Veda 'as a book which reveals the knowledge of supernatural methods for the achievement of the desired object and avoidance of the undesirable'. The term 'Veda' is used by the Hindus to denote four collections of sacred books, called respectively, The Rg Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda. The Vedic texts are said to have been collected and classified by an ancient sage Krishna Dvaipayana. As he classified the Vedas, he became renowned by the name of *Veda - Vyasa*, i.e., classifier of the Vedas. It is said that he taught the four Vedas to his four principal disciples. He taught the Rg Veda to Paila, Yajur Veda

to Vaisampayana, Sama Veda to Jaimini and Atharva Veda to Sumantha.

The *Rg Veda* is in poetic form. It is divided into ten mandalas (books) containing 1017 metrical hymns (suktas), arranged according to their authors and the Gods to whom they are addressed. The Rg Veda is meant to be recited aloud for the invocation of the deities at the time of the fire-sacrifice.

The *Yajur Veda* has both poetry and prose, with a total of about 2000 stanzas and prose units. It consists principally of prayers and invocations applicable to the consecration of the utensils and materials of sacrificial worship. It is divided into two parts, the white (*sukla*) and the black (*Krishna*). The former is attributed to the sage Yagnavalkya and the latter to Tittiri.

The *Sama Veda* is poetry meant to be sung; it has a little less than 2000 stanzas. It is to be chanted at particular parts of the sacrifice.

The *Atharva Veda* has over seven hundred hymns in about 6000 stanzas and prose units. It teaches chiefly how to appease, to bless, to curse and to rectify what has been wrongly done in the act of sacrifice. The Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda have many stanzas in them.

The Vedas are said to be *apauruseya*, which means divine in origin. They are called Sruti, because they are directly heard from God; and they are not of human origin. The authority of the Vedas does not depend upon anything external; they themselves are authority, being the knowledge of God. The rishis were only 'seers' who intuitively saw the Vedic truths. Hence the Vedas have been called 'divine revelation' or '*divya - caksuh*' and the direct visualization of the rishis is called 'sakshatkara'. The rishis were vehicles through which the message of the Vedas was communicated

by divine power. The spiritual truths were heard in the innermost recesses of the heart by the rishis, who preached and taught the Vedas.

One remarkable thing about the Vedas is that they have been preserved by the process of oral transmission, from father to son, and teacher to pupil, and have been so carried in memory from age to age. Because of this oral tradition, the Vedas are said to be the oldest extant books of the world. The names of rishis appear along with their hymns; but they have not said any thing about themselves in the hymns. Of the Vedic rishis seven are prominent. They are : Kasyapa, Visvamitra, Gautama, Atri, Bharadvaja, Vasishtha and Jamadagni. The other prominent rishis are Agastya, Vamadeva, Narayana and Atharvan. There are some women rishis also. Three of them are eminent, Ghosha, Vak and Visvavara. The compositions of the hymns were done by the rishis not only for their time but for generations to come. One rishi in Rg Veda (III. 33.8) says : “Do not forget, singer, these words of yours will resound in after - ages.”

Each of the Vedas has three main divisions viz., *The samhitas or Mantras, the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas*. The famous Upanisads are mostly the different chapters of the Aranyakas. The samhitas are collections of mantras or hymns; most of which sing the praise of one or another personal God. The Brahmanas contain detailed descriptions of the sacrificial rites and the modes of their performance. According to the great Vedic commentator, Sayana, they deal with eight classes of topics, namely, *itihasa* (history), *purana* (old stories), *vidya* (esoteric knowledge about meditation), *upanisad* (supreme knowledge), *sloka* (verses), *sutra* (aphorisms), *vyakhyana* (explanations), and *anuvyakhyana* (elaborations). The Aranyakas are forest treatises meant for contemplative life. They present the symbolic meanings of the fire-sacrifices and their accessories for the purpose of meditation. Their intention is to direct

the aspirant's thoughts from ritualism to speculation and contemplation on spiritual truths. According to Paul Deussen, the division of Vedas into Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanisads is based on the principle of dividing life into four *Asramas* or stages, namely, *brahmacarya* or student life, *garhasthya* or married life, *vanaprastha* or retirement and *sannyasa* or life of renunciation. As a student, the youth is trained in self - control and acquires such virtues as chastity, truthfulness, faith and self - surrender as explained in the Samhitas. The chief aim of the stage of married life is to ritualistic sacrifices as explained in the Brahmanas. At the stage of Vanaprastha a man need not confine himself to ritualism and can engage in symbolic meditation as instructed in the Aranyakas. Finally when he enters the life of renunciation he is dedicated wholly to acquiring knowledge of Brahman, through the help of the Upanisads.

The most important Vedic texts are five Samhitas, eighteen Brahmanas, four Aranyakas and sixteen Upanisads. A classified list of the Vedic texts, as given by Swami Satprakashananda, is given below.

### I. Rg. Veda

Rk Samhita	Brahmana	Aranyaka	Upanisad
	1. Aitareya	1. Aitareya	1. Aitareya
	2. Kausitaki	2. Kausitaki	2. Kausitaki
	(or Samkyana)		
	3. Paingi		

### II. Krsna (Black) Yajur Veda

Krsna Yajuh Upanisad Samhita	Brahmana	Aranyaka
	1. Taittiriya	1. Taittiriya
	2. Ballavi	2. Katha

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 3. Satyayani  | 3. Svetasvatara |
| 4. Maitrayani | 4. Mahanarayana |
| 5. Katha      | 5. Maitrayaniya |

### III. Sukla (White) Yajur - Veda

Sukla Yajuh Upanisad Samhita (or Vajasanayi Samhita) Brhadaranyaka 3. Jabala 4. Paingala	Brahmana 1. Satapatha	Aranyaka 1. Satapatha	1. Isa
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### IV. Sama - Veda

Sama - Samhita	Brahmana	Aranyaka	Upanisad
1. Tandya (or Pancavimsa with the supplement Sadvimsa)	1. Chandogya	2. Kena	
2. Talavakara			
3. Arseya			
4. Vamsa			
5. Daivatadhyaya			
6. Mantra			
7. Sama - Vidhana			
8. Samhitopanisad	Brahmana	Aranyaka	

### V. Atharva Veda

Atharva samhita	Brahmana	Aranyaka	Upanisad
1. Gopatha	1. Mundaka	2. Mandukya	3. Prasna

According to the subject - matter, the Vedic texts have been classified into (i) *Karma - Kanda*, (ii) *Upasana Kanda* - and (iii) *Jnana Kanda*. The first deals with rituals, the second with worship and the third with the highest knowledge, i.e., Brahavidya. According to the Mimamsa school of philosophy the main purpose

of the Vedas is to denote some karma or rite and therefore all the portions which do not speak of rituals should be considered as redundant and figurative. That is, they emphasized only the karma kanda portion of the Vedas and other two parts as not necessary. This view is rejected by the Vedanta school which believes that Jnana kanda is the most important and the other two are accessories to it.

The Vedic rishis speak of two kinds of seeing : One is seeing with the spirit and the mind and the other is seeing with the eye. Hence in the Vedas we find two ways of approaching the Ultimate Reality : one through the inner spiritual vision and the other through poetic vision. Thus in the Vedas we find spiritual ecstasy coupled with the finest poetry in the world.

How the Vedas are to be studied is indicated in the Vedas themselves. To quote Swami Prabhavananda :

‘For the study of the Vedas, according to long tradition, and even according to Vedas themselves, one must have - as Yagnavalkya had - a master, or guru; ‘Approach a teacher’, says the Mundaka, ‘with humility and with a desire to serve.’ Elsewhere we read : ‘To many it is not given to hear of the self. Many, though they hear of it, do not understand it. Wonderful is he who speaks of it; intelligent is he who learns of it. Blessed is he who, taught by a good teacher, is able to understand it.’

The function of the ‘good teacher’, as Hinduism conceives, is two fold. He of course explains the scriptures, the spirit as well as the letter; but, what is more important still, he teaches by his life - by his little daily acts, by his most casual words, sometimes even by his silence. Only to be near him, only to serve and obey him in humility and reverence, is to

become quickened in spirit; and the purpose of the study of the Vedas is not merely or primarily to inform the intellect, but to purify and enrich the soul.'

Pleasant indeed are the study and teaching of the Vedas!  
He who engages in these things attains to at concentration of mind.  
And is no longer a slave to his passions;  
Devout, self - controlled, cultivating in spirit;  
He rises to fame and is a blessing to mankind.

\* \* \*

#### 4. The Theology of the Vedas

The hymns of the Vedas were composed in praise of the gods. In some hymns the number of the gods is given as thirty three, of which eleven are in heaven, eleven on earth and eleven in mid - air. The Rg Veda looks upon the universe as possessed of three planes of existence. The topmost plane is called 'dyuloka' or celestial sphere; next comes the 'antariksaloka', the sphere of intermediary space; the third is 'bhurloka' or the terrestrial sphere. In each sphere there is a presiding deity. *Savitr* or *Surya* is the god of the celestial world; Indra or Vayu is the God of the intermediary space; and *Agni* is the God of the terrestrial region. These three gods were multiplied into thirty three, there being eleven in each sphere. According to the *Satapatha Brahmana* the thirty three gods consist of the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twelve Adityas, Dyu (sky) and Prithvi (earth). According to it, the twelve Adityas are the twelve names of the Sun for the twelve months of the year.

Further the gods are spoken of in the Rg Veda as the 'former' and the 'latter', the 'old' and the 'young'. The 'former' are the gods of poetry and the 'latter' are the gods of philosophy. The 'former' gods are concrete and physical. The 'latter' are abstract and speculative.

**The Physical Gods :** The gods under this category appeal to the senses and are 'semi-tangible'. The first god in this list is the sky and it is referred to as *Dyaus*. The Sanskrit term 'dyu' means 'to shine' and *Dyaus* means the 'bright' or 'the shining one'. Then we come across the names of 'Mitra' and 'Varuna'. Mitra symbolized light, and was considered to be the God of day, and Varuna, the deity of the deep blue sky. Varuna, from *var*, to cover, means the all – embracing *expanse*, and the primary source of all things. The God next in importance is *surya or savitr*. The most important God of the Rg Veda is 'Indra'. 'Vishnu' is the faithful friend and companion of Indra. 'Agni' the God of fire, is the greatest of the terrestrial gods. Agni, is a deification of fire in its threefold manifestations, as the sun in the heaven, as lightening in the atmosphere, and as fire on the earth. He carries the sacrifices to the gods and brings the gods down to the sacrifices. He is both 'Brihaspati', the purohita or mediating priest, between god and man and 'Brahmanaspati', the lord of prayer. He not only hears prayers, but also causes the gods to hear them. He is a kind of *anima mundi*, a subtle principle, that pervades all nature. He is one of the most prominent deities of the Rg Veda, because he is the product of *sacerdotalism*. In the worship of Agni we see the germs of two great ideas so natural to man - - namely, incarnation and meditation.

**The Metaphysical Gods :** Unlike the former, these gods do not appeal to the senses. There is nothing in nature corresponding to them. There was the imperious tendency of mind to generalize the gods and to achieve a unity of godhead. As a flight of abstraction we find in *Skamba*, the supporter, *Visvakarman*, the marker of all things; and *prajapati*, the lord of creatures. During this period the sages had started using cryptic terms like 'the one' (*ekam*) 'that' (*tat*) 'that Reality' (*tat sat*), 'the eternal' (*aksharam*) and the supreme (*Brahman*). All these terms are in singular number and

neuter gender. We also find the indefinable word 'om' and also the term 'aja', 'the unmanifest', 'the unborn'. There is an off-quoted mantra of the Rg veda which signifies the unity of Godhead: 'The wise call Him Indra, Agni, Varuna etc. To what is one, sages give many a name' In another place it is said, 'The great divinity of the gods is one'.

Thus in the Vedas, at the earliest stages, one may note a polytheistic conception. Max Muller distinguished another aspect called henotheism, which means a belief in single gods each in turn standing out as the highest. Vedic polytheism essentially *poetic theism*, where the divine is approached through poetry. It includes the aesthetic element as an essential factor. For the Hindu the Vedas go beyond all these *isms*. In the words of Swami Prabhavananda :

'What he (the orthodox Hindu) sees in the graduated scale of Vedic conceptions is a beneficent correspondence to varied stages of religious attainment. Some men are but barbarians in spiritual things; others are seers and sages. The Vedas (and this, say the orthodox, was a clear purpose of the exalted rsis) minister to all according to their needs. Some they teach to walk. To those at a low stage they offer polytheism, even at times materialism; to those at a higher stage monotheism; and to those at the top of the scale a notion of God so utterly impersonal, so devoid of anything describable in human terms, as to be suited only to the greatest saints, and to these only in their most strenuous moments.

\* \* \*

## 5. Vedic Ritualism

Ritual is worship reduced to a routine or habit. It is the embodiment of faith and it binds together large groups of believers.

This is the social function of ritualism. Further ritualism binds the present with the past and secures a visible continuity of religion. This is the historical function of ritualism. The other chief function of ritualism is its symbolism. The rites we perform are intended to be external marks of our gratitude and humble service to God and suggesting purity of mind and spirit.

The chief Vedic ritual is sacrifice or Yajna; Yajna is the soul of the Veda. Yajna is of three kinds.

- i) *Havis, Havir - Yagna, Ishti* - Meat offerings;
- ii) *Pasu, Pasubendha* - animal offerings; and
- iii) *Soma, Saumya adhvara* - soma offerings. There are seven types of soma sacrifices, the important among them are *gyotistoma* and *vajapeya*.

To this a fourth class, Pakayajna, or little sacrifices, called grhyakarma (domestic offering) was added. Pakayajna consists, chiefly of offerings of cakes, soups, grains, fruits, butter, milk and honey. Apart from these yajnas, there are references to Rajasuya, the consecration of a universal king and Asvamedha the sacrifices of a horse.

The Vedic sacrifices or rites may be classified into (i) *nitya* or periodic or regular and (ii) *naimittika* or occasional or special.

*The nitya or regular sacrifices:* Under this, we have during the day the *sandhyavandana* at morning and evening, and *madhyahnika* at noon; these are prayers to the Giver of all light through the Gayatri mantra. In addition, the agnihotra (fire offering) is to be performed daily morning and evening. Further, the Vedas speak of the five great sacrifices- *Panca - maha yajnas* - to be performed daily. They are:

- i) *The Brahma - Yagna* consists of the daily recitation of Vedic texts, called *tas*;

- ii) *The Deva Yajna*, the offerings to Gods;
- iii) *The pitr Yajna*, libations to the spirits of one's ancestors;
- iv) *The Bhuta Yajna*, the oblations offered to the four elements - *Prthvi, ap, vayu and akasa*;
- v) *The Manusya Yajna*, sacrifice to men, in the form of offering food to guests etc.,

There are also *periodical sacrifices*.

(i) The *Sravana sacrifice* to the serpents takes place on the full moon day of the *Sravana* month;

(ii) The ceremony of *Pratyavarohana* (re-descent) takes place on the full moon of *Margasirsa*. It probably coincided with the beginning of the New Year and so a renovation of the house, with a new coat of paint for the walls, etc is done.

(iii) Then there are the *agricultural rites* consisting of ceremonies consecrating the various stages of agricultural operations. There are also many rites for the prosperity of the cattle.

There are certain occasional ceremonies such as guest-reception, the building of the house and the *caitya* sacrifice. Guest-reception is an elaborate rite where the guest is seated on a bed of grass, his feet are washed and *arghya* (water, etc. as worship), *acamaniya* (water for sipping) and *madhuparka* (honey - mixture) are offered. A cow is presented to him and then the guest is fed.

The building of the house contains important rites, such as digging of pits etc; and the positions of the doors, especially the main door is a matter of great care. The house - building is concluded by the *Vastusanti* or the rite of the appeasement of the *Vastupurusha* (site or house). The *caitya* sacrifice is offered to the *caitya* which is either a religious shrine or a memorial erected to the memory of a teacher of some distinguished person.

There are rites pertaining to the stages of man's life which are called *samskaras*. We have the *Samskaras* of childhood, of

boyhood, of manhood and of old age and death. Let us see some of them. We may begin with the marriage sacrament. After offering oblations into the domestic fire, the bridegroom grasps the hand of the bride - *pani - grahana*. The bridegroom then leads the bride three times round the fire its *parinayana* and next makes her step on a stone its (*asmarohana*), symbolic of the steadfastness which the stone imparts. The vital ceremony which sets the formal seal on marriage is the *sapta - padi* (the seven steps) which the couple take together in a north - eastern direction. This is symbolic of their friendly cooperation - their marching in step in their married life. After sunset, the husband points out the pole - star, the *Arundhati* - star, and the *saptarsis* to the bride to ensure the stability of conjugal life. On the fourth day of the marriage, the ceremony of the consumption of the marriage, the *Garbhadhana* (impregnation) takes place. The ceremony of *pumsavana*, ensuring a male offspring takes place in the third month of pregnancy. The *simantonnayana*, parting of the hair, takes place sometime in the eighth month of the first pregnancy only. This is done to ensure fertility to the wife and heroism to the child. The *Jatakarma* or the birth ceremony is performed immediately after birth of the child. On the tenth day after birth the ceremony of *namakarana* (naming) takes place. In the sixth month the ceremony of *anna - prasana*, the first feeding of the child with solid food takes place. The rite of tonsure - *chudakarana* - takes place in the third year. The most important sacrament in the life of a boy is the *upanayana*, the leading of the boy to the teacher. The return of the student to his parental home from the teacher's house is called the rite of *samavartana*.

Now let us pass in review the ancestral offerings in the vedic ritual. There are two conceptions of Fathers in vedas. The one is the distant, half forgotten ancestors called the *pitr*s (or manes). The other is the fathers who have lately departed called the - *pretas*. To the first we perform the daily *pitr Yajna* and the monthly *sraddha*,

by which the pitrs are honoured and receive oblations like gods. To the second we perform the funeral rituals following immediately after death such as *sapindikarana sraddhas* etc.,

In this context it would not be out of place to mention certain *agamic rites* pertaining to worship. Ordinary worship, whether it is private or public, is of three kinds: (i) three fold worship; (ii) five fold worship; (iii) sixteen fold worship.

The threefold worship consists of *dhupa, deepa and naivedya*. In the *five fold worship* two more items *gandha and puspa*. The sixteen fold worship consists of:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| i) Dhyanam           | : meditation;                            |
| ii) Avahanam         | : invocation;                            |
| iii) Simhasanam      | : enthronement;                          |
| iv) Padyam           | : washing the feet;                      |
| v) Arghyam           | : offering hospitality;                  |
| vi) Snamam           | : ablution;                              |
| vii) Vastram         | : presenting vestments;                  |
| viii) Yagnopavitam   | : investing with the sacrificial thread; |
| ix) Candanam         | : offerings sandal paste;                |
| x) Puspanam          | : offering flowers;                      |
| xi) Dhupa            | : burning incense;                       |
| xii) Deepa           | : lighting the lamp;                     |
| xiii) Naivedyam      | : offering food;                         |
| xiv) Tambulam        | : offering betel;                        |
| xv) Nirajana         | : waving lights; and                     |
| xvi) Suvarnapuspanam | : making a gift of gold or money.        |

The Vedic rites are traditionally classified into:

- i) Nitya Karmas - i.e., obligatory rites like the sandhyavandanam etc.,
- ii) Naimittika karmas - i.e., occasional rites like the samskaras; and
- iii) Kamyas Karma - i.e., optional rites like the various kinds of yajnas as described in the Vedas.

This ritualism marks one characteristic development of early Vedic religion. According to the Vedic conception every human being who is born labours under three debts, namely, the debt we owe to our parents for giving us birth which is called *pitri rina*, the debt we owe to our teacher for imparting knowledge called *deva rina* and the debt we owe to the builders of healthy social organisations which provides us with a favourable environment which is known as *rishi rina*. The rituals and sacrifices mentioned in the Vedas are meant to enable us to discharge our duties; therefore, they are not meaningless and insignificant. The institution of Yajna, as ritual, had special meaning of its own. To quote A.C. Bose:

The Bhagavad Gita, in its own remarkable way, distinguishes the spirit of Yajna, from its forms. If the spirit is accepted then the material part of the Yajna, related to the fire, fuel, and the oblation, may be taken not only literally but also symbolically and figuratively. If so, then the Yajna of the karma kanda would be material Yajna; but there will also be the Yajna of Tapas (spiritual discipline) in which the fire of restraint is lighted and the senses (sensual pleasures) are the offering; there will be the Yajna of Yoga in which the vital function will be the offering into the fire of self control; and there will be the Yajna of sacred studies (Brahmayajna) and the Yajna of jnana, knowledge (in which Brahman the Supreme Reality - is fire, fuel and oblation as well as sacrificer) for men of spiritual discipline and self dedication. If this wider meaning of Yajna is taken, then it must be admitted in the same wider sense that (as the followers of the karmakanda claim) the eaters of the ambrosia of the remains of Yajna go to the changeless Eternal.' There should then not only be no opposition to Yajna but Yajna must be accepted as the central thing in the discipline for higher life:

Even this world is not for the man without Yajna, what to speak of any other.'

In the Vedic rituals there are prayers for good things of earth and for good qualities in men. There is a prayer that men may prosper in every way through *yajna*. At the end of the *yajna* mantras the word *santi* was uttered by way of invoking peace.

In Vedic rituals, through the mantras, the Vedic values such as *tapas* and *satya* were emphasized. The Vedic rishis looked upon the entire cosmic process as the performance of a great sacrifice where man can mould himself in harmony with the cosmic order. Thus the Vedic rituals stand for the dominant factors of the cultural life such as the spirit of sacrifice, restraint, self-abnegation, harmony through love and the desire for the attainment of immortality in life. In short, the Vedic rituals provide an outer husk to the deep religious values.

\* \* \*

## 6. Vedic Ethics

The Vedic values are *rta*, *satya* and *tapah*. One of the features of early Indian thought is the conception of *rta*. In the mantras we meet with expressions like guardians of *rta* and followers of *rta* in the descriptions of gods.

*Rta* originally meant uniformity of nature implying a certain law and orderliness in the course of things such as we find in the regular sequence of day and night, the uniform succession of seasons and the general appearance of natural consistency. The original idea came to be interpreted as moral order. The term *rta* finally meant the moral law that governs the physical world. The Vedic gods carefully maintain the cosmic order. They zealously uphold the moral law. The cosmic order is an expression of the moral law because all this uniformity and consistency in nature is an expression of the inherent

goodness of the principle underlying all phenomena. To uphold *rta* is to facilitate and to propagate the expression of the good. To oppose it is to favour evil. *Rta* is opposed to *anrta* and as such it stands for truth as the sustaining principle underlying the universe and maintaining its integrity. *Rta* in its moral aspect includes the performance of the Vedic ritual of *yajna*. In its moral aspects *rta* is cognate with truth. The Rg Veda (X.110.1) speaks of *rta* and *satya* as being 'born in the beginning of things out of perfect spiritual ardour.' *Rta*, in its moral aspects however, is wider than truth. It includes justice and goodness and it is almost synonymous with *dharma* as an ethical concept. Further *rta*, gives symmetry and harmony to cosmos. Hence, the conception of *rta* has an aesthetic aspect too. It implies splendour and beauty. It is the discipline of form that makes beauty. Hence, the Vedic gods, who are spoken of as upholding *rta*, are all lawful, and good. Thus the concept *rta* includes the trinity of values - the true, the good and the beautiful.

By emphasizing *rta* the Vedic rishis uplifted the mind of man to spiritual and ethical heights. The Vedic people followed the path of righteousness. They had faith in collective prayers. They swore by truth which is called *jyotisaspati*.

They spoke '*sunrta*' speech, i.e., palatable truth. They prayed to gods to make them free from evil deeds. Gods who maintained the standards of morality were praised. They were called *Nasatya* in general. *Nasatya* is an expression for speaking the truth. Agni was called *satyaparayana* (devotee to truth) Varuna, Mitra and Aditya were called *dhrtavrata* (one who never alters his ways). Indra has been addressed as *satkarma - palaka* (protector of good deeds). Vishnu is called *adabhyah* (free from deception).

The ideal of society, according to the Vedic seers, is to translate the order of the cosmos into social order. But *rta* does not imply fate or foreordination. It only means eternal law and eternal justice.

It implies that a man must reap what he sows. Thus the conception of *rta* led to the doctrine of *karma*. In the Vedas there is no place of predeterminism. They speak of their confident faith in man's capacity to follow *rta*. The Rg veda declares: 'The earth is sweet to the man who lives by law (*ritayate*)' .

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## 7. Vedic Science

The Vedic rishis knew that the world was governed by natural laws. In the Yajur Veda there is a verse which says: 'The earth with all its waters revolves round the sun.' (Yajur veda III, 6). The Aitareya Brahmana holds the view that the sun never sets nor rises and that the motions of the sun are apparent and are really due to the rotation of the earth (Aitareya Brahmana, III, 4, 6). This clearly shows that long before Copernicus could give his helio - centric system of astronomy, the revolution of the earth round the sun was known to the vedic seers.

The notion of the various divisions of time (*kala*) is found in several hymns. Apart from the three divisions of time into past, present, and future, the Vedic seers identified time with the sun and divided it into another 90 divisions: year, two solstices, five seasons, 12 months, 24 half - months, 30 days eight watches and 12 zodiacal signs.

Questions concerning the beginning and origin of all things were asked and answered by the Vedic seers. The creation hymn in Rg Veda (x, 129) is the most sublime hymn in the entire Vedic revelation. This is the *Nasadiya hymn*. It clearly says that there was something at the beginning, but as that thing had not manifested itself, nothing can be said of it. This shows that 'creation' should be understood as making something shapely out of shapelessness and not in the sense of making something out of nothing. This scientific account of creation in the Rg Veda shows that there is no such thing as creation of the

universe, but only its manifestation. In the Vedas there is a reference to 49 cosmic rays rotating in different fields, giving rise to different shapes (Rg Veda V, 53.10., Yajur veda XXXIII, 45). In *Jaimini Brahmana* there is a reference to the existence of further regions in space; i.e., other atmospheres beyond the effect of solar systems (III, 310). The penumbra and umbra of the sun are referred to in the Vedas. This reveals that Vedic seers were aware of the sun spots also. *Satapatha Brahmana* mentions that the interior of the earth is extremely hot (XIV,9,4,21). Rg Veda (VII,15,14) holds that the entire earth contains magnetic fillings in the interior. There is a reference to the comets also (Rg Veda V, II, 3). The origin and development of Hindu geometry is traced to the Vedas. The science of geometry was invented in India from the Vedic rules for the construction of sacrificial altars, dealt with by the *Sulba Sutras*. It is admitted by scholars that the truth of the Pythagorean theorem is found mentioned in the *Sulba Sutras*, even two centuries before Pythagorus was born.

The *Atharva Veda* contains the literature on medical science and chemistry. It has reference to poisonous germs which cause diseases. It has also references to curing of diseases not only by herbs but also by the exercise of will power, known now-a-days as psychotherapy. There is also a reference to the power of healing by touch (mesmerism). The Atharva veda (XI, 4, 16) contains the four - fold classification of Vedic therapy to protect life.

- i) The drugs of the Angirasas (juices of plants and herbs);
- ii) The drugs of the Atharvam (mantra - therapy);
- iii) The divine drugs in the form of prayers; and
- iv) The drug of human artifice and contrivance.

Even injection was popular in Vedic times. We have a reference to this in Rg veda (X, 97, 12). God is recognized as the greatest physician. For the human physician certain qualifications are

prescribed in the *Atharva veda* (V. 29, 1). They are (i) he must know the preparation of medicines and (ii) he must be one who can understand diagnosis and prescribe the remedy readily. Fever, consumption, various wounds, leprosy and poisoning are mentioned as diseases in the Atharva Veda. References to water therapy, treatment of diseases of heart, kidney and liver by means of sun's rays, different types of fevers and fever therapy, types of snakes and snake bites and medicinal herbs for snake - bites, veterinary diseases, hair diseases, skin diseases, etc., are found in many places in the Atharva Veda. In addition to all these things, the Atharva Veda mentions the twelve signs of the Zodiac (X, 8, 4).

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## 8. Vedic Society

It is generally believed that there was no caste system in the early Vedic period. But the mention of the names of brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya and sudra as mentioned in the Rg Veda *Purusa - Sukta* (X, 90) had raised a sharp difference of opinion among Vedic scholars, whether the system of caste was prevalent during the Vedic period. A little reflection will show that this is a reference to the system to classes only and not to castes. There are two important words in Sanskrit, one is varna and the other is jati. Both varna and jati are translated into English as caste. This is the difficulty. *Varna* is the old Vedic conception, whereas jati is a post - Vedic idea. *Varna* is spiritual; *jati* is hereditary. The word *varna* is derived from the root 'vri' which means to choose or to select. According to the Vedic thinkers, each human being will fall into one of the four categories of propensities or temperaments. The mind has three qualities i.e., *satvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika*. To the Vedic sociologists these three attributes of mind work their way out in society in four different types of human beings. Those in whom the satvika quality dominates are called brahmanas; those in whom there

is found a combination of satvika and rajasika qualities are called *kshatriya*, those in whom we find a combination of *rajasika* and *tamasika* qualities are called *vaisyas* and those in whom we find only the *tamasika* qualities are called *sudras*. These, therefore, are not the four Vedic jatis but the expression of the direction of the human mind (*pravrttis*). Thus Vedic psychology is at the root of Vedic sociology. There is no evidence in the Vedas themselves to show that the four classes had become hereditary thereby indicating castes. In short, in Vedic society the classes existed but they have not degenerated into a caste system.

The Vedic Aryans had brick - built homes. There were villages and towns. Iron cities are also mentioned. Cattle - keeping and agriculture are the principal occupation. Other occupations and trades are also mentioned. The construction of chariots, weaving, rope-making, working in leather, making gold ornaments and weapons are some of the occupations we come across in the Vedic texts. Gambling was the most popular form of recreation.

Family was the important social unit. It was patriarchal. Marriage was regarded as a sacred function. In general monogamy was the rule, though there were references to the existence of polygamy, which was only an exception. Women studied the Vedic love mach like men and there was the custom of *upanayana* of girls also.

Monarchy was the normal form of the political organizations. In the task of administration the king was assisted by a council. The Rg Vedic polity and society are based on the small village pattern governed by petty kings.

Let us see some more features. In the Rg Vedic society 'nishka' was used as a coin, i.e., as a unit of barter. The art of dance was engrafted as the accompaniment of Vedic sacrifice. In the *Kaushitaki*

*Brahmana* there is a reference to three kinds of *silpa* or art named as (i) *nritya* (dance), (ii) *gita* (song), (iii) *vaditra* (instrumental music).

Chariot race was an essential feature of the *vajapeya* sacrifice. Further horse racing was one of the famous amusements of the Vedic Indians.

There is a mention of three types of roads in the *Atharva Veda*, one for chariots, one for carts and the third for foot - passengers. The killing of animals was not prohibited in the Vedic days. The vedic people, including the brahmans, ate fish and meat.

Education was obligatory for all and it was given free. In the ashrams all lived equals, as there was no difference between rich and poor students. According to the Vedic seers, perfection is the very nature (*svabhava*) of men, but it is not manifest. Education or *vidyabhyasa* is the disciplined study and practice of truths revealed by the Vedas. Various branches of knowledge have developed from the Vedas. We come across the expression of *para vidya* and *apara vidya* in Vedic texts. *Para vidya* is supreme knowledge; it is the knowledge of the Brahman. *Apara vidya* consists of the different arts and sciences like astronomy, geology, biology, medicine, grammar, music, dancing, etc. There is no contradiction between these two vidyas - *para* and *apara* in the Vedic system of education. Being developments of the Vedas they do not contradict each other. Education in *apara vidya* is formulated in such a way as to lead the student step by step from the finite to the infinite, from imperfection to perfection, from the temporal to the eternal.

### CONCLUSION

The one salient feature of the Vedic philosophy is its world - affirmation. The Vedic sages were never in favour of renouncing the various joys of life. The Vedic rishis had not abandoned their

interest in the problems of life in this world. They lived as members of the family, propitiating gods with the sacrifices and their prayers. The householder was regarded as the pivotal principle of social life. None of the Vedic rishis were sannyasins. Every normally developed person was expected to marry and run a home; because, *grihasthasrama* was the centre of all domestic sacrifices prescribed in the Vedas. A happy home was always glorified and aspired for in the Vedic period. The colourful family life of a Vedic householder was never a life of pessimism. Nor the hedonistic tone of the Vedic rishis is an expression of materialism. According to the Vedic seers human life is rooted not in its finite, material manifestation but in its infinite being of Brahman. The worldly pleasures should not be enjoyed in an irresponsible way with a self centred need. The philosophy of life propagated by the Vedas was also a harmony between enjoyment and sacrifice, between worldly life and spiritual perfection. The central thought of Vedic philosophy is not an ideology of escapism. It is realistic. Vedic culture believes that the various objects of the world have been created for enjoyment. It only warns us against excessive indulgence in them. Enjoy life but do not lose oneself in it. Be in the world, but not out of it. Do *tapas*. *Tapas* means to burn. That is, we have to burn selfishness in us. Self - negation and harmony were the skey notes of the life of the Vedic sages. The process that brings real happiness in life is that of enjoyment - non - attachment - renunciation. To live together, sharing a common life, was the motto of the Vaidika people. The last *sukta* of the Rg Veda may be mentioned here :

Assemble together, speak with one voice, let your minds be all of one accord... Let all priests deliberate in a common way. Common be their assembly, common be their mind, so be their thoughts united... United be the thoughts of all, that all may live happily, that we may all happily reside.

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## INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

- Dr. Saraswathi Chennakesavan

The Indian Philosophy is one of the most ancient Philosophies of the world. In the early days all branches of knowledge including religion were interwoven into a whole. Such knowledge was known as “The Vedas”, which means, books of knowledge from the Sanskrit root vid which means ‘to know’. Man had no need to struggle for his existence, for nature was beautiful and the seasons kind. So, man had leisure for thinking and speculation. He was interested in finding answers to the interminable questions of the nature of things which surrounded him every day. He used his capacities for conceptual thinking and his guides were his observations of natural phenomena. It was an enquiry into the meaning of experience both internal and external. Thus we have in the Vedas a search for religious possibilities which is usually a forerunner of philosophical theories. Very often people, even enlightened and educated people, equate Indian Philosophy with *maya*, *karma*, *sanyasa* and many other such ideas. We shall see in the course of this lecture that this is not wholly true.

The ancient Vedic Indian was struck with awe at the vast impressiveness of natural phenomena and his own capacities. Thus his simple - mindedness and trusting nature was poured out in verse in the worship of the beautiful and the wonderful. These are recorded as ‘mantras’ in the Vedas. Forgetting or wantonly ignoring this context, some people have said that the mantras are authoritative scriptures not to be disobeyed. But this cannot be true. No doubt they look and sound authoritative, but they have a meaning and a purpose, and a logical methodology hidden behind. Their meaning was to explain natural phenomena in terms of human behaviour and their purpose was to lift man from his sorrow and suffering by diverting his attention from his own needs to that of humanity.

Classic Indian Philosophy could be divided into four periods. The first is the Vedic period which includes the Upanishad thought. The second is the puranic period which provided for the onset of both a literary progress and a philosophic progress. The progress in philosophic thought is seen in the arising of mythologies and ‘smritis’. A myth is neither true nor false. It is usually based on a simple truth elaborated into a study to impress the value of the truth. A ‘Smriti’ is the summing up of all practised truths as they are handed down from generation to generation in a popular form to impress on the people. The third stage is the period of the philosophic systems. The fourth is the modern stage starting roughly from the 18th century. Since it is impossible to cover the whole of these periods during a short time, I will only give you a bare outline of some aspects of these. However, I would be giving some time to the Upanishadic thought, for that is the most popular as well as the most important literature for Indian philosophers.

The method used by the Upanishadic thinker was one of dialogue. A dialogue is not merely a question and answer session. It is that where an idea is put forth, drawing out the other person, who is usually a student to raise objections. Putting such objections together, the teacher would go ahead and raise a new point and so on. From this follows the condition that the teacher must be an eager and enquiring student. That it is the purpose of education not merely to pass on information from teacher to pupil but to help the student by discussions to arrive at necessary information by his own thinking was emphasized during this period. But then who is a good student and who can be a worthy teacher? A teacher is one who can irritate the student intellectually to such an extent as to force him to ask questions. A good student is one who knows what questions to ask and at what stage to ask them. Hence, a student in the Upanishadic stage is one who knows a little and is willing to learn more. What is

it that they learnt in this manner? There are a few fundamental questions which were raised and discussed. It was asked “Is there one ultimate existence, reality, Sat?” The answer as given in both the Chandogya and Brhadaranyaka Upanishads is that the Real is that by knowing which everything else becomes known. It is that by which the eye sees but which the eye sees not. It is that by which the mind is made to think but cannot be thought about by the mind. This something is the imperishable without which nothing can exist. It is imperishable and eternal because it does not come into being and pass away nor is it destroyable. Here the Upanishadic thinker draws a very important distinction between the *Survival* and the *Eternal*. Survival means, deathlessness in the sense of being born, becoming dead and getting born again. Birth is the beginning and death is the end there is beginning and an end again and again. The Eternal is that which has no death at all and not that which merely survives deaths. It is the *Aksara* that which is deathless. But matter is also indestructible in this way. But this adjective 'eternal' cannot be applied to matter. For to say that we are eternal we must know that we can be eternal. Such self-knowledge is absent in matter. Hence, that which is ultimately real is characterised by not only existence but an awareness of its own existence and an equanimity born out of such an awareness. This is what is called *sat, cit and Ananda*.

The next most important point to be discussed is that this eternal is not the material body but the knowing atman. Nobody needs to tell me “I exist”, nor can I ask the question “do I exist”? for then it becomes contradictory. To ask such questions we have *to be* to ask. But such a soul is not perceived in the ordinary sense because it is not so perceivable. e.g. the horns of a hare, and the sky-lotus. One may imagine them for they are made up of things which are seen individually and separately. We know horns and we know hares. Hence, they are perceivable. *But horns of a hare* are not perceived

for they are never found to be together. But the self is perceivable immediately for we can never doubt our own existence. A sense-organ is necessary to know the object. But to know *I exist*, no sense-organ is necessary for the knowledge is immediate and certain. Hence, one can never doubt the existence of *atman*, the self in us. Even in sleep or when we are dreaming we are aware that it is we who are sleeping and dreaming for otherwise one can never say ‘I slept well’ or ‘I had an exciting dream’.

Another idea that pervades the Upanishadic philosophy and is to be a characteristic of all later philosophies is the fact that there are two types of knowledge. Man is aware that his life and his existence are correlates. Man's body is matter and man as a body belongs to the world of nature which is made up of matter. But it is man alone who can say ‘I am alive and this body which is matter is mine’. No other matter or animal can say this. From this follows the distinction between that which is lower knowledge and that which is higher knowledge. Normally there is sought to be established an opposition between these two. The lower or the ‘*apara*’ must be discarded and the higher or the ‘*para*’ alone is to be sought. It is from this that the idea of *Sanyasa* arises. The idea of discarding the lower is emphasized as *Sanyasa*. This means we are giving a lower value to the *apara* knowledge as that which can be discarded and giving a higher value to the *para*. knowledge which is something to be sought after.

This is not a correct distinction. One can say *either this or that* only when both belong to the same sphere of thought. These two lower and higher implicate each other and do not negate each other. Unless there is the embryo there cannot be a man. There is truth in both. The heart of the atom is as much real and true as the highest evolved *Atman*. But without the atom, there is no man and without man we cannot think of a Soul. At the same time it is for the

knower that both the atoms and the self become knowable. Hence, the Upanisad says, "it is for the self that every thing else is dear". The lower and the higher are limits. One can reach the same end either by going to the lowest knowledge, namely the knowledge of the ultimate particles of matter or by reaching the highest - the knowledge of the self. These two cannot be separated from each other. We are not concerned with disembodied beings nor can we be concerned about atoms if there is no person or self to be concerned about it. Hence, the empirical must be as real as the transcendental for there cannot be the one without the other. Transcendence is of something always. This something is the empirical without this there can be no transcendental.

In philosophy we are concerned with this self and that which is concomitant with it. The area of the empirical is that of the scientist. He searches for reality from one end and the philosopher does the same from the other end. The Upanishads serve as a never ending source of this search. The Upanishadic seer was disgusted with the observance of external formality. Thus in one place in the Chandogya we have the contemptuous picture of man holding to the tail of the other man and chanting "Om! Let us eat, Om! Let us drink" (Chan. Up. 7, 12: 4 & 5). Hence, the ancient seer, discarding all externalities started an investigation into the nature of this self *atman*. This is not directly taught in any Upanishad. Material from various Upanishads have to be put together to get an idea of what the saints meant. All these are in the form of stories and discussions. Both these have the same function, namely to establish the nature of the ultimate real from the human point of view. There is a combination here of truth-telling and story-telling. The stories or myths using the power of imagination put what is not bound by time and space into a framework of time and space. Logical arguments, on the other hand, show how the ultimate is beyond time, space and mental assessment. We

have an example of this in Kathopanishad where Nachiketas, a young human being argues with Yama, king of death, wanting to know what is beyond death. The context is all ordinary story where the father of Nachiketas gets angry with him for protesting against the devious and cheating ways in which his father was performing sacrifices. The father tells him, in anger, that if he continues to protest he would offer Nachiketas himself to Yama and so on goes the story. But the result is the instruction by Yama to Nachiketas about the immortality of the soul. The study of the many Upanishadic myths is important because they give us an insight into the fundamental approach our ancient philosophers made to ultimate questions. Man becomes fascinated by stories. We all know that all history all over the world, begins in myths and stories enveloping facts and ideals. The Upanishadic myths are symbols of universal truths.

The Upanishads are a study of the nature of Brahman. The word means as derived from its root *Brh*, that which grows or bursts forth. Growth or development is a constant feature of nature. The Upanishadic seer observing this perhaps said that ultimate reality is something whose dimensions can never be known properly by the human mind, for who knows what the next step will be. But all this is real, for there cannot exist anything that is unreal. It is often said that in the Upanishads man turns from an examination of the external to an analysis of the internal world. However the wealth and diversity of the ideas developed in the Upanishads is so great that it becomes difficult to pinpoint anyone idea as the only teaching of the Upanishads. No doubt some ideas are more emphatically stated than others, but the diversity remains. The study of Brahman is thus a most important idea of the Upanishads closely followed by a method of attaining such a Brahman. This idea of Brahman was used to refer to the ground of the world.

There are some definitions of Brahman in the Upanishads. I will here take three most important definitions. The method adopted for arriving at such definitions is not the Western method of using a characteristic to define an object. It is either a successive inclusive definition or a successive exclusive definition. The method appears to be almost like the play of a child who would want us to guess at what it hides. But with reference to Brahman there is no other to which it can be compared or contrasted. One such attempt at definition is given in the famous Janaka's court where Gargi, the woman philosopher, questions Yajnavalkya, the famous seer. They go on arguing about what constitutes the final support for the whole of this universe, When all possibilities, such as air, water, fire, sun, moon and space are all exhausted, Yajnavalkya admits that there can be nothing which would define this for there is only one of its type and as such it can only be experienced and not defined in language. In the same Brhadaranyaka Upanishad we get another definition. Slowly each answer was found inadequate and a wider one was sought. Thus, it was found that Brahman was indeed the principle of breathing without which even man cannot exist, but it was wanting since it did not include that which was the dear (*priya*). Hence, a parallel between the human being on the one hand and the cosmos on the other hand was established and then it was stated that just as man cannot be without his self, so also the cosmos cannot be without a sustaining principle and this is Brahman. But then we cannot have two such realities, for each would then limit the other. It was therefore stated that such a self cannot be anything other than this Brahman and *vice versa*. We must not forget that the Upanishads were always striving for a unity of all things and this characteristic is to be found throughout our cultural history right from the Vedic times. The diversity was never forgotten. But later in the Puranic times and in the age of the systems, philosophers sought to bring about an understanding of the unity and the diversity in various ways. Of this

later, the last definition which we shall deal with here emerges from the instruction given to that know - all Narada by the great saint Sanatkumara. It is here that we come to understand that whatever may be our knowledge, even Vedic knowledge, knowledge of sacrifices, all these do not help in realising our inmost nature. Vedas are said to be mere language, but speech which is a symbol of life is more than mere language. It is speech that makes things understood. It is 'more' than mere language. Thus step by step a 'more' is postulated which ends up in that which is the ultimate 'more' which is the soul without which nothing else matters.

Having thus said that Brahman is the more, the basic, the highest as well as the minute, the Upanishadic thinker turns to make this thought available to all people. We must never forget that in that early stage of evolution of man, the concept of a god was that it was a reigning principle. In the Vedas we find the early man defying nature and natural phenomena. The seers and saints could not and would not have escaped the popular idiom in which their thoughts, however supreme they might be, had to be expressed. Thus following the Rg Vedic tradition we find that again in the Brhadaranyaka parallels were drawn between a human personality and the ultimate reality, this forms the first attempt of man to see ultimate reality anthropomorphically, no doubt, as an ultimate and majestic personality. Thus the human bodily self was called the Visva while the cosmic self was designated Virat or *Vaisvanara*. The Vital self in man was known as *Taijasa* while that of the cosmos was the *Hiranyagarbha*. The intellectual self was given the name of *Prajna* and the all-consciousness intelligence was called Isvara. The intuitive conscience of man was the *Turiya* and that of the cosmos was *Brahman*. Thus the unity of the Atman and Brahman is emphasized to be present in all aspects. This unity is beautifully indicated in the Mundaka - Upanishad which I quote in terms "That which is invisible,

ungraspable, without family, without caste, without sight or hearing of it, without hand or foot, eternal, all pervading, omnipresent, exceedingly subtle, that is the imperishable, which the wise perceive as the source of Being”.

The *Svetasvatara* Upanisad goes a step further and signifies a later and significant development in the Upanishadic thought towards a religious orientation. In the Vedas the Gods are natural gods, signifying partly their natural source and partly a human anthropomorphic element. In the older Upanishads we do not have any mention of a God. On the other hand, we find the Brhadaranyaka saying "who ever worships a deity thinking that as one and himself another, he does not know". (I, 4,10)

But when we come to Svetasvatara Upanishad we do find a conception of God as the “immortal inner ruler”. It is here we find all the ingredients of a full-fledged religion such as belief in God, devotion to him being considered as a true means of attaining him. He is referred to as *Maheswara*, the great controller as well as the internal immanent principle, the *antaratman*.

We find that the Upanishadic thinkers raised a very fundamental question and tried to answer it. They asked what is the most important thing in man and arrived at the conclusion that it is the soul. It is *Purisaya*, that which is imprisoned in a body and which tries to get beyond its imprisonment. This is what is indicated when a person hears lovely music and gets engrossed in a wonderful painting. He is not aware of himself as an individual body, but only as the melody of the music or the beauty of the painting. The *Jiva* or the individual self is that which is at peace with itself and is not bothered or worried about the contradictions of the world which worry the body and the mind. The word *Jiva* itself means “to continue to breathe”. This definition is almost identical with the definition of Brahman which

also means 'to breathe'. In addition, though the *Jiva* is said to possess the capacities of emotion and action which are sentient, activities are indicated by the presence of the mind.

In this very brief outline of Upanishadic thought we come to certain principal ideas. Firstly, these indicate the culmination of the Vedic search for an ultimate reality. Though in the Vedas, the ancient Indian was concentrating on deriving his knowledge by an analysis of the external world and corresponding human activities, in the Upanishads we find that man while not yet discarding his enquiry into the external world, was more and more drawn into enquiring about himself. It was not that he had exhausted his knowledge of Nature. But he found that his knowledge of nature was conditioned by his own state of being. The truth that for the sake of the thinking man, no other reality can be termed to exist dawned on him very early in the Upanisadic period as we can see in the Chandogya Upanishad. Hence, he turned upon his innermost being and wanted to learn what it is all about. Hence, we have a Brahman derived from the ultimate touched upon in his experience and then we have also discussions about the nature of such a self without whose existence we cannot even think of any reality. These two Brahman and Atman were sought to be related. There can be only two relations. One is that of identity where we say “this is different from that”. In addition the upanishadic seer also came to establish in a very suggestive manner, the hybrid relation of identity- in-difference where we say “No doubt these two are identical, but we can know the identity only because there are differences between them.” According to these people neither pure identity nor pure difference can be known. All these relations evolve the idea of a relation between man and nature on the one hand and man and the supreme on the other hand. These are the moral principles which the teacher gives his students at the end of his regular studies. “There should be no

slackness about speaking the truth, about acting righteously, about taking care of your welfare, about the welfare of society, and finally about the practicing of what you have learnt” (I, XI, Taithiriya). With this advice the student is sent out into the world. There can be nothing more important in life than what has been said here. We shall have to say much about this later on.

At no time in our history, philosophy was ever taken on trust. There were always questions and arguments. So, the Upanishadic seer, maintains that one can understand the reality of the existence of one's own self by referring to the various states of human experience which are undeniable. In the waking state, the self is present “as that by which the eye sees”, in the sleeping and dreaming state, it exists “as that which remembers the waking experience and dreams about it”, and in deep sleep it is that which goes to sleep and awakes with renewed energy and says I slept well. However, the Upanishadic seer was well aware of the possibility of equating deep sleep experience with one of unconsciousness. So, he maintains that there is a fourth state which is called the *turiya* which is the concluding stage and which includes all the other three. Here the self is said to be like a thread which constantly runs through all these stages.

Now to a final idea given in the Upanishads, it is very often said, even by those who ought to know better that reason plays no part in Indian Philosophy. The idea is imported from western thinkers who are acquainted more with the mystic aspects of Indian Philosophy to the disadvantage of its rational approach. Indian philosophy gives a very high priority to the intellect and to the intellectual approach. If this were not so, many stories in the Upanishads would serve no purpose at all. At this level of philosophising, the ancient seer converted his pupil to his point of view only with logical argument. It is the capacity for argumentation, that makes an individual distinguish between what is right or wrong,

between what is abiding and that which is not so. The Upanishads, resound with reasoning and everywhere one finds the Sanskrit equivalent of the rational component ‘because’.

The vast amorphous period ending with the Upanishadic age and the beginning of the systematisation of Indian Philosophy is usually called Puranic age. While talking of these ages, we should not forget that there are no sharp lines of division between one age and another. Each merges into the other gracefully and almost imperceptibly. Between the Upanishadic age and the rising of the puranas or epics much water seems to have flown under the bridge. The political situation must have been a very stormy one. In addition, the highly intellectual and mystic ideas of God, soul and the world, put forth by the Upanishads could not be appreciated by the common man who had to spend his time either in fighting wars or tilling the soil. The great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata are war stories, though their historicity has not been established. Our purpose here is not to examine whether they are real or not, but to see what are the truths that the sages tried to convey through these war stories. There is no doubt at all that these epics served a two-fold purpose. First their social purpose was to unite the warring clans under one well-known and respected people as it is seen both in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. A more important fact that emerges from these two epics is that the highly intellectual moral and ethical principles were taught and implemented in a more acceptable manner to the people at large.

The process of moulding an abstract reality into symbolic images became more pronounced by now. It became slowly into a plurality of - personal God. The three aspects of nature namely, creation, maintenance, and destruction assumed personalized forms and we have the arising of the *Trimurti*. Today it is almost impossible to distinguish between them as their characteristics as personalities

overlap much that each of them is described in identical terms. In addition each of these Gods became associated with a partner signifying each one aspect of human need such as prosperity, knowledge and power. The division of society into vocational levels became more pronounced and each level became more rigid and restricted. It was established by the writings known as *dharma sastras* or science of duties that it is possible to keep people at peace and under control only by prescribing duties and obligations and insisting on obedience of such rules. The insistence was made neither by a political power nor by a moral power, but by the fear of punishments known as hell and the anticipation of pleasurable rewards known as heaven. This was accompanied almost always by punishments at the human and worldly level, making it doubly sure that people obeyed the caste distinctions, rules and regulations implicitly. From this it was but a step to the notion of *avatara*. If there is a God-reality, then it is absolutely necessary that he should concern himself with his creation. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that in the Vedic times, it was natural forces which were made into Gods, for man was afraid of the unpredictabilities of natural phenomena. He had anthropomorphically created these Gods in his own form and tried to get their favour by offerings which he would naturally offer to a superior person. Then Gods came to be known as *Parama Purusa*. This tendency became much more strengthened and solidified during the time of the epics. God was a Paramatma, the highest soul. He was a *parama purusa*, the greatest of mankind, he is *paratpara*, existing every where and so on. Such a God or Gods were formulated by man in such a manner that he is considered to be extremely involved in human affairs. From this it is but a step to the idea of *avatara* or descent of God into the world. Such an *avatara* is defined by Sri S. Radhakrishnan as where “God who limits Himself for some purpose on earth, and possesses even in his limited form the fulness of knowledge”. (Ind. Phil. Vol. p.545).

It is necessary here to discuss the idea of *avatara* a little bit more earnestly. This is not a philosophical concept, but a religious one. However, as I have already pointed out, at this stage of development there could be no sharp distinction between the two. In the Upanishads there developed a two-fold description of Brahman. One which was derived on the basis of exclusion which is usually called the *nirguna Brahman* and the description based on inclusion is usually known as *saguna Brahman*. It is this later concept which developed into a personalized' God in the Svetasvatara and later in the Puranic times. It is this Brahman which is now established as having a form and a name. It is necessary to understand the sense in which *form* is used here. Form is that which has shape or size or both. Or we may say it is that which has magnitude of dimension. Form again here is that which though having size or dimension it is not perceptible. To give an example, it is like the particles of atom which though possessing dimension are inferred only through their activities. Thus although Brahman is said to have a form, it is *agrahyam, adrsyam and apani - padam*, to quote the Mundaka Upanishad, Thus God is the unknown but not the unknowable. God is not manifest in a form, but all manifestations of God, from a human point of view are forms of God. It is also thought that God who is unmanifest makes himself known through his power of manifestations. From this understanding of the nature of Brahman who has a form, we have to consider the other aspect of the *Avatara*. Man is divine by nature as it was established in the Upanishads. This spark of divinity can be developed to such an extent that man himself becomes a God. It is while these ideas about God and his nature were taking shape that the epics developed. As a result we have the idea that God in his manifestations can descend into the world with a recognisable form. The Bhagavad Gita belongs to this period. Before we start on the philosophy expounded in the Gita, it is necessary to say something more about the *avatars* themselves. If we examine

ten avatars traditionally accepted, we find that they progressively represent the development of nature into man both character wise as well as form wise. The earliest form is one which swells in the waters and from there we have closely following the amphibian. The development of intelligence in a body that is alive was not yet developed in the human form. There was the animal- man form first and then the human being. Then under this development into a human form was almost like the early man. Then emerged the fully grown human form. One lesson we have to learn from this is that God is not purely a human property. He is omnipresent, that is present in all creatures which possess life. Life and reality are ever present together. Even in non-vital objects reality is present. But here it is *jada*, crude. When it comes into vital existence, the sentience that was dormant in matter takes an active form. In man reality in the form of consciousness becomes fully aware of itself. The avatars of God in the final human form exemplify the full manifestation of consciousness at its best and most good. Of the three important Gods Siva, Vishnu and Brahma, the preserver of the universe is Vishnu and, therefore, he is seen as the pervader of all beings. Hence, it is Vishnu who is said to be the God who incarnates. It is a curious fact that in Saivite mythology, Siva never descends as an avatars. On the other hand, he personally comes down in some form or other to help his devotees and then disappears. There is no regular story about Siva taking birth, living a good life etc.

Here I wish to draw your attention to one source of moral philosophy in India namely the Bhagavad Gita which is the most well-known part of the Mahabharata. It is set in the middle of the great war between two sets of warrior cousins. Krishna, an avatars of Vishnu, sides with one side in the war. In the midst of the din and cries of ancient warfare, the author of the Mahabharata creates an island of calm and peace where Krishna as the teacher instructs

Arjuna, his disciple the need and art of philosophising. Mainly the Gita is neither a philosophical nor metaphysical manual. The Gita is said to be so multifaceted that it gives to the honest seeker, whatever he looks for in it. This is an evidence of the richness of its teaching. At the end of every chapter the Gita is described as an Upanishad teaching, Brahmavidya given as a dialogue '*samvada*' between Krishna and Arjuna. The whole situation in the Gita is normally viewed as battle between the weaker nature and the noble nature in man. Man finds many reasons for what he desires to do rather than what he ought to do. When the *Jiva* identifies itself with sense activities, it is more often than not in conflict with the judging and the discriminating self. That is, very often when we wantonly do something wrong, we are bothered within ourselves about its wrongness, although we may not acknowledge it publicly. This is what Mahatma Gandhi called "My inner Voice". In some people this may not be actively effective because of their lethargic nature. But in most people the feeling of regret that they have not acted in the right way is always there. In the Western countries they say that people who have such a battle within themselves are those who due to this factor become subject to heart attacks and other nervous illnesses.

The teaching thus conveyed by Krishna to Arjuna in the battle field concerns itself with the duty or *dharma* of man. This word *dharma* is derived from the root '*dhr*' which means upholding *dharanat dharma*. That which is upheld is the society and that which upholds it is *dharma*. So, the nature and meaning of *dharma* changes with our conception of the structure and function of society. But the change is not merely a vagary. Society must be such that its members are happy, contented, honest and law - abiding. So, all these are meant by *dharma*. The idea of *dharma* that we get from the Gita is not the absolute something that is present somewhere. It is that which every man has to do so that the society in which he

lives is not disrupted or destroyed by his actions. This is characterized as *Svadharmā* in the Gita. *Svadharmā* here is not to be understood as the duty of caste or a community. Perhaps such a meaning was acceptable in those ancient days. But today when the caste system as a social principle is fast disappearing, except as a political weapon in our country, we have to understand the word *Svadharmā* in a different way. *Dharma* also means characteristic. Whatever is the characteristic which exists naturally in man as man and as a member of a society that is his nature. Man was born noble as Rousseau says. So that is his natural quality. Anything other than a noble character is not the real nature of man but that which arises out of the soul's bondage to the body and the mind. Hence, *Svadharmā* under which we live. These Puranas are the normal authority for the popular Hinduism of today. There are Puranas dealing with the life and exploits of almost every deity that a Hindu conceived of. But all these are not our concern. As already stated the puranas are meant to establish a noble and high reality in the context of a society and emphasise their truths in such a society.

This is a lecture on Indian Philosophy. As such we need not concern ourselves unduly with the various aspects of the Hindu religion and its relation to Indian Philosophy. Even in Indian Philosophy I shall only confine myself to the fundamentals of the six orthodox systems which are supposed to be derived from the Upanishadic philosophy, such limitations are obligatory from the point of view of time. Only one important point I wish to stress now. During the Puranic period and even before that, as early as the Vedic times, there was opposition to established thought of the Vedas. Such thought later on crystallised into the philosophies of Carvaka the sweet-tongued materialist, the Buddhist philosophy and the Jain philosophy. These are all living philosophies today, though they may not have the same form in which they were born. It is interesting to

note that at no time did the Vedic and Upanishadic thought go unchallenged. It is not something new of today's society. However, the challenges came from too much imposition of authority. Intellectually speaking no person should be a slave to another's intellect. Each has his own reason and intelligence which should be exercised in the acceptance of any thought or theory.

This tendency is also evident in the six systems of philosophy called the Nyaya, Vaishesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and the Vedanta. To say that anyone of these systems represents Indian Philosophy is not correct. It would be like saying that the part represents the whole. None of these philosophies are exactly replicas of the Upanishadic thought. In fact some of them are very far removed indeed from their source. Let us take a look at the meaning of their names and understand what importance was given by the ancient philosopher to a reasoned-out philosophy. Nyaya means reasoning correctly. It is also known as *tarka vidya* the science of debating, *vada vidya*, the science of argumentation. Vaishesika means that which gives importance to particulars as well as to their characteristics. The means of understanding these is by *dharma - adharma viveka* which is the intellectual capacity to distinguish between rightful and wrongful characters. The Samkhya, as its name indicates, develops from conceptualising ultimate reality in terms of units of existences. Thus for them there are fundamentally two knowledges from which develop the twenty four evolutes from which this whole universe comes to be. It is specifically indicated that reality is of the nature of numbers which are purely intellectual in nature. Yoga is of course the psychology of release from sorrow and suffering. Mimamsa means enquiry. The Vedantic schools in spite of swearing on the Upanishadic teaching, revel in arguments and counter arguments. Thus a very cursory glance at the schools gives us an idea of the place of reason in Indian Philosophy. It is not all either

authoritative or mystical. To understand them as such is not to be true to the originators of these philosophies.

All philosophies can be studied from three aspects and that is what we are going to do today. These are metaphysics, epistemology and moral sciences. Metaphysics from its very name means that which includes physics and goes beyond it. Its Sanskrit name is *tattva sastra* meaning the science of that which is ultimately real. Hence, the content of a metaphysical study is the nature of reality and the enquiry as to whether there is anything beyond our empirical experience. The schools of Nyaya and Vaisesika are the most interesting schools for we see here much of the fundamental scientific thought and the methodology used by such sciences intellectually. After all there are only two ways of looking at things. Either all the things that we experience are real separately and individually or all of them are mere external expressions of only one fundamental reality. The Nyaya and Vaisesika say that all things are real including the mind and self. Their reason is that we are able to speak and think about them. Nothing that is not real can be spoken about. If a thing seems to be capable of speaking about and yet unreal, we shall find on enquiry that such a thing is always made up of things which are within our experience. Take the sky lotus for example. We know the sky and we know the lotus. But there is no such thing as a sky-lotus. It is only in this sense that we speak of things which are apparently non-existent. Again these philosophers maintain that by applying the method of discrimination we know that we usually experience, the *macrocosm* as it is usually known, is not the ultimate real. That which is finally real is atomic in nature. Such *paramanus* are neither created nor are they destroyable. There are four different types of *anus* corresponding to the elements which by their combination produce the whole world. However, no 'anu' or subatomic particle is identical with another for their one fundamental

quality is that they have *Visesa* the particular distinguishable quality. They are not merely quantitatively different but also qualitatively. The Samakhya and Yoga systems, on the other hand, while conceiving the cosmos as real, distinguish all that exists into two fundamentals *Prakrti and Purusa*. There is a very common misunderstanding even amongst the learned people that these two fundamentals represent the female and male aspects of the Universe. This is neither the place nor do I have time to go into this problem. *Prakrti* here refers to substance. Not merely substance which possesses qualities as in the scientific sense. Here substance is super-sensuous made up of qualities alone without any substantive basis. But these qualities are *sattva*, equilibrium, *rajas*, activity or motion and *tamas* stability of course static nature. These qualities are present everywhere, in all things. Only the proportion in which they exist varies. On the other hand, *Purusa* is that which provides the motive for action, the purposiveness of all activity. It is that immortal something imprisoned in these three qualities which is struggling to get itself free from it. Both are real and finally existent. But in this world of ourselves they are always to be seen together *Purusa* is bound by *Prakrti*. The word *Purusa* itself means "one who is bound". *Prakrti* is the original cause and transforms itself merely into its various effects including matter and life. Thus there is continuity from the lowest evolution to the highest. Before such evolute takes place the three gunas *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are held in a state of equilibrium. Though it is often called a state of rest, actually it is not a state of rest at all. The *Samkhya* Philosophers held the idea that at no time can there be any cessation of motion. Because once it stops, there is no means by which it can be started again. So even in the state of supposed rest, while there is actually no expression of its diversity, there is however a change of production and reproduction of itself thus maintaining a principle of perpetual motion as a necessary requirement of reality.

The Vedantic schools are the Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita. Of these the latter two are philosophies because they require a philosophy as a basis for their religious beliefs. Advaita is pure philosophy. Merely a study of facts is science, but a study of the implications of these facts for human values is philosophy. This is what Sankara has done in giving us Advaita. The subjective and the objective are facts of life. They must converge into a focal point if experience is to be free from contradictions and the consequent pain and suffering are to be avoided. The purpose and aim of Indian philosophy is this. Man must attain his natural state of being where he is free from sorrow and suffering. These two are the result of attributing correct values to wrong things or wrong values to right things. When we believe that some things are eternal such as power and glory and suddenly find one day that they are not so, then indeed is suffering. To the Advaitin all that is, is one only. This reality which is one is experienced as many. The enquiry is how this is possible. We cannot deny the world of objects for they constitute our experience. We cannot deny our experience itself for even such a denial is experience. But by an analysis of this experience, we find that each experience brings about the knowledge that it is a part of a wider experience. Such analysis goes on till man is convinced that finally everything that seems to be so different is traceable to only one reality. This reality, following the Upanishadic convention, the Advaitin called as *Sat, Cit and Ananda*. As already pointed out, these are not qualities belonging to one substance. Then there would not be one reality only, but one thing with three qualities which would make ultimate reality four in number. Hence, the Advaitin insists that these three *Sat, Cit and Ananda* are not to be interpreted as qualities of reality but the manner in which man understands the ultimate from his own limited mind and intelligence. That is, the ununderstandable One is seen to be, from the human point of view, as that which exists 'sat', which is knowable hence of the nature of knowledge *cit* and

always at a state of equanimity, not allowing for any conflicts. This last state produces a supreme contentment which the Advaitin calls as *ananda*. Again I must stress the point that these are called as characters only from the human point of view. Reality or Brahman is neither knowable with the limited intelligence of man nor describable in language, for language is after all a symbol of that which is known. To illustrate this there is a story. Some disciples went to Sankara and asked him to teach them Brahman-knowledge. He kept silent but with a radiant smile on his face. This happened repeatedly. Then the disciples got wild with him and blamed him of not being a good teacher. Then Sankara seems to have said, "All the while you were asking me questions and I was answering them. For Brahman is something which cannot be spoken about, defined nor thought about. One can only experience Brahman and thus become one with him".

What then of the plurality of this world? It is now necessary to explain the difference in meaning between the two words Existence and Reality. That which exists need not always be real. For example dreams. We cannot say that there is no experience of dreams. But we know they are not real for on waking they seem to disappear. During the state of dream the dream experiences seem to be true and give rise to all true experiences. But on awakening, they are no more true even to our limited understanding. So also, the objects of this world are all true as long as we are amidst them and experiencing them. We cannot deny this, for then we would be denying our own experience. Since what is thus experienced and existent is said to be ultimately not real, Sankara has given us a way of understanding this ultimately one and its relation to the experienced many. This is the most unique contribution made by Sankara to Indian philosophy. The unreal is that which might be existent. The real is that which is both existent and real. However, the objects which exist have to be real for they are experienced. But they cannot be unreal for in the

last resort they are not what they are. Just as we know the scientist today says that the objects that we experience are not ultimately real, but only constructions of the human intellect from their fundamental constituents, so also Sankara says the objects that we see are only constructions of the mind of man. Everything is Brahman. But the human mind creates the differences within it and man himself is only such a differentiation. The world is an appearance but is not unreal. Appearance is yet not real in the ultimate sense. Hence, the objects of our experience, our experience of them, the self who thus experiences are all both real and unreal. From the human point such a situation is not understandable. Hence the world of experience which involves the individuality of the self as well as the known is said to be due to *maya*. The word *maya* technically means that which is and yet is not. Hence, it is wrong to say that the Advaita theory preaches a theory of illusion. There is no doubt that all things are mere appearances, but not for those who experience them. They are an appearance from the point of view of the seeker of knowledge who has attained such knowledge at its highest level. From this follows the second idea of Advaita namely that there is certain factor of reality in all experiences. Experience is the criterion. What is experienced cannot be unreal, for the unreal cannot be an object of experience. Hence, even illusory knowledge and erroneous knowledge, in as far as they are our experiences, are existent. But once they are transcended and their true nature is known they cease to be real in some degrees or other. The illusory object is real only apparently, *Pratibhasika Satta*. The empirical object, or the objects of our normal experience has a pragmatic existence, *Vyavaharika Satta* while the final and ultimate truth is *Paramarthika Satta*. Thus the whole universe is made up of different levels of reality. Nothing is wholly unreal or illusory, within our experience and nothing is

completely real except the knowledge of ourselves at the highest levels.

As against this school of Monism the other two schools of Vedanta namely Ramanuja's Visistadvaita and Madhva's Dvaita are different in their conception of ultimate reality. To both of them everything that is experienced at the empirical level is real. To the Visistadvaitin such a reality is a dependent reality. That is Brahman and this universe are one whole in which this universe forms an inseparable part. It has reality only because it belongs to the whole. The whole of reality is made up of three factors matter, soul and God. The nature of dependence of the first two on the third is like the nature of dependence of the body on the soul. The body is that which the soul controls and directs. Similarly this universe including the souls is like the body of Isvara who controls and directs its activities. Prakrti is here, called matter and it evolves into this material universe at God's will whereas the human souls whose coming into being is patterned by their own *Karma*, are still under the authority of Isvara or God.

We see here how the human mind can never be satisfied with the abstract real. Due to a feeling of insecurity the soul clings to something which it thinks can give it help and lift it from its sorrow and suffering. Thus we find again and again these strands of idealism and theism appearing in the philosophic history of our culture. Notwithstanding any such occurrences, we should always remember that man can only go so far and not beyond that. To the extent that his intellect drives him, man sees the ultimate reality in many ways and forms. Man believes what those who have realised tell him is the nature of this ultimate. But unfortunately such experiences again seem to be many and there is bewilderment as to exactly what all this is about.

This takes us to the next step in our enquiry as to the nature of Indian Philosophy. If at all God is to be realised, what are the ways in which he is to be realised? Apart from such realisation, is there any manner of plan of life and living which would help in the attainment of such a truth? These questions were raised by our ancients and answered by them. One such answer we have already seen in the idea of *svadharma* developed by the Gita. Performance of *svadharma* is very difficult indeed! For how can we know what is our true nature and even if, for the sake of argument, we come to know of it, how can we implement it? This is what motivated our ancient seers who in their great wisdom, have given us some principles to guide our action.

Many people say, even to my own personal knowledge, how can there be any moral ideals in Indian thought, for look at the type of stories we get in the Puranas, which are said to be authorities for human action and provide directive principles for it! Many social atrocities have been committed in the name of tradition and authority. On one hand those who are anti-social cite the *Puranic* stories as their models and on the other hand some ask "Why should I be moral?" Such situations lead us to ask the philosophic question, "Is faith in God necessary to behave morally?" Or, putting the same question negatively, "Is it not possible to lead a good life while not believing in a God?" Let us take a look at the development of moral ideals from the Vedic times in answer to these questions. In the Vedas Gods were formulated as representing natural phenomena. But such Gods were also bound by natural laws known as *rta*. Any number of verses from the Vedas could be cited in support. The Gods are merely custodians of the laws and not their makers. Law is above the Gods. Why then, if the law is so strict and universal, did man disobey it? Slowly, not finding a cause for such disobedience the Vedic seer called this '*anrta*', the opposite of *rta* truth. Such a

moral law as a law, is eternal, but its contents have been changing from age to age. The moral code, that is the manner in which the moral law is applied, has been changing with changing condition of life in India as our cultural history shows. That is why it is known as *Dharma* and a *Sastra*. It upholds the welfare of a society and as such it cannot be and should not be violated as otherwise society itself would be destroyed. Our ancients have laid down four goals to govern the activity of mankind. These are *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha* and known as *Purusarthas* or human values or '*motives of man*' literally. The first one *dharma* has been used in Sanskrit literature in various ways to mean law, justice, virtue, duty, natural characteristics, morality, social obligations and the actions which result from all these. It is also used to mean a particular type of spiritual merit which secures for man his welfare not only in this world, but also in all the worlds to come hereafter. In spite of such various uses the word *dharma* here is to be understood as a principle of moral law. The changes in the moral code required from age to age are known as *yugadharma*. The changing position of women in Hindu society is an example of this *yugadharma*. In Vedic society women were considered on an equal footing with men in all aspects of life. Men and women not only were highly learned according to their stations in life but were also free to choose their partners in life as evidenced by the *mantras* chanted during a wedding ceremony. They were also given the sacred thread and were considered equally competent to attend to the funeral rites of their parents and husbands when necessity arose. In conflict with this during the *sutra* period women were brought down to the lowest caste, and equated with the *Sudras*. Why this was done has to be investigated taking into consideration the economic and social conditions of the day. All this is only to prove that *dharma* as a principle was considered constant while its content changed from time to time. The purpose of *dharma*

is to maintain a society within law and order and it is the nature of man which determines his duty to society as emphasized in the Gita. Now let us take a look at the particular aspects of life which have to be so governed by this universal law. These are *artha* and *kama*. *Artha* is economic well-being. To a man who does not have the means to have two square meals a day and shelter over his head to protect him from the harshness of nature conditions, there is no point in talking about *dharma* or moral principles. Even in the Gita and in the Yoga system we find these stressed. A man should be comfortable in both body and mind before he can think of other things such as concentration and devotion. Again fulfilling social obligations and the enjoyment of life become impossible without a means to secure them. Thus the word *artha* means acquiring of material possessions. But such acquiring has to be within the framework of *dharma*. One must not resort to anti-social practices to acquire wealth. Similarly for the purpose of acquiring worldly status, there should be no indulging in undignified activities. Ruthless and unprincipled rivalry and headless and cutthroat competition, thoughtless assassination of character are all considered evil. The happiness of the greatest number should be the aid in acquiring economic welfare. All these are given in its Arthashastra of Kautilya which is an authority for the moral and legal practices of the individual as well as governments in the acquiring of wealth and in the maintenance of the law. The purpose of economic welfare is to release man from the strains and stresses of living and not acquisition of wealth at the cost of others' suffering.

Happiness for man can be achieved in many ways. But such happiness should make man more largehearted, more understanding and should not make him narrow-minded and selfish. All pleasures, *kama* should be oriented towards the achievement of such happiness. It is the nature of man to strive for happiness just as water seeks a lower level. When such striving is not channelled into

proper paths, it becomes license. *Kama* stands for sensuous pleasures of all types. A life of such pleasure is not negated, but it has to be regulated and disciplined according to *dharma*. It is a fact that pleasure always produces pain. They are the two sides of a coin. Hence, a regulated and disciplined life of pleasure seeking will always help in the bearing of pain with composure and enjoyment with equanimity. Pleasure and pain must make a man a good man in the sense that he becomes a worthy member of the society in which he lives and does not neglect its welfare for his own welfare.

Now comes the most important aspect of human values *moksha*. The immediate purpose of the previous three values is to attain a balanced and contented life and the ultimate purpose is to attain *moksha*. Moksha is not a state to be attained somewhere after one dies. It is not a post mortem state. In Indian philosophy, the purpose of a moral life is not so much to fulfill the will of God as to seek one's own salvation. In some philosophies like the Visistadvaita, Dvaita and the Saivite philosophies these two become one. This is where religion and philosophy merge for these systems. Moksha is freedom from ignorance, bondage, error, evil and sin. Essentially man is free. A child does not know the meaning of these words for it is a free being. It is to attain such a state of freedom that man is always striving. All the difficulties of man in this world are because he puts the 'I' before everything else.

The moment such an ego is removed and the welfare of all is stressed man is on the path to *Moksha*. In the language of Visistadvaita in surrendering to God there is perfect selflessness. This is the highest form of devotion. As the Upanishadic seer says, we pray for the welfare of the universe and not for our personal gains. This is the true prayer which makes man submerge his individuality in the universal self, God. Thus putting himself under the control of God who is present in the whole universe.

So far, I have not touched upon a most interesting aspect of the socio - ethical aspect of Indian philosophy namely the doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth. This theory not only involves the philosophical belief about the eternality of the soul but also that such a soul is involved in a causal chain of repeated births and deaths. It is said that such a cycle of births and deaths is the root cause of all misery in this world and is called *Samsara*. There are two ways of dealing with this. Firstly the causal aspect and secondly the moral aspect. Many have been the explanations given from both aspects. I will not go into these. The causal aspect says that whatever action takes place there is always an effect produced. This is a physical law true of physical nature. Such a physical law is applied to the ethical field which is not a factual field. Some causes produce results immediately and some others have delayed results. When this happened the ancient Hindu was upset, not knowing how to explain such a situation where there seemed to be no recognisable connection between the action and its effect. To explain this, he postulated a store house of actions from which the results would come out at a later stage. This he named as *adrsta* which provides some sort of a bridge for the time-lag between the actions and their effects. This leads to the second aspect of the *Karma* theory. The theory of rebirth maintains that the same soul exists repeatedly in different bodies according to the accumulation of its *Karma in adrsta*. If the person has always done good, the resultant life would be one of riches, happiness, welfare and goodness. So, it is said man should strive for this. Since the final effect man desires is Moksha, he must so orient his actions as to achieve this end.

When the effects of our actions are not exhausted and are held over, the soul must necessarily take another birth to exhaust such unfulfilled effects. When this happens there is rebirth. On the face of it this seems to be reasonable. However, how is one to explain the

facts that the world is full of inequalities and unmerited sorrows and sufferings. A good man suffers while an evil one like a black marketeer and a corrupt man flourishes and prospers. A learned and good man has an idiot for a child whereas an illiterate man begets a genius. It is said that such occurrences can only be explained by referring to the accumulated *Karma*. There is one difficulty in accepting this law of *Karma* leading to rebirth. The law of causality is applicable in the physical world. Even then it is applicable only at the macrocosmic world. At the level of the atom and the sub-atomic structure of matter it is very doubtful if the definite law of causality is applicable. It is much more difficult to think that such a law can be applied to a situation involving non-physical matters such as birth and death. We are not sure, in these days of scientific advances, if a physical law, or a natural law can be applied to non-physical matter. Even in man, there is no predictability of cause and effect. Seeing a snake today he may get frightened and run to call for help. But sometimes when no help is immediately available he may react differently. Hence, even at the daily level of human activity, the law of causation does not apply regularly. How much less would it apply in the realm of transcendental things! Hence, we have to understand the principle of *Karma* in a negative way. It is meant to help people in doing good. Just as a child is made to do what the elders want it to do by threats of punishment and promises of rewards, so also man is sought to be kept within the bounds of reason and duty and within the bounds of *dharma* by the threat of something in the form of rewards and punishments. This threat takes the form of future good and happy life or a bad and troublesome life. Then if the souls are getting born and reborn, then the number of such souls is limited apparently. There is no creation of a new soul by God, for all souls take birth in a body depending on their *Karmaphala*. If this were really so, how can one explain the fact of population explosion. Where were these souls and bodies which are now getting born every day?

I have given a very very sketchy account of Indian philosophy so far. Much more remains unsaid. However, I wish to give certain general concepts now. As I said in the beginning the common man's attitude to philosophy in India is that it is non-separable from Hinduism and the related mysticism. This is fundamentally wrong. First of all there is no one religion known as Hinduism. Even our saints like Samkara have said that there are *shanmatas* six religions or faiths. Hinduism is only a *dharmasastra* whereas philosophy is a *tattvasastra*. There is no doubt there are some common areas between the two, specially developed during the days of the great acaryas. It is also usually said that what all has to be said in philosophy has already been said and that a study of Indian philosophy today can be a careful understanding of what has already been said. This attitude rings the death-knell to Indian philosophy. The history of Indian philosophy and the spirit of Indian philosophy is dead against such an attitude. If this were not so there would never have been the great debates and discussions between *Pandits* and *Gurus* that we read about.

Philosophy is neither religion nor spiritualism. It is not mysticism nor renunciation. It is a way of life dictated by principles, held by a cold logical reasoning. It is a *darsana*, a seen and experienced truth. Philosophy is not 'given' in the sense of a revelation. If we but glance at the systems of philosophy each varying from the other in fundamentals, the idea of revelation would vanish. It is no doubt 'spiritual' in the sense that it seeks to understand that which has no form, that which cannot be grasped by the limited mind of man, that which is the smallest as well as the greatest. This search is Indian Philosophy and it is never ending.

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## THE SPIRIT AND SUBSTANCE OF THE GITA

- Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao

The Bhagavad Gita is not only a revered Hindu scripture but a book of universal wisdom. It sets forth a way of life and view of reality acceptable to us, all who are children of reason and science. It is neither old nor new, it is eternal. It is a version of the perennial, eternal law (*sasvata - dharma - gopta*). Its influence on the minds of men is second to none. It is enshrined in the *Bhismaparva* of the great epic *Mahabharata* : "It is a little shrine in a vast temple, a temple that is both a theatre and a fair of this world". It is one of the triple source - books of the Vedanta Philosophy, the living religion of the Hindus.

A glance at the opinions expressed by the ancient sages and modern savants describes to us the glory of this gospel. It is delivered by Krishna to Arjuna "The close companion, representative man and the chosen instrument of the Lord".

In the Year 1785 Charles Wilkins translated the Gita into English, and Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India writes in the preface to the volume: "Works like the Bhagavad Gita will survive the British dominion in India, it shall have long ceased to exist and the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance".

Emerson the American transcendentalist, on reading the Gita writes: "It was the first book I read, whereas if an empire spoke to us nothing small or unworthy, large, consistent in its voice of an intelligence which another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions that concern us."

The German critic William Von Humboldt writes : “The Gita is the most beautiful, perhaps, the only true philosophical song existing in any known language”. After reading the book he wrote to his statesman friend Frederic Von Gentz, “I read the Indian poem for the first time, when I was in my country estate in Silesia and while doing so I felt a sense of overwhelming gratitude to God for having let me live, to be acquainted with this work. It must be the most profound and sublime thing to be found in the world”.

John Eglinton in his Memories of George Russel writes: “Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau among the modern writers have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand 'Sacred Books of the East'. The Bhagavat Gita and the Upanishads contain such God-like fullness of wisdom on all things, that I feel, the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, here they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be true”.

Professor Edgerton admires the poetic expressiveness of the Gita. “The pithy *anustubh* verses, the flow of the lines, the similies and metaphors - these give it a form, the interest of which cannot be had in any dry analytical philosophical disquisition. It is the best introduction to Indian thought and culture. Its language is full of grace and vitality”. The fervent Christian missionary Rev. Farquhar observes: “There are few poems worthy of comparison in point of general interest or of practical influence with the *Bhagavad Gita*”.

Praising the tolerant, universal, humanistic and spiritual slant of the Gita, Aldous Huxley observes : “The Gita is one of the most comprehensive and clearest summaries of perennial philosophy ever to have been made, hence its enduring value is not only for India but for all mankind”.

Sri Sankara regards the Gita as the essence of the teaching of all the Vedas. He adds that "read and sing the Gita, what need is there for any other scripture!".

A popular verse compares the Upanisads to cows and Krishna to the milk - man, Arjuna to the calf, the Gita to the milk and the good and wise men to the partakers of the milk”.

In the prose-classic of Bana's *Kadambari*, it is mentioned that man attained happiness by the recitation of the Gita. In Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, it is recorded that king Avantivarman had the Gita read out to him in his last hours. The glory of Gita is described in glowing terms in the Varaha and Skanda puranas. Alberuni in his *Indica* quotes from the Gita about twenty times. From this we gather that this Muslim writer was so fascinated by the Gita that he was perhaps the first to introduce it to the Muslim world. Later, Abdul Fasil and Faizi rendered it into prose and verse into the Persian language”.

In our country, the late Lokamanya B.G Tilak was the greatest resuscitator of this gospel. He translated the Gita in prison and preached the dynamic message of activism. He observes : “The Gita is the most luminous and priceless gem. It gives peace to the afflicted souls, it makes us masters of spiritual wisdom; in short in all the languages of the world there is not a single book like the Gita which can make us acquaint so well with the hidden truth of the ages. It beatifully harmonises the philosophy of action, devotion and knowledge. It can easily be said to be immortal fruit of the tree of the eternal Vedic Religion”.

Mahatma Gandhi regards the Gita as his spiritual mother. His commentary on the Gita - *Anasakti Yoga* is presented to us with a profound and touching introduction by Mahadev Desai in his book 'Gita according to Gandhiji'. Gandhiji writes: “I lost my earthly mother

who gave me birth long ago, but this eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed. She has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom - I can declare that the Gita is ever presenting me with fresh lessons, and if somebody tells me that it is my delusion, my reply to him would be I should hug this delusion as my richest treasure”.

In another place, Gandhiji sums up the message of the Gita : “It inculcates in us the duty of perseverance in the face of seeming failure. It teaches us that we have a right to action only, but not to the fruits thereof, and that success and failure are one and the same at bottom. It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves body, mind and soul, to pure duty and not become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of chance desires and indisciplined impulses”.

Sri Aurobindo extols the message of the Gita : “Its teaching is universal. Whatever may have been its origins, its language and structure and combination and balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of the sectarian teachers nor to the spirit of a rigorous dogmatist. It is an undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a synthesis of Indian Culture”. In his work on the *Synthesis of the Yoga*, he summarises the message of the Gita: “The greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the human race, the most perfect system of Karmayoga known to man in the past is to be found in the Bhagavad Gita. In this famous episode of the Mahabharata, the great basic lines of Karmayoga are laid for all times with incomparable mastery and the infallible eye of an assured experience. It aims at the secret of dynamic and not only static identity with the inner presence”.

Dr. Radhakrishnan in his introduction to the Gita observes: “It sets forth a tradition which has emerged from the religious life of

mankind. It is articulated by a profound seer who sees truth in its many-sidedness and believes in its saving power. It represents not any sect of Hinduism but Hinduism as a whole, not merely Hinduism but religion as such, in its universality, without limit of time or space embracing within its synthesis the whole gamut of human spirit from the crude fetishism of the savage to creative affirmation of the saint”.

In his Indian Philosophy, he instructively warns us not to take the historical context of the poem literally. “As the dialogue proceeds, the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of the battle-field die away and we have only an interview between God and man. The chariot of war becomes the lonely cell of meditation and a corner of the battlefield where the voices of the world are stilled, a fit place for thoughts on the supreme”. Professor Mascaro writes that the Gita seeks to achieve not only analytical exactitude, but is also unmatched for its poetic expressiveness". He exclaims, "If a Beethoven could give us in music the spirit of the Bhagavad Gita what a wonderful symphony we should hear".

Kenneth Walker records the advice he received from a friend. “Have you ever read the Bhagvad Gita?” the friend asked. “A long time ago”, replied Dr. Walker, “but I cannot say that I got very much out of it”. “Then read it again” said the friend, “for, it is one of the three or four great books of the world”. I have been working for psychology for more than ten years now, and I can only tell you that, in my opinion, the Bhagavad Gita contains more true psychology than the whole libraries of modern treatises. The Gita is a book of Light and Love for life”.

This mighty religious scripture situated in the substantial sacred Epic of Hindu religious tradition is considered as a living authority on questions dealing with the reality and activity of God, man and his destiny, and the way to attain Him. It is a book which teaches us

the art to schooling ourselves to achieve our highest. It is the science and art of spiritual life. The power of the Gita is not confirmed to explain the mysteries of life in clear cut rational terms. It is far more concerned to awaken in man a wonderful new and intimate sense of the divine and to tell him what is wrong with us. It reveals to us something about ourselves and what we can do about it. The book combines clean vision, splendid persuasive powers of argumentation, sincere feeling and amazing knowledge of human psychology and lucid poetic expression. Our reading and pondering over its meanings and its message rings in peace and harmony, helps us to shed fear, and imparts courage to all. Its imperatives are practical and help us to live aright and love all. If we do not relate the teaching of the scripture to life, it ceases to influence us. More recitations through ages have tended in some minds to a kind of 'reverential insensibility, a stupor of the spirit and an inward deafness'. A greater and more ardent attempt is now here made to unite philosophy into a practical religion and to bring the individual and the universe into a personal relationship with God. Its deep religious fervour and ethical earnestness lifts it above all sectarianism and supplies spiritual nourishment to all. It is the vital synthesis of Indian genius.

The study of Bhagavad Gita is undertaken with different motives and hence there are many approaches to the Gita and have worked to get at a *Vulgate* edition of the text and sought to sort out the interpolations and variations in readings. It is the critical approach of the Indologist. There is the *sanctum* approach to the scripture which looks upon the Gita as the source book of Vedanta, embodying a definite coherent and self - consistent school of philosophy. That is the approach of the ancient acaryas, Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and others. Each acarya strives his best to interpret the scripture to suit his doctrines. This has led to the straining of many verses to force them to yield a system. Such an approach is the scholastic

way. It had led to polemics and philosophical controversy. Many modern savants find in the Gita their solace. They look upon it as an Universal Forum giving men guidelines for spiritual evolution and for the reconstruction of society, in the image of justice and love. Its religion, psychology and ethics are looked upon as eminently suitable to our age and its problems. This is my approach to the scripture. The poem has a symbolic value and presents the predicament of the modern man in the personality of Arjuna's crisis. The dialogue - form, between India's two fascinating figures and the occasion of the poem have all given the message of the gospel great topicality".

Modern man, inspite of his immense knowledge and astounding powers of organisation is still far from peace or individual happiness. He is stricken by psychic anxiety, cloven by emotional conflicts, beset by economic insecurities and assailed by political doubts and hence, knows not his duties.

In the face of gross injustice, Arjuna the great warrior who knows his prowess, the justice of his cause, falters and wants to run away from the battle, because of sentimental feelings. He says that he is in great sorrow, that he would not see the death of his cousins. The ghastly immediate consequence of bloodshed and the death of his cousins unnerved him. He came to the battle field to punish his wicked cousins who robbed him of his kingdom, banished him into the forest for thirteen years and treacherously refused to redeem their pledge to give back even a part of the kingdom. He is upset at the possibility of a fratricidal war, so he puts on the role of a sanyasi and trots out arguments in favour of peace and a life of renunciation. This pseudo - pacifism is foreign to him. He cries out " Alas, what a great sin have we resolved to commit in striving to slay our own people, through our greed for the pleasures of the kingdom; far better would it be for me, if the sons of Dhrtarastra with weapons in hand should slay me in the battle, while I remain unresisting and

unarmed". Arjuna dreads to do his job, and so he invents argument to give it up. He seeks escape into inaction. He quails, he perspires, his mind and gait are reeling. He becomes unsteady and is drowned in sorrow. He seeks a way out of the crisis by taking refuge in the Lord, by putting himself in the place of the disciple in distress who seeks instruction. We are all like Arjuna. He is our representative. Arjuna's problem is to see a way out of the need to punish the evil-minded men in war and yet not incur sin in the attempt. The message of Gita is for all of us.

The concept of the human personality and destiny described by the Gita is comprehensive and catholic. The way it outlines for the development is concrete and is in tune with the psychology of man. These factors have made the Gita a manual for spiritual life.

The unregenerate human being's behaviour is not his essential nature. Man is not a body plus a mind; he is not an automaton, complex in structure. He is not even an organism, as the fashionable biologist describes him. He is essentially a person, a spirit who uses both. The Gita asks us not to interpret man endocrinologically, behaviouristically, psychoanalytically or in terms of a machine. He is not merely a rational, political, social animal, but is essentially spiritual. This fact is ignored by the exponents of our *sensate* culture, who over-simplify the nature of man and interpret him in terms of a single dimension. The line of interpretation is rationalised in the different philosophical theories, eg., Hedonism, Materialism, Marxism and psychoanalysis.

The one-dimension theory of human nature describes the aid of human life as the sum of the successive satisfaction of desires. The goal of life is the maximum pleasure or the balance of pleasure over pain. The truth about human personality is, we have a self deeper than the biological and physical aspects of our life. Religion and

spiritual experience enable us to realise "what we have in us to be". We have to transcend the physical and the biological in us and not negate or extinguish them. We must not exterminate our impulses, instincts, drives, emotions, passions and longings, We have to train them, and not thwart them. We must sublimate them, not suppress them, we must harness them to the central purpose of the development of our spiritual personality. The physical basis of our personality is necessary. The Katha Upanishad compares the human being to a chariot. The charioteer must not unyoke the horses, then he will not reach his destination. He must drive the horses well, yoke them, use the spurs discriminatingly, must know when to let in and when to hold back. In short the Gita asks us to develop self-control. It is called atma *samyama yoga*. We are asked to perform the sacrifice of self-control kindled by knowledge.

Self-control is the first step necessary for the integration of human personality. It is the root of all virtues. It is the antidote to our routine and repetitive impulsive actions. All the sense-organs of man have a natural function. They are governed by the mind. Each sense discharges its duties. The eye cannot choose but see. We cannot kill it. The senses are so constituted, that they disperse our energy and flow out obeying the natural law of the 'pleasure – principle'. Nature helps the impulses to cling on to objects. Any interference with the life of impulses is painful. The voice of reason is not heard because of sway of emotions. Hence, the necessity of a deliberate conscious control of the senses. Passion and prejudice are always able to mobilize their forces more rapidly and press the attack with greater force than the voice of reason or the wisdom of the seers. Sometimes the voice of self-interest may launch a counter-attack and win the day for a short while. "Reason is the slave of passion", said Hume.

The senses are the chief sources of man's pleasure and pain. The Gita repeatedly asks the aspirant to bring them under the control of a governable mind. "The senses carry off the understanding as a gale carries away a ship on water".

The immoderate and uncontrolled indulgence of senses leads to passion. "Desire and wrath spring from passion. Passion is the master sin devouring all. Passion envelopes knowledge. It is the perpetual foe of the wise. It has its seat in the senses, mind and understanding. Its operation veils wisdom and deludes the soul of man". Arjuna is exhorted to take the first step to control the senses from the beginning and slay the foes that destroy knowledge and wisdom.

Without self-control there can be no integration with one's own self. One cannot live in peace with one's own self, unless the divisions in the self, conflicts in the mind and the acting of the heart for unity and harmony are overcome.

'Yoga' is the term of general significance in Indian thought. It is not anyone discipline, but it is the name for all spiritual *sadhana*. In our anxiety to sell yoga, we should not dilute it or soft-pedal its emphasis on self-control and ethical life. It is not just a system of body postures as described by many, nor is it the renunciation of the idle. "It is not the fad of the physical culturist. It is not one set of discipline but a large term in the framework of self-development, permitting adaptation and modification to suit the equipment and nature of individuals".

To achieve singleness of mind, we require constant practice. It is practice with patience that can give us a strong will. Ascetic repression and violent suppression of the working of the senses do not help us. Through reflection, dispassion and constant practice we get graded control of the senses. Violent repression destroys the

self. We need constant endeavour. It is not easy to control or curb the restless mind. Krishna admits Arjuna's submission to Him about the difficulty in controlling the mind. But he suggests constant endeavour. The yogi must go about his job strongly, little by little with a steadfast purpose, with determination and an untiring mind. He must achieve dispassion with his keen sense of values. To practice control without dispassion is dangerous. It will not be effective. The feeling for renunciation results deep from devotion to the Lord and not merely from self-effort. Devotion to the Lord is necessary. Complete devotion to the Lord weans us away from all other alignments. Hence, Narada in the *Bhakti Sutra* says: *anuragal viragah*. For the devotee, it is easy to practice self-control and dispassion. Hence, the Gita puts devotion along with self-effort as a primary means for controlling passions. The ideal man of the Gita, the man of 'steadfast wisdom' practices devotion.

The Gita-view of human personality has for its basis the concept of gunas. The doctrine of gunas constitutes the foundation for the study of human personality types. The entire chapter XIV is devoted to the study of the gunas. The entire system of animate nature is woven out of the strands of three gunas *Sattva, Rajas and Tamas*. They constitute *Prakrit*. The author of the Gita declares, "there is not an entity either on earth or in heaven that is free from the qualities of Prakrit". Prakrit is the powerful force that impels all men to action, even the learned. The importance of Prakrit is admitted in every walk of life. The entire psychophysical activities of man are viewed under the framework of three gunas. The triadic classification is applied to all our activities eg., faith, food, sacrifice, penance, gift, knowledge, agent, intelligence, courage, joy, etc.

The norm set up for the development of spiritual life is the cultivation of the *sattvic* in us. The *sattvic* in us unfolds itself only by a life of strenuous discipline and devotion. This is not capable of

being achieved in one life. Hence, the faith in life does not perish at death. It is carried over and determines the nature of the subsequent birth. The series of births gives us opportunities to carry out our unfinished moral effort cut short by death. Faith in karma and rebirth take away the horror and nihilism associated with death. *Sattva* is responsible for lightness and illumination of things in nature. It brings the best in us. Hence, the exhortation to bring about the emergence of *sattva* (*sattvodreka*).

*Rajas* is the source of all activity. *Tamas* is the power of nature that is responsible for anything that resists and obstructs. It is the cause of inertia. The *gunas* are in all things and persons in diverse measures. We distinguish the *gunas* on the basis of their effect.

To achieve self integration (*atmasamyama*), one has to work for it hard, with an impregnable will, and determined effort, grounded in absolute faith in God. Without integration, we can never achieve one pointedness (*ekagra citta*). In the absence of integration conflict will rage wildly in the mind of man. The impetuous senses will carry one away to the ends of the world. For the uncontrolled there is no power of concentration, and for him there is no peace; for the "unpeaceful how can there be happiness". Self-integration must proceed by steps and not all at once in one stride or in one sweep.

The genius of the Gita is seen in the concrete and detailed suggestions it puts forth for the aspirant. He is told to the kind of Sattvic food he should take. He is asked 'to choose a clean place to live and cultivate calmness of mind, fearlessness and continence, to avoid relish for crowds'. One is asked to avoid extreme over-indulgence or ascetic starvation. "Integration is not for him who eats too much nor for him who eats too little. It is not for him who sleeps too much, nor for him who keeps vigil too long. It is for the man who is temperate in his food and recreation, who is restrained in all

his action and who has regulated his sleep and vigils. Integration (Yoga) puts an end to all sorrows.

For integration self-effort is not enough though it is indispensable. A celebrated verse of the Gita declares and affirms its unconquerable faith in the power of man's capacity and free will to pull himself up and to be on the right track. "Let man raise himself by his own self, let him not debase himself. For he himself is the friend of himself; but he who has not conquered himself is hostile as a foe". Self-conquest is the primary step in self-integration.

The spiritual aspirant is essentially a social being. He lives and has his development through his concourse and interactions with his fellowmen. He cannot live apart from them. His individuality has to blossom into a perfect personality by a process of morality induced through socialisation. He has to live in peace with fellowmen. The integration which he seeks to effect in himself is affected by his attitude to others and other's love for him. He has to grow with them. Hence, the necessity for integration with fellowmen. The Gita ethics is at once individualistic and altruistic. Its altruism is not sensate altruism. Its humanism is theocentric (God-centered). It does not look upon man as a discrete atom in a mechanical structure called society. Man is not a mere organism, and society is no mere organic structure as fondly believed by the biologists. The Gita flatly denies this and affirms as MacMurray would, "We are persons and not organisms. We have a will of our own not merely to adapt to nature, but also to manipulate nature to our needs. To interpret man in terms of organic categories is not fair".

The integration of man with his self must be perfect, natural and not involve strain or tension. The Gita has given us memorable images of the integrated yogin. There cannot be an image of vastness and fullness nobler than the ocean to compare the man of integrated

life, “into whose life enters all desires as the waters enter a sea, which though ever filled, remains within its bounds”. He is the awakened (*buddha*). In the words of the Gita, “what is night for all beings, therein the disciplined is awake, and wherein all beings are awake is night for the yogi”. The mind of the integrated man is “like the lamp which flickers not, in a place sheltered from the wind”. The perfect mastery of the integrated being over his senses is as easy and as natural as the control of a tortoise over its limbs. The perfect detachment of the yogin and his unaffectability is likened to the contact of the lotus leaf to the water in which it sprouts.

The spiritual aspirant of the Gita is a humanist. He is not an escapist, who wants to run away from the social agonies of the fellowmen seeking individual salvation by running to mountain tops and monasteries. He accepts life as a challenge and seeks to answer it. Life is not a problem to him, it is a challenge and an opportunity for perfecting himself. He has faith in the ultimate reality and the goodness of man. The Gita declares him a yogin “who worships the Lord abiding in all beings and who looks upon all as himself in pleasure or pain”. All the activities of the aspirant are God-centered. He acts and lives in the constant presence of God. “Theocentric Humanism” is the practice of the presence of God in all our activities and the dedication of all acts to Him.

Thought is always the parent to the act. Any type of thought if entertained for a sufficient length of time, will by and by reach the motor nerves of the brain and burst forth into action. It is no good dallying with a bad thought. We must put out that thought at once. We grow into the likeness of those things we contemplate, as man thinks in his heart, so is he.

The yogin has to acquire jnana. The simplest meaning of the term jnana is mere knowledge. But that is not the Gita's meaning of

the term jnana. It comprises quite a number of intellectual and ethical virtues: “Absence of conceit, pride and vanity; forgiveness, sincerity, reverence for the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control, dispassion for sensual object, renunciation, absence of egoism, knowledge of the transient nature of man's life, unflinching devotion to the Lord, love of solitude and love of scriptures”. The devotee's love of God is not of the nature of blind unreasoned infatuation, for it is the love of the perfect and the infinite. It never disappoints, or falls short of expectations. The devotee's love of the Lord is the knowledgeable love. It has for its grounds the knowledge of the infinite auspicious qualities of the Lord. It is not a *moha* or blind love born out of passion. It is the desire to place ourselves in the hands of the best. The *bhakti* of the Gita is not the confused, lazy or sentimental effusion or escapism. It is the love of the lovable, and the adoration of the Supreme in the complete faith that one will be saved. The Bhakta is not one who lives as he likes. He has to pass through severe self-discipline, must shed his selfish motives and live a the centric life. He is not indifferent to things all around him. The humanistic qualities of the Bhakta are described in glowing terms in the concluding verses of the Chapter XII of the Gita. The Bhakta is not indifferent to his neighbours. He desires the good of all (*sarva bhuta hite ratah*). The insistence on acquiring ceremonial purity and perfect self-control resulting in a governable mind is the first step. The yogin must integrate his life with others i.e., his fellowmen. He has the community-sense and realizes the divine nature of all men and respect them all. Integration with fellowmen is possible only by leading an ethical and selfless life. Action must aim at *loka samgraha* (good of the world) and must have the good of all at the heart (*sarva bhuta hite ratah*). The Gita advocates the celebrated doctrine of *svadharma* for scrupulous adoption by man. It is a unique doctrine based on the psychology of man and makes for an efficient society.

If we want an efficient society and splendid individuals, we should press into service the doctrine of *sva-dharma*.

*Sva-dharma* does not imply *jati-dharma* (caste-duties). It is a psychological view of the concept of duty. Nature has gone into endless diversity and no two men are alike. Men can grow to their best in different ways. It is foolish to press all men in a single file and put them into a single Procrustean bed. Each must undertake the duty that does not go against his grain. One must act according to one's temper and training. The concept of *sva-dharma* is a powerful corrective to social waste. It saves us from individual maladjustments. We get over the difficulty of the placement of the square men in round holes. *Sva-dharma* enables men to perform their own duties efficiently, gracefully, spontaneously and with ease. The author of the Gita is of the firm opinion that the path of *sva-dharma* leads the individual to salvation. Treading the path of *sva-dharma* is described as the most effective form of worship for liberation. *Sva-dharma* spells concord. It brings about a social order, where all are not equal but one, all are equally necessary, where all work is divine. It promotes the mutual aid and co-operative instinct in men and lessens tensions and strife. It is nobody's *svadharmā* not to do anything. The Gita is opposed to idleness.

The yogin of the Gita lives a full life not apart from the world but unattached. He lives a life of perfect self-control. He single with Tennyson that "self - reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, these three alone lead life to sovereign power". He would only object to word 'alone' and add love of God in its place. He finds his freedom in action and not from action. He is not bitter to life's denials. He does not invoke self-pity. He is in harmony with creation. He does not see things through the mists of passion and jealousy. He lives 'practicing the presence of God in all'.

The conception of society envisaged by the Gita is largely democratic. It lays great stress on the liberty and freedom of human will, to overcome obstacles to achieve its ideals. Faith in the unconquerable goodness and the ultimate triumph of the good are the fundamental notes in the message of the Gita. It never belittles human responsibility in order to glorify the Lord. The glory of the Lord, is that he has endowed man with a free will and has enabled him to choose the good in the presence of evil by his effort. "Man is an indetermination" in the words of Bergson. "The omnipotence and the glory of the Lord are not incompatible with human freedom".

Bondage, according to the Gita is the result primarily of man's 'assertion of his autonomy', and the consequent unrestrained exercise of his free will for the gratification of his *sensate* and physical desires and ambitions. It is the arrogant assertion that man is the captain of his ship and the master of his fate. It is the denial of the existence of God, together with the denial of the moral law, *Dharma*. It is the egoistic expression of man's powers that is responsible for this bondage and sinful acts. This is no doubt another name of man's servitude to the three *gunas*.

*Moksa* is the state of existence in which all our doubts and disbeliefs are dissolved and all our tensions and strifes are overcome for ever. To attain this, we are asked to rise above the sway of the three *gunas*. The ideal man of the Gita is described in four places under different captions: *Sthitaprajnaa*, *Yogarudha*, *Bhakta*, and *Gunatita*. In all these descriptions what is common is the insistence on the necessity of transcending the pressure and the sway of *gunas*.

It is the sway of the *gunas* that tosses us in *Samsara* and also blurs and blinds our visions of the Divine. It is again the sway of the *gunas* that makes men feel autonomous and assert arrogantly: "This I have gained today, and that longing will I fulfil. This wealth is mine

and that also shall be mine hereafter. This foe I have slain and others too I shall slay. I am the Lord of all and I enjoy myself. Who is there like me? I will perform sacrifices and I will give alms. I will rejoice”.

The Gita declares that men, caught in the meshes of delusion, self-conceited stubbornness, filled with haughtiness, and purse-proud, utterly disregard all rules, and hate God and fellowmen. The unrestricted anti-social use of one's freedom is bondage. Arjuna is told by Sri Krishna, “If indulging in self-conceit, you think 'I will not fight', that resolution of yours is in vain”.

How to overcome and transcend the sway and influence of the three *gunas*, is the aspirant's chief concern. The stoic and the freethinker exhort men to pull themselves through their boot-straps. They ask people to practice unremitting self-effort and detachment to overcome their mean motives and the humiliating weaknesses. Psychosomatic training is outlined by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*. Buddhism and Jainism speak of a self-culture and do not indent on God.

The transcendence of the realm of *gunas* is not exclusively and entirely left to our self-effort according to the Gita and the Mahayana Buddhism. The Gita persistently and impressively suggests that ‘devotion to the Lord’ and ‘faith in His grace’ are absolutely necessary to overcome the influence of the *gunas* and to be liberated from their sway. Devotion is the key to open all. The Gita directly and persistently suggests devotion as the only method within the reach of all. It glorifies its supremacy and elaborates its effective power for securing *moksa*. Mere rationality and self-effort, unaided by Grace, cannot help us to secure *moksa* from the triple nature of *prakrti*.

In the second chapter, describing the characteristics of the *sthitaprajna*, the Lord does not fail to point out that the man of

steadfast wisdom is not a mere stoic. He says, “The aspirant should control all his senses and remain steadfast and devoted to Me”. Gandhiji draws pointed attention to 'devotion' in the above verse. Again in the tenth chapter the Lord declares: “On those devotees that are ever devoted to Me and worship Me in love, I bestow the knowledge by which they come to Me. Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their hearts, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of wisdom”.

Devotion works in a double way. It helps us to overcome the temptations of the flesh as well as the tyranny of *Prakrti* which binds us to *Samsara*. Speaking about devotion, Sri Krishna reiterates its importance. “By devotion one knows Me in reality, what I am and who I am, then having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters into Me ..... Having found refuge in Me, he reaches, by My grace, the eternal, indestructible state (*Moksa*)..... Therefore mentally surrendering all actions to Me fix thy thoughts on Me, thou shalt surmount every difficulty by My grace”. “Fly to Me for shelter with all thy soul. O Bharata : by My grace shalt thou gain supreme peace and everlasting abode”.

In conclusion, the Lord says: “Surrendering all duties, come to Me alone for shelter. Do not grieve, for I will release thee from all sins”. Referring to this verse, Sri Aurobindo observes: “It is the crowning word. It is not merely the essence of what has been said on the subject; it sweeps out, as it were, yet farther breaks down every limit and rule, canon and formula, and opens into a vivid, wide and illimitable, spiritual truth with an immense significance”.

Devotion to the Lord alone clears our mind of care, and with the onset of Grace we no longer see things through the mist of passion. “The *maya* of *Prakriti*”, the Lord declares, can be overcome only by his Grace. Hence, it is maintained by all the theistic interpreters

of the *Gita*, that bondage is due to atheism and lack of faith in God. It can be overcome by devotion. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, after granting the grand vision: "By devotion to Me alone may I be known truly, seen and entered into".

Devotion and self-surrender are described in the ninth chapter of the *Gita* as king of the sciences, easy, pleasant and yielding moksa. God-love can be practiced in many ways. Nothing is lost in it. Even a little, the *Gita* says, carries you a great way. The imperfect and unfinished efforts of spiritual life are not wasted for they bear fruit in the subsequent lives and gives the necessary atmosphere to complete our spiritual quest. The least that a man can do is to put himself in the hands of the best, i.e. God. The ground once covered is never lost.

In the history of Indian thought two ways of spiritual realization have been preached, one is the way of complete renunciation, i.e., the giving up of all works. The only thing that we can do is to get out of life. We must keep ourselves free from the stain of action. The world is a snare, it is a nightmare, we can only wake up. Any type of action we produce results in things that bind us to *samsara*. Action forges chains and binds us for ever. He let us renounce all action. The *Gita* is opposed to such a renunciation of actions.

The positive view of life is called the *pravrttimarga* which makes men live an active life for securing the material and other goods. In the words of Professor Hiriyanna, the *Gita* has discovered the golden mean between the two opposing ideals. "It preserves the excellence of both the methods. While it does not abandon activity, it preserves the spirit of renunciation. It commands a strenuous life, and yet gives no room for the play of selfish impulses." The ideal of *Karma Yoga* keeps the spirit of renunciation and combines it with life of ceaseless activity. This ideal is given wide and permanent

currency by the *Gita*. The *Gita* has focused this practical teaching in its splendidly devised setting. The ideal is the central message of the *Gita* according to all moderns. - Tilak, Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, Besant, Tagore, Vinobaji and Vivekananda.

The *Karma Yoga* ideal is in keeping with the biological and psychological nature of man. Activity is the very breath of human existence. Man cannot live even for a moment without action. Cosmic existence is based on dynamic activity. Act we must for keeping life and there is no escape from it. It is necessary for any social order. Not all action is *Karma Yoga*. Nor all giving up is renunciation. The *Karma Yoga* doctrine requires us to lead an active moral life and still escape the bondage that our actions normally forge for us. That is the secret of *Karma Yoga*. The active moral life of man is to be lived in a particular spirit. It is this spirit that quite paradoxically transmutes activity into a condition of freedom from that of bondage.

*Karma Yoga* is not mechanical activity. It is not physical interaction, nor is it the mere promptings of instinct, as in the animal world. It is not the egotistic activity of the so-called utilitarian, who acts on the pleasure principle. It is a yoga, i.e., an activity which seeks God-Union by a definite method.

It is not unconsidered action, nor vague speculation. It takes intellect into account. An enlightened understanding is the necessary preliminary for the practice of *Karma Yoga*. Further, the agent must act from a sense of duty and not from the desire for any particular fruit. This detachment is absolutely necessary for the yoga. It makes for equanimity and does not disturb us and makes for efficient action. It secures concentration and makes uncentred attention possible. Besides, once the agent is not oppressed by the ideas of the fruits of action, there is no temptation or chance of his adopting any unscrupulous means to achieve his end.

Here it may be asked, what is it that serves as motives for action in the doings of the Karma Yogin? Motiveless action is psychologically impossible. The author of the Gita does not deny all motives. He only denies selfish motives. The central motive that actuates the karma, Yogin is the "Love of God," i.e., Isvara Priti. He is not stoic who prides upon his sense of fortitude and powers of self-denial. The devotee renounces not only the desire for the fruit of the action, but also the sense of agency.

It is quite possible for men to be detached about the fruits of the actions, but it is impossible to be rid of the sense of agency. It is in this effort, the Karma Yogin needs 'Devotion' and 'Surrender' to the Lord. Without a complete knowledge of the philosophical truths and the love of God, and an unreserved surrender to God, it is not possible for the yogin to give up his sense of agency and feel himself an instrument of the Lord to do His will. Whatever may be the differences among the ancient commentators of the Gita, they have all agreed that the Gita teaches all the yogas, karma, bhakti and jnana. The devotee grinds corns and heals the sick and attends on the sick.

The ethics and religion of the Bhagavad Gita presents a way of life suited to all men. It is comprehensive and tolerant in its conception of Ultimate Reality and catholic in its methods of approach to the Lord. All manifestations of the Lord are equally true and spiritual. Each perceives the spirit in one way. The difference in the temper of men and the divergence in their outlook and equipment accounts for the different pictures of Reality. The Lord declares: "Whatever form My devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady". The temple of the devotee is not confined to any chapel. It is larger than the house of worship of any sect. The author of the Gita allows each to grow to his best in his own way from where he

is. He does not ask all to work in a single file. The Gita's ideal of morality is within the reach of all of us.

In short, the Gita affirms the reality and validity of religious experience and man's imperative need for it. It presents an unambiguously comprehensive ideal of true religion. It gives in the very process a just and adequate estimate of other nostrums that compete for the place that truly belongs to spiritual religion. Its vision and tradition are larger than any of the schools.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave puts it in a verse his view of Gita: "*Brahma Satyam jagat spurtir jivanam satya sadhanam*". "Brahman is real, the world is His manifestation. Life is an experiment with truth". We are asked not to compromise with evil, nor give it quarter or take flight from it, but face it in the spirit of a soldier-saint. The fundamental imperatives of the Gita is: "Yield not to unmanliness, O, Arjuna, for it is does not become thee: Cast off this faint-heartedness". This imperative is the most important one among the sixty commands in the Gita which the Lord gives his disciples, not as a dictator but as an omniscient benefactor interested in setting right faltering humanity. The first and foremost injunction is a strong rebuke to all of us who falter out of weakness trying to escape from the duty by pseudo-detachment and feigned arguments in favour of our inaction.

One has to stand up and fight for the right cause, with a pure motive, in a right manner and hold firm to righteousness. In the hour of crisis one must not sit with folded hands and masquerade one's weakness and sentimentality as piety and love of peace. We must be free to face the crisis in our life not by avoiding its issues or adopting another's way of life. We must encounter evil without being violent to our nature and yet transform life. The Gita insists on our giving battle to the evil from where we are. Arjuna is the man who is

deeply confused by his sentimental emotions. To him the Lord imparts clarity and light in the hour of darkness. The Gita's stress on *svadharma* is unequivocal in its appreciation and in the denunciation of those who go against their nature and adopt other's dharma (*para dharma*).

The first imperative is dedicated to strengthening man from within and in bringing clarity, vigour and understanding to confused minds. Lokamanya Tilak saw in this the essence of the Gita. All subsequent argumentation in the Gita proves it. In the eleventh chapter again Krishna exhorts Arjuna: "Therefore, arise and gain glory, conquering the foes, enjoy the prosperous kingdom". Again he exhorts: "Fight, delivered from this fever (*yudhyasa vigatajvarah*)". The author of the Gita asks us not to become victims of our weakness, doubts, indecisions and cowardice. Krishna's imperative has a tremendous redeeming power. The precise order of the Lord asks us to banish 'weakness'. All the sins and all evils can be summed up in that one word 'weakness'. It is weakness that is the motive power in all evil-doing.

Religion is a force and power, not a mere form. It helps man in its effort to fight our lower tendencies (*vasanas*) and to bring to the forge the potential goodness. The author of the Gita asks us to live an active moral life. Action done in a spirit of dedication to the Lord, without desire for fruit, according to the behests of the scripture, can liberate us. If we feel that knowledge is too difficult, we are counseled to practice the art slowly step by step: It is not impossible.

Vinobaji observes: "How does one become a flute in Krishna's hand? - To be a flute means to become hollow". But I am stuffed full with passion and desires. How then can music come through me? My tone is gruff. I am gross. I am filled with *ahamkara*, in sense of 'I'. I must empty myself of the ego. Only when I become empty, will

the Lord breathe through me. It is the Bhakta that has the vision of God. The bhakta is protected on all planes; if there are difficulties, they are warded off; if it is indigence, prosperity is ushered in; if ignorance, knowledge is imparted; if he seeks release from bondage, he is given *moksa*: to attain the Lord we are asked to practice the presence of God in all that we do and dedicate all our activities unreservedly to Him: That is the strategic imperative: "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away and whatever you practice in the form of austerities, do it all as an offering to Me".

In short, the special appeal of the Gita is in its tolerance and psychological feasibility of the methods it advocates. It rejects outright the philosophy of inaction and insists on a life of service and action. Gandhiji writes: "He who gives up action falls; he who gives up only the reward rises". The forty-seventh verse of the second chapter clinches the issue. It lays down that we have a right to action, only, and must refrain from concern for the fruit of the action. It is a two-sided injunction enjoining exclusive obligations to act and an absolute prohibition of the interest in the fruits of the action. While doing the action, one must feel that the Lord is the agent, and we are mere instruments in his hand. Self-effacement is necessary. A fourth point is that we should not fall a prey to the lure of the temptation of inaction. The first three are positive and the fourth is the negative one.

Service is a form of devotion when conceived in the right spirit. Devotion to the Lord is no excuse for claiming exemption from service. How should a jnani hold that his state of mind is the condition of privileged inaction? Selflessly dedicated action for the good of all is the true spirit of renunciation. The man of knowledge and devotion, says Gandhiji, must be prepared to grind corn and nurse the patients. Devotion must express itself through action.

The criticism of religion in general and Hinduism in particular is the neglect of the social concern and lack of humanism. The Gita takes up the challenge and advocates the doctrine of Karma Yoga selfless God-dedicated action. My esteemed Professor K. Swaminathan in a recent article highlights the image of true Karma Yogin by citing the description of the sacred tree (X-22) of the *Bhagavata*.

They live and grow for others' good  
Fierce blows of sun and wind and rain  
They take themselves and ward off from us  
Those that seek their shelter find  
No harsh unkindness, no refusal

With arms outstretched they welcome guests  
With leaf and flowers and fruit and shade  
With root and bark and hard heart-wood,  
With fragrant gums and tender shoots,  
With many parts man's many needs  
It is their nature to fulfil.

Their birth and growth and death are all  
A sacrifice unlimited.  
From these friends let us learn to spend  
Our life, our wealth, our thought and deed  
In silent joy for other's good.

Thus towards the Jumna stream he walked  
Through the thick avenue of trees  
Laden with foliage, flower and fruit.

The concept of steadfast service as the essential form of devotion is embedded in the life of the saints of all traditions and

scriptures. Appar writes: "God's duty is to support His slave. My duty is to serve and be content". Meikandar in the tenth sutra of the Sivajnan Bhodam requires "steadfast service as both the fruit of a good life and the seeds of a better one". Jesus says: "Not every one that calls Christ Lord, but he that does the will of the Father, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven". St. Teresa writes: "Jesus has nobody now on earth but yours. You are the feet with which he goes about doing good. Your's are the hands with which he blesses". Faith without work is useless. In the words of William Law: "There is no possibility of turning to God without turning from self". The Love of God is the lever for it works not only in the three measures of meal of the biblical women but in all the activities of men".

The Gita view of man is not the Naturalistic account that he is an animal, aggressive, predatory, ready to attack and defend himself; nor is his life solitary, poor, brutish and short. Man according to the Gita is a being and not an animal. He can think and act in terms of values, can rise above passions, anticipate, plan and prepare for the future.

He can look before and after, pine for what is not. He is not a helpless victim of blind forces of Nature. The Gita-view of man describes him as a distinct entity from all other forms of life. He is not only a being, but a divine being. He is the spirit as well as body. The soul in man can control the physical and the mental aspects. The two, body and the mind, need to be purified. This the spirit can do by its devotion to God. In short, man is created to carry out God's work and glorify his concept of love of all.

What should we do with the Bhagavad Gita? The answer is: Get back to the Gita. Read it slowly, persistently, prayerfully, chapter by chapter. Its contents will grow into you and deepen your understanding and give you the full realisation of the significance of

its teaching for personal life. We are beset by the folly of unbelief, and we put too much trust in the so-called wisdom of man. This is the surest way of keeping away from the influence and the operation of the regenerating power of God, buttressing you in all your activities. The verses of the Gita influence us in an unobstructive way. It embodies great truths in striking sentences and epigrams. It conveys warnings, sounds alarms, presents inducements, proclaims deliverances, makes promises, offers pardon, administers comfort, in short, rings in peace and harmony in you. "Your faith must stand not on the wisdom of man but on the powers of God" in the words of St. Paul. The whole set of man's life will change. We must read the Gita devotionally and not professionally. We must linger over the verses, ponder over the spirit of the verses. Then the essence will emerge out. The verses rise to lofty heights of spiritual vitality in choice simple expression, disclosing the love of God. The love of God brings order and beauty out of the chaos and the coarseness in our life.

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**INDIAN PHILOSOPHY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO THE THREE SYSTEMS :  
ADVAITA - VISISTADVAITA - DVAITA**

**- Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao**

**The Advaita System of Sankara**

Sankara was born in A.D. 788 of Nambudiri Brahmin parents Sivaguru and Aryamba in Kaladi. His parents ardently prayed for his birth to the Lord in Trichur Vadakkunnathan temple. Sivaguru passed away soon after the boy's birth. Sankara early in life evinced precocious mastery of all Vedic lore and the different branches of ancient wisdom. In conformity with tradition he was initiated into brahmacharya which is regarded as the second birth for man opening up his spiritual eye. It was prophesied that the child would live only for eight years. The fascination for Sannyasa was deep in the future world-teacher. Sankara had not the usual hankering for the satisfaction of the senses, nor for the exercise of power or pelf or position. He has an intense reflective turn of mind and possessed an indrawn personality. He had a mission and an ideal that directed him with no time to waste or luxuriate on the trifles of life.

He appeared at a time similar to ours. The ritualists called Mimamsakas, filled the hour with hectic ritual and propitiation of the multiple gods to secure property, progeny and health here and perpetual pleasure hereafter. The Hedonism preached by this school made them forget humanity and made them individual egotists. There was the ascetic who was torturing his self to know the truth. In such an age Sankara the boy-philosopher interpreted the coherent philosophy enshrined in the Upanishads, Gita and the Brahma Sutras, revealing the philosophy of the unity of existence, the fellowship of faiths, the dignity and divinity of man as the basis of human compassion. Tradition records an incident which gives us a powerful

insight into Sankara's love of Sannyas. The boy went to his village river for his daily bath and a crocodile caught hold of his feet. He cried out to his mother to grant him permission to renounce the world and take to sannyasa; for the acceptance of *apatsannyasa*, would ensure his life. Then Sankara went to the banks of Narmada and took orders from Govinda, the disciple of the celebrated Gaudapada. As a sannyasin he traveled all over India on foot, impressing the fact of the unity of India. He defeated many an opponent and the supporters and the expounders of anti-Vedic systems of philosophy. He went to Badri and Varanasi and wrote his memorable commentary on the Vedanta-Sutras. He established different Maths all over India.

His works run into twenty volumes (Memorial edition printed in Srirangam Vani Vilas Press). They can be classified into four distinct sections; (A) Commentaries: (1) on the Brahma-Sutra, (2) the twelve principal Upanishads, (3) The Gita, (4) Vishnusahasranama, Sanat Sujatiya; (B) Independent tracts on philosophical topics explaining the system of ideas according to Advaita; (C) A series of poems explaining Advaita in one verse, in ten and in a hundred; (D) Devotional poems describing the path of the devotee in adoration of Sakti, Vishnu, Subramanya. His commentaries are known for their metaphysical brilliance and poetic excellence. They are clear and deep (*Prasanna-gambhiram*) penetrating as well as broad-based. It is only Sankara's humility that makes him name his works as commentaries. They are not mere notes or annotations, but treatises that discuss and illuminate the mind and purify the hearts of men. It is his style that has earned for him a permanent place among the philosophic Sanskrit prose writers of India. The great philosophical insight of Sankara has immense significance for religion. Before we pass on to the estimate of the function of reason which he uses to explain the Sruti, let us know his view of Sruti. The Sruti

or the Veda to Sankara is all not of one degree of importance. He holds that there is a great divide between the two parts of the Vedas, the ritual section i.e., Karmakanda and the Jnanakanda i.e., the section relating to Brahman and spiritual realization. One deals about dharma delivering injunctions and prohibitions and awarding heaven and hell as the rewards for those who obey the behests. It is a kind of supernatural pragmatism which makes karma the sovereign power in the world.

Sankara feels that this section does not describe the ultimate truth of the Vedas. They deal only about the categories, dharma, karma and cannot give us moksa even if it is infinitely pursued. According to Sankara, the upanishads which represent the nature of Brahman convey the ultimate message. To realize Brahman, which is already real and existent is the goal of man. The individual soul due to a fundamental ignorance has the feeling that the pluralistic world of souls and objects is real. It is this deep-rooted, firm, but false conviction that makes men hate one another, made war, cry down and destroy others. This separatist illusion (*dvaita-bhranti*) is to be overcome for the realization of Brahman. This is not to be had as the result of action, but through real knowledge. Bondage is due to *ajnana*, release is due to its opposite *jnana*. Sankara also rejects the compromise solution i.e., of *samuccaya-vada*, the combination of *jnana*, karma and *bhakti*. In his assertion of *jnana* as the sovereign method for spiritual realization, he is not slow to realize the degree of worth in karma and *bhakti*. He urges that karma, when done selflessly as dedication to the Lord secures *satyasuddhi* (cleaning of the heart). It cleans the mind which is a necessary step for the removal of *ajnana*, though not a direct and immediate step, genuine *bhakti* makes us realize the finite failing in us. Sankara, very clearly demarcates the two sections of the Vedas and asserts the difference in the values they pursue and places the real significance of the Sruti in Brahman realization. When Sankara asserts that the Upanishads

embody the final and true gospel of the Vedas, he does not rely on all the passages in the Upanishads as stating the truth. Authority is not claimed for all the statements of the Upanishads, only the purportful scriptures lay bare the meaning. To determine the meaning of the upanisadic passages there are the six determinate marks of purport, and among those Reasons (*upapatti*), appears to be only one of the marks of the purport, in reality its functioning is important, in the determination of all other marks of purport. Further, applying the scheme of six tatparya lingas, Sankara Brahman, the unreality of the world and the absolute reality of the non-dual spirit as the prime purport and real message of the Vedanta. The method followed by him is simple but appears subtle. He classifies the Upanishadic passages into two categories, those passages that embody the ultimate truths, *tattva-avedaka Srutis* and *atattva-avedaka Srutis* i.e., those that speak of the apparent reality. Sankara argues that the function of the Sruti is not to explain things, that are already disclosed to us through perception or inference. The Upanishads seek to tell us something that we do not know and cannot know through any other instrument than the Vedas. The *abhedavakyas* i.e., the identity passages disclose the novel truth of the unity of existence as well as the non-difference of the individual soul and Brahman and this is not disclosed by the bheda Srutis. The bheda Srutis merely describe the phenomenal world that is superimposed on Brahman. They confirm what we know through experience, and other sources of knowledge. The scriptures are authoritative only in respect of that truth which cannot be had through any other sources. The law of Coveltly is insisted on *aprapte sastranam pramanam*, scripture is authoritative in respect of those truths that cannot be had from any other source. Hence, we find that the philosophical categories of Advaita Vedanta flatly contradict the deliverance of common sense. To the utter irritation of the Realists Sankara asserts that the worlds of men and things are unreal, because they are seen and perceived,

because they are particular and finite and because they are non-sentient. The truths of the Advaita have to be learnt from the Sruti primarily and not from mere intellection. They have to be explained secondarily with the help of logic and argumentation. In the plenary sense they have to be experienced. Spiritual experience carries with it self-certifying validity. The sastras in the ultimate analysis are only Jnapakas and not Karakas. From this we gather that Advaita is not the facile acceptance of Sruti; Advaita is based on examined Sruti.

If Sankara is not a blind literalist, nor is he an arrogant free thinker who built his philosophy on the basis of mere reason and logic. This is not to say that he was illogical or inconsistent. If he was critical of the Vedas, he also was equally critical of reason and its functionings. He did not believe that they are the ends. He knew that human reason is at best a double-edged instrument. It cuts both ways. It is in the words of our national poet Tagore “all blade and no handle”. It cannot function in a vacuum. It cannot supply ends. It can work out the ends it is supplied, be they good or ignoble. Hence it is described by Hume as the ‘slave of passions’. In his commentary on a significant sutra Sankara defines the limits of reason. He writes, ‘mere reasoning cannot be depended upon in matters which must be understood in the light of revelation. Reasoning rests on individual opinion. Even men of outstanding intellectual eminence such as Kapila, Kanada and others are seen to contradict one another. As against this if it be contended, that all reasoning is unsound, even this assumption is based on reasoning. Further, it is possible for rationalists to argue, that if all reasoning is baseless, then the whole cause of our practical life will come to an end.

Sankara concludes that all reasoning as such is not useless. That reasoning which is not opposed to and is in accord with the prime purport of the Sruti is valid. Mere reason is inconclusive. It can prove or disprove anything. Reason can argue, it cannot discover

or demonstrate. Though Sankara does not accept the exclusive and sole deliverances of reasoning as ultimate truths, he is not slow to know the power of reason and its function in human development. The Upanishads themselves declare that Vedanta is not for one that is intellectually indolent. It requires a razor-like mind to comprehend the truths of Vedanta. Vicara, jijnasa, and manana are not possible without the functioning of the intellect.

Sankara knew through his astute intellect that Reason has a limited role. On occasions he says that Advaita Vedanta can be stated in terms of rational philosophy. It is not merely scriptural revelation. This he states in his commentary on the Gaudapada Karika.

Throughout the bhashya, in many places Sankara speaks of the glory of reasoning. He writes that a hundred scriptural statements cannot turn blue into red or make fire cold. He counsels us to argue, but not to argue perversely. Sankara the giant intellect that he was has refuted the logicians, the Sankhyas, the Buddhists and the Mimamsakas in his commentary on the Tarka-Pada with the help of logic. Any one who reads the commentary of Sankara on the first two padas of the second chapter will see how it regales the mind of the most astute metaphysicians and at times even baffles the expert. He is not subjugated by reason though he is fascinated by it. Reason shakes men, but the mere reasoning power of argument does not shatter them. He is neither an abject flatterer of reason, nor is he its determined enemy. He uses it in the measure one should do without violation to the spiritual advancement of man. Only the realization of the unity of existence can bring about fellowship among men and amity between the different creeds. Sankara's clarion call is to realize the oneness of the Self in all. Such a realization can be achieved by the true knowledge of the Self. It is not a production, like an action. It is not a place of resort to which we have to travel. It is not a transformation. In short, it is not *utpada*, *apaya*, or *samskarya*. It

is our true nature which is to be realized. It is to be revealed. Hence it is called self-realisation. Karma and bhakti are contributory to it. Ceremonial purity cleanses the doors of perception and prepares the soul for the vision. If the window panes are dirty we cannot see clearly. Hence is the need for *atmasuddhi*. We should listen to the scriptural truths, the upadesa of an enlightened guru and that is *sravana*. The truths taught by the *upadesa* have to be pondered over for a time examining their pros and cons, to get at the conviction of the truth, and that is *manana*. We have to continue to meditate on the Vedantic maha-vakyas, till we experience them in our very person, here and now and that is *nididhyasana*.

Sankara does not down-grade bhakti. He is a great bhakta. The Absolute of Sankara appears when viewed in relation to the world as God i.e., Isvara. He is the creator, sustainer of the world. The world is not a product of mere material forces, nor is it the accidental collocation of atoms, nor is it the evolution of insentient Nature. It is the work of Isvara who is Saguna Brahman. The Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman are not two, nor are they antithetical. Without worship of the personal God, Advaita realization becomes difficult. Not by ignoring God, do we reach the Absolute, but by worshipping and transcending the worship we realize moksha. It is not correct to describe Sankara as an atheist. If anything he is a super-theist. Sankara has great respect for tradition. He does not want to break from others violently. He claims no originality for his majestic system, but declares that his system is a synthesis or systematization of the doctrines in the triple texts.

He believes, above all, the dignity and freedom of man to overcome any limitation. He identifies the individual soul with Brahman. The essence of the soul in man is not the body, nor the mind nor a complex of elements and Kosas. It is not the sense organs. It is not mere thought or intellect. It is not the transmigrating soul

which is the agent of action and the enjoyer of fruits. In essence it is non-different from Brahman. The soul of man is not a banished stranger, it is Brahman. The maha-vakyas are: *Ayam Atma Brahma, Tat Tvam Asi, Aham Brahmasmi, Prajnanam Brahma*. This experience was the rediscovery of Sri Sankara. It is this message that constitutes his title to undying fame, as the great world teacher. He summarized his entire philosophy in half a verse affirming the truth of three propositions: (i) the reality of Brahman, (ii) the non-reality of the world, (iii) the non-difference of the individual soul from Brahman.

The greatness of Sankara is disclosed in his conception of human nature. Two very different conceptions of human life are struggling for the mastery of the world, based on different conceptions of human nature. The militant atheistic creeds regard man as a puppet in the grip of mechanical, economic and psychological forces with predictable responses to outer stimuli; some others of this creed regard man as a puerile passion. His free will is denied and history is described as the working out of a machine. They believe that man is determined by several calculable forces. The alarmists of this school do not believe that human nature can change. So they despair about man. Yet another view is that man is essentially good and divine. He is perfectible and educable but his perfection under limitation. Sankara takes the second view and does not despair about man. His spiritualism is humanistic. He affirms the integrality of man of God, and sounds a spiritual note. His catholic outlook does not make him regard other religions as his rivals, nor does he look upon them as material for recrimination. He regards all religions as alternate approaches to one and the same Reality, the differences arise from the temperamental distinctions. Only if all men are basically equal in essence, can we command that they should be treated as equals in one another's eye and equally respected. "There cannot be happiness

for any of us until it is won for all." Nothing can integrate mankind at all levels as the *sarvatmabhava* proclaimed by Sankara. When our faith was drooping in the efficacy of eternal values, Sankara held it up for us by his message of hope.

Sankara's fame has found references beyond the frontiers of India. A famous inscription in a dilapidated temple in the jungles of Cambodia, belonging to the time of Indra Varma reads as follows:

*Yanyadhitani sastrani bhagavat-Sankarahvayat :  
Nissessa surimurdhalimalalidhanghripankajat -*

The heads of all scholars, like bees worship the lotus-like feet of an acharya, guru who is named Bhagavan Sankara.

Sankara puts his final faith in the self validating spiritual experience (*aparokshanubhuti*). Spiritual realization is the authentic pramana. Spiritual experience is total and is not fractional. It is arriving at a goal without traveling. It is a transforming experience where we have all doubts destroyed, disbeliefs dispelled and the tensions overcome. Spiritual experience alone gives us the certitude. We no longer see the things through the blinkers of the senses or discursive reason. It is an awareness of our basic reality. It is clear vision, direct, vivid experience, it is not dialectical knowledge born of mental perspicacity or discursive thought. It is not the work of feeble imagination but is the fact of immediate comprehension. It is the natural condition of the Atman, the realization of the basic truth that Atman is one and not many. Spiritual realization alone can give the fundamental faith for the fellowship of men. Without this realization our tall talk of the brotherhood of all is just conventional good manners. It has no roots. It will dry up and bear no fruits. According to Sankara, the fundamental and only Reality is spirit. It is designated by the term Brahman in the Upanishads. It is a non-composite homogenous consciousness principle. Its *svarupa-lakshana* is

*satyam, jnanam and anantam*. It is unconditioned existence, unexcellible bliss and is infinite. It is not brute matter. Sankara does not hold to the doctrine of materialistic non-dualism (*bhutadvaita*). Reality is a consciousness principle. It is not an object of knowledge. It is not even a subject related to any object. It is a unique type of consciousness which is neither a subject nor an object. Subject and objects are both in it. It is self-luminous and self-manifest. It makes all objects clear to us. It is ever present. As the Gita puts it, 'of the Real there is no non-existence'. Brahman is unlike all things we know. It is posited on the authority of Sruti. It is declared as indeterminable. We cannot predicate anything about it for the simple reason, that there is nothing besides it which it is not. Further to describe Brahman in terms of any predicate is to limit it. All description is a limitation. It militates against its infinitude. Whenever we describe anything we need a thing in terms of which to describe it. By what can we describe the knower of all knowledge? It is the basic reality, hence, it cannot be described. Students of logic experience difficulties in the method of description. In a description we have a subject and a predicate, and a relation connecting them. If we ask ourselves the question, is the relation the same as the predicate or different? If we say it is identical, then there is no predication secured. If we argue that the relation is different from the predicate and the subject, then we need another relation to connect them. This lands us in infinite regress. Hence, the subject- predicate relation which is the soul of all description is self-discrepant and is unintelligible in the last analysis, however useful it is in life. It is the aforesaid reason that makes Sankara regard Brahman as indeterminate (*nirguna*).

The concept of nirguna is supported by Sruti and sustained by logic and human reasoning. The realists who are accustomed to a subject- object logic are not able to comprehend the rich philosophical significance, and the astute logical thinking and the

significance behind the concept. They put it down as mere blank negation and equate it with Sunya. Sankara knew his critics well in advance and had anticipated their superficial logical criticism. He writes, 'Brahman that is devoid of determination appears to dullwitted as nothingness'. Brahman is the Real of the Real. It is the cause of all that appears. Everything is explained in its terms. The Katha declares 'when that shines, everything shines after that, by its light all this is lighted' (*Tasya bhasa sarvam idam vibhati*).

Brahman is a formless, timeless, non egoistic unitary consciousness which underlies all the apparently separate egos in the world. Brahman is simultaneously both Atman and Brahman. The core of the self is atman. It is the veil that hides the underlying consciousness principle from us. It is the real, waiting to be released. Sankara's genius is shown in the way, he has logically exposed the defects in the prevalent doctrines of the relation between Brahman and the world and the souls. The most popular doctrine is the relation of the cause and the effect i.e, the creationist theory. The things of the world are created by God. The problem of creation and the logical concept of cause effect relation are bristling with difficulties. There is the problem of Evil, there is the difficulty of finding out an adequate and moral purpose for creation. The concept of causation is based on the concept of relation. We have already seen how the concept of relation is shot through and through with inconsistencies. The doctrine that the cause itself transforms into the effect is also not free from defects. If the world is the transformation of Prakriti as the Sankhyas describe, such an explanation is unintelligible because a meaningful evolution is not possible for an insentient Prakriti. If the world is contended to be the transformation of Brahman itself such a position is assailed by a number of doubts. The imperfections of the world touch the perfection of Brahman. Further, there is the contingency of Brahman experiencing all the sorrows of all men, a position which falsifies the Upanishadic description of Brahman. The

above doctrines are not satisfactory and it goes without saying that Sankara felt the Buddhist doctrine far removed from truth. The Buddhist doctrine holds the view that knowledge of the existence of objects is a flux of momentariness. Nothing endured more than a moment, Sankara criticises the School of Vijnanavada idealism from the standpoint of realism. He criticises realism from the standpoint of idealism. He refutes the doctrine that objects are momentary in their existence. He asks the question who is there to affirm that they come into existence and endure for a moment. Sankara refutes the doctrine of the Sunyavada. It is Sankara's feeling of unsatisfactoriness that made him propound the *vivartavada*. The *vivartavada* holds the view that the cause and effect are not equally real. They belong to two different orders of reality. They are not reciprocally dependent. The cause Brahman is not dependent on the effect. The effect is dependent on the cause. The defects and the different characteristics of the effect do not in the least effect the cause. It is one-sided type of causation. Such is the relation between the world and Brahman.

Between the Brahman and the world there is no reciprocal relation. The world as effect is dependent on Brahman. Brahman is its cause. The world is not as real as Brahman. It belongs to a different and a lower order of reality. Sankara designates the reality of Brahman as *paramarthika satta* and the reality of the world as *vyavaharika satta* i.e., apparent reality. The world's reality is no doubt not absolute like that of Brahman. But this does not mean that Sankara reduces the world to the level of dream experience. The world of dream experience is designated as *pratibhasika* reality. The world is on a higher level than this. It is the world and it is not like the dream world; a separate world to each. So our world of waking life has objective significance. The world is not the creation of the Jiva according to Sankara. The Jiva is only an enjoyer and Isvara is its creator. The world of experience is the joint creation of the personal God of Sankara and Maya. Hence it is unfair to describe

Sankara as an illusionist. Dr. Radhakrishnan has described the position: 'unreal the world is but illusory it is not'. Another important doctrine in the philosophy of Sankara is the affirmation of the divinity of the individual soul. Many religions and systems of philosophy look upon man as the fallen angel. They say he is a creature and can never become the creator. They grant salvation to those to whom God gives his grace and the rest are thrown into Hell. Sankara's position is a bold contrast to the other views. He believes that it is the power of Maya that hides man's real nature which is Brahmanhood, and projects in its place the finitude of man. With the onset of philosophic wisdom and the consequent spiritual realization, man realizes his real nature here and now on earth in the embodied state. Moksa is not an attainment of anything new. It is self-realisation. It is not bringing into being something which is not there but is a being of what is already there. This is the concept of Jivanmukti. The spiritual experience is open to one and all. It is the birth right of all human beings. Sankara affirms Sarvamukti. His doctrines of Jivanmukti and Sarvamukti are his unique contributions to Religion. These doctrines disclose the great tolerance and universalism, the characteristics of Sankara's thought. Sankara asserts the dignity and the divinity of man in a grand way. He declares in his commentary on the Taittiriya Upanisad 'that the excellence of man consists in his capacity to reason and in his free will' (*jnanakarmadhikara*). Sankara in a very illuminating passage towards the end of his commentary on the Prasna Upanisad states, 'the student of Advaita Vedanta, leaves the causes of the origination of all disputes among the disputants themselves, and keep his sense of Real alive. Protected by their example the knower of the Vedas reposes happily'. Sankara laments the barren dialectics, vain argumentation, and the dry scholarship of the grammarians.

Brahmanubhava or the realization of the unity of existence i.e., *sarvatmabhava* is an experience of the greatest value. It is moksa.

It is liberation from all the trammels. It is valuable because it is self-evident. The experience brings about a wonderful transformation in our thought, feelings and character, and this is supremely desirable not only to us but is manifestly helpful and joyous to our fellowmen. It is this experience that makes us understand the sense and the value of the unity and solidarity of the world. It is such an experience that enables us to practice universal compassion, ungrudging love, and understand the true meaning of such portentous phrases as 'God is love', 'the world is my family'. This experience in the Upanishadic terminology gives us fearlessness (*abhaya*); *abhaya* produces *ahimsa*. Fear of death is also overcome. In the words of Eckhart these men, 'give out in love what is taken in contemplation'. Spiritual experience is the strongest force for the regeneration of man. It is the most powerful instrument for the remaking of man and through that for the establishment of a New Social Order. Men who busy themselves to improve others without such an experience act from mere habit and their Humanism has no roots. It disappears like the night's paint with the first wash in the morning. Hence the Upanishads and Sankara refer to spiritual experience as the Great (Bhuma) and as basic to all our joys and experiences of bliss. Realization of the true nature of the self is bliss. The pursuit of this basic intrinsic bliss the highest a man seeks. In the celebrated dialogue between Maitreyi and her husband, she asks for that instruction and refuses all else. She asks her husband 'what shall I do with all this mass of things, if I do not attain immortality by that'. Yajnavalkya says that there is no hope of immortality by wealth. Then he proceeds to instruct her that self-knowledge is the solvent of all evils and is the Supreme Pleasure. It is because of this all things are pleasant to us.

### **The Philosophy of Ramanuja**

The philosophy of Ramanuja represents one of the most prominent forms of Vedanta arising from the interpretation of the

triple texts, i.e., the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma Sutras. Long before Sri Ramanuja, a cluster of twelve God-intoxicated mystics in South India poured out in the regional language, Tamil, their love of God and their visions and experiences and longings, in the form of exquisite, soul-stirring and moving imagery. Their outpourings constitute the Divya Prabandha of four thousand songs of the mystics called Alvars. They belonged to all the castes and one of them was a woman. The songs constitute the source-book for the philosophy of Ramanuja. They were lost to posterity and it was Nathamuni who restored them and set them to writing by the strength of his austerity and devotion. Nammalvar alias Satagopan revealed these songs to Nathamuni in his yogic trance. Nathamuni restored them for us.

The next great figure in the pre-Ramanuja period was Yamuna later known as Alavandar. This great soul picked up Ramanuja as his chosen instrument for propagating the philosophy of the Vedas. He wrote several works, e.g. *Siddhitraya*, which seeks to establish the three categories, *Atma Siddhi*, *Iswara Siddhi* and *Samvit Siddhi*. Ramanuja expresses his indebtedness to Yamuna by singing his glory in his works.

Ramanuja, in his plan of temple-worship, ordered the recital of the songs of the Alvars, but he has never cited any passage from the writings of the Alvars. Visishtadvaita regard the Divya Prabandha, particularly the thousand hymns of Nammalvar, as Dravidopanishad. There are several commentaries on it by later Acharyas. The outpourings of the Alvars are a staple source of inspiration. It is the fact of there being two sources, i.e., the triple texts and the hymns of the Alvars, in Tamil, that has led to the description of Ramanuja's philosophy as Ubhaya-Vedanta.

Sri Ramanuja, unlike Sankara, accepts both the parts of the Vedas, the Karmakanda and the Brahmakanda as valid. He sees a

unity of outlook in them. He differs from the Mimamsakas who regard that the Karmas prescribed in the Vedas give, of their own accord, worldly pleasures as well as liberation; he holds that only the efficacy of their being a form of worship of the Supreme Being is the cause.

The philosophy of Sri Ramanuja is generally expounded under five (*arthapanchaka*) heads, which five are: the nature of the Supreme Being to be attained; the nature of the soul; the way to attain the Lord; the nature of the spiritual ideal to be reached, and the obstacles in the path of God-realisation.

Ramanuja has made two significant contributions to philosophy in general and to Indian philosophy in particular. On the ontological side is the concept of Reality as one inseparable unity of three factors (Tattva- traya) of Chit, Achit and Iswara (Matter, Soul and God). The first two are dependent on the third. The relation is envisaged as a unity in which God predominates over the other two and controls them. The subordinate elements are the attributes (Viseshanas) and the dominant element i.e., God, is the substance (Viseshya). The attributes cannot exist by themselves separately, and the whole in which they are included is described as a Visishta (complex unity). It is not correct and fair to describe Ramanuja's Vedanta as a form of qualified Absolutism. It is not Sankara's Vedanta diluted, nor is it a compromise with its tenets. It is a creative and constructive effort to systematize the teaching of the Upanishads and the Gita and the Brahma-Sutras, keeping in view the great mystic insight of the Alvar's experiences.

The systematisation is not the reading into the texts of preconceived doctrines, which are not there. It is not a distortion of the texts. The genius of Sri Ramanuja is disclosed in his masterly harmonization of the different types of Upanishadic texts in a comprehensive manner. He gives equal attention to those texts that uphold an identity between Brahman and Atman, and to those texts

that uphold radical differences between the Lord and the souls. He does not subordinate the one to the other.

The most substantial Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka, has an entire section describing the intimate relation between the Lord and the soul and illustrates it by twenty-three examples. The Upanishad says: "He who dwells in all beings, yet is within all beings, whom no beings know, whose body is all beings, who controls all beings from within, He is your inner controller, immortal" (III-7 -15). The Gita reiterates the same truth: "The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings and by His power causes all beings to revolve as if they were mounted on a machine" (XVIII-61).

To Ramanuja, God is not one who is watching the universe and the human drama from the wings. He is actively interested in helping men. He is immanent, and is transcendent, and is organic to the world. Ramanuja's God is not like the God of the deist, who creates the world and leaves it to run itself. God for Ramanuja is not to be equated with Nature as in pantheism. God minus the world is still God, and not zero as in pantheism. Ramanuja's God is responsive to the wishes of men, sensitive to their needs and akin to their spirits. He has metaphysical as well as moral attributes. He combines justice and love. He loves mankind more than any earthly father or mother does. He, out of infinite love for men, incarnates himself as lovely idols in sacred shrines to afford men easy access to him. These idols are the expression of His Saulabhya and infinite concern for mankind.

To restore himself the right relationship to God and live in that inseparable relationship with the Lord as His body - - such is the high destiny of man. The Alvars exclaim: "Those days in which we live apart (in mind) from the Lord are as good as days of death". Alienation from the right relationship to the Lord is sin and bondage. The recovery of it is Moksha (liberation).

Ramanuja holds that bondage (samsara) arises on account of ignorance (avidya). The essential nature of sam sara is pain and sorrow. We are born, in the words of Blake - "in other people's pain and die in our own". Any pleasure in samsara arises on account of a privation. For instance, food is not a pleasure, if there is no hunger. Plato calls pleasures of this kind "negative pleasures". Most of the pleasures are transient and cease to be pleasures with the wearing out of our sense-organs through which alone we can experience them. The law of diminishing returns operates in the realm of pleasures. Further, very few of us get the good things of life, and when we do get them, we do so, for a very little time. The majority of us are condemned to misery and want. The pleasures of human life are precarious. In obtaining them, we are open to the jealousy of the competing others and are troubled by the anxiety to preserve them even while enjoying them. When pleasures are snatched away from us, we are left bemoaning.

Spinoza in the West, and Patanjali in the East, have shown that the love of finite things is bound to land us in sorrow and misery. There may be a few unimaginative souls to whom human life and existence, here and now, may seem to be eternal bliss. To reflective and discerning minds the imperfections in samsara are obvious. Samsara is infested with the three-fold sufferings (sufferings arising from supernatural factors). The so-called pleasures of human life are mixed with a lot of ill. The unreflective, the insensitive and the unimaginative alone can hold the view that human existence, as it is, is an excellent thing.

The poet Bhartrhari describes thus the complex nature of the World- "Here the sound of vina, there the voice of wailing, here pretty women, there tottering, withered dames; here the meeting of learned men, there the brawls of the drunkards. I do not know whether samsara is heaven or hell."

The call of Moksha is indeed the message of all the schools of Indian Philosophy, Vedanta included. Moksha according to Ramanuja is the realization of the true nature of the self and its right relationship with the Lord. The ignorance of this relationship and the wrong conception of the nature of the self, hold men in bondage. The average individual suffers from a two-fold ignorance which prompts him to do sins and act in a wrong way. In his unregenerate way, the human being takes his body to be the self. He wrongly identifies the self with the body. He entertains *dehatmabhava* and lives the life of the indulgent sensualist. He is ignorant of the true divine nature of the self. This forgetfulness leads him to the suffering of all kinds of pain. He also feels he is "the master of his fate and the captain of his ship." He feels in the manner of the demoniac nature (asuric) mentioned in the Gita, that he is all in all and that there is no God. Man becomes proud and overbearing and vain. He forgets the creator, the Lord, and feels that he in himself is the creator." "Man dressed in a little brief authority, plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven, as make the angels weep." Man's delusion about his own true nature and his ignorance of the real nature of the Lord and of the Lord's relationship to the soul, repeatedly land him in the cycle of births and deaths. His ignorance-prompted activities lead him to sin, and sin produces impressions, (vasanas) in the soul, and a kind of taste (ruchi) which goes with the vasanas. All these subject him to almost endless birth and deaths. The cycle keeps as long as ignorance persists.

Even an unregenerate man may, due to some unconscious or conscious acts of merit, happen to be thrown into the company of God-lovers (bhagavatas). It is this good company (sat-sanga) that prompts and propels man to seek a way out of samsara. Reflection (vichara) then sets in, and man finds on examination that most of the remedies offered by secular knowledge cannot put a radical end to

all human sorrows. Medicine may cure a disease once, but it cannot ensure that the disease will not recur.

Hence the reflective man starts on the quest for Moksha, which promises a state of existence which is free from doubts and disbeliefs, and tensions and strifes, and which puts an end to rebirths, and ensures bliss eternal. Such a man understands the supreme importance and the urgent necessity of the quest for emancipation and dedicates all his energies to that quest. The way to Moksha, Ramanuja says, is through Bhakti and Prapatti. Bhakti has been described by him at great length. Bhakti normally presupposes the fundamental duality of the worshipper and the worshipped.

Bhakti is the most popular, the most natural and the easiest mode of God-realisation. It is intense love of God and is a powerful emotion, arising in man from a vivid sense of the greatness of God, and of His goodness and love for all. Bhakti is reared on faith in the existence and the majesty and the accessibility of the Lord. And faith is the precondition of all systematic knowing, of all purposive doing, and of all decent living. Bhakti is “popular”, because it is basically founded on a human emotion. To love and be loved is the only way to avoid loneliness. The human heart naturally loves and the human mind naturally believes. Under normal circumstances, men in general are prepared to make all kinds of sacrifices for the sake of love. They count no cost too great, in their venture to satisfy love. Love is an all-consuming and universal emotion. It is a total emotion and is at times self-effacing and self-emptying. Its divine analogue is Bhakti. Human love is directed to other fellow-beings who are imperfect and are of unequal worth. It is based on infatuation (moha), and rests on a projected picture (of the object of attachment) of the loving mind steeped in imperfection. With the dawn of true sense, men feel disappointed and frustrated with the course their love has been taking. Imperfection can lead to no reaction other than imperfection, incompleteness, and unsubstantiality.

Bhakti is affection for the perfect Lord based on a clear knowledge and a deep conviction of his majesty and His tender love. It is based on Jnana, not Moha. It is the replacing of self-love by God-love. The devotee realizes his creatureliness (*akinchanya*). The root-meaning of the word Bhakti is “resorting to.” It brings order and beauty into the confused and tangled facts of life. Bhakti is an ineffable emotion. It is likened to the feeling of a dumb man who has tasted delicious food and is unable to express his delight.

Ramanuja outlines the methods of Bhakti and marks out clearly its accessories and aids. There are certain external aids to Bhakti. The aspirant must have deep faith in the scriptures and must imbibe the truths of the scriptures from an illumined Guru. This is the process of *sravana*. After learning the central and saving truth from the Guru, one has to meditate on it till it becomes one’s unshakable belief and firm conviction. Once the conviction is secured, one has to meditate on the Lord. This is described as *Nididhyasana*. *Sravana*, *Manana* and *Nididhyasana* constitute the dialectic of spiritual life on the intellectual side.

The Vedanta affirms that mere intellectual probity and mental agility are not enough for the seeker. He has to secure moral excellence and has to learn to see things clearly and not through passion. We must get rid of our bondage to passion, and must exercise our inborn freedom to cleanse our minds of all lusts and perversities and stupidities. To secure moral excellence, we need self-control and also the grace of God. The worship of the Lord is the sovereign means. And this worship of the Lord is better done according to rules laid down in the scriptures by the great seers of the past. To become eligible to worship the Lord, we have to observe ceremonial purity too. But the more important need is purity of mind.

### **Dvaita Philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya**

Madhva, known also as Sri Anandatirtha, is the historical founder of the Dvaita school of Vedanta and its systematic exponent. Tradition and evidences from his works ascribe the origin of the system to the monotheism of ekanti-Vaishnava sampradaya. The traditional list of the names of the teachers (guru parampara) retained in the different mathas traces the primary teaching of this school of thought to Lord Narayana. Sri Madhva expounded the tenets of his system through his commentaries on the three texts (Upanishads, Gita and Brahmasutras) and the tracts (prakaranas) and was hailed, therefore, as the founder of the system.

He was born in 1238 A.D. on the Vijayadasami day (the tenth day of Navaratri) at the village Pajaka Kshetra, thirteen Kilometres south-east of modern town Udupi in the South Kanara district of Karnataka. He lived amidst men for seventy nine years. We have an account of the details of his life in a literary work, entitled 'Su-Madhva Vijaya' in sixteen chapters, set forth in the manner of a Mahakavya by Narayana Panditacharya. It is a contemporary account of the Acharya's life. There are two accounts of his life and hence, great sanctity is attached to this work. Its literary merit is disclosed by the effective style and the graceful flow of the verses. Attention may be drawn to the description here of the Himalayas and Madhva's pilgrimage which is uplifting. The pen-picture of Veda-vyasa at Badari is exquisite and melodious. The portrait of Sri Madhva drawn here is done with a loving hand and affectionate admiration. The book has remained the single authentic source book of information on the life and career of Sri Madhva.

Sri Madhva was a Tulu Brahmin, born of poor parents. They belonged to Sivalli Brahmin families in the North settled in this area. His father's name was Madhyageha Bhatta. He was born to the

parents as the gift of their devotion to the Lord Ananteswara, at Udupi.

He was initiated into the study of the Vedas very early in his life at the age of eight. Since then he took up the study of the sacred scripture under an Advaita Acharya, Achyutapreksha. There was constant disagreement between the master and the disciple and the studies ended soon. However, he sought initiation at the hands of this guru under the name of 'Purnaprajna', and wrote his commentaries under the name 'Anandatirtha'.

As a child Sri Madhva (whose pre-ashrama name was Vasudeva) was precocious, had a prodigious and phenomenal memory and Herculean physical strength. He performed several superhuman feats and miracles. By his power, he is said to have shifted a heavy boulder and placed it over a wide waterway to bridge it. He drank enormous quantities of milk, and turned tamarind seeds into gold coins to pay off the debts of his father.

Sri Madhva travelled on foot all over India to preach the word of God and spread his message. He engaged several scholars of Jaina and Advaita persuasion in dispute to vindicate his standpoint. First he undertook a south Indian tour covering all important places like Kanyakumari and Rameswaram. Then he undertook a long tour to Badarikasrama. He stayed in lower-Badari for forty eight days and after a divine call he met the Lord Badarayana. There he got the blessings of the Lord for composing a commentary on Brahmasutras which he dictated to Satyanantha, his pet disciple. While returning home to Udupi he engaged several scholars in dispute and converted them to his fold.

Notable among them are Sama Sastri and Sobhana Bhatta. They later became the first two disciples of Sri Madhva : Narahari

Tirtha and Padmanabha. After returning to Udupi he converted his own former teacher to his fold. His own younger brother was ordained as Vishnutirtha. Another pupil of his was Madhva Tirtha.

Sometime after, he undertook a second trip to Badari. On the organizational side, Sri Madhva wanted to bring all the members of his fold together. So he installed eight young boys as the heads of eight mathas to worship Krishna in turn, nine times a day. This shrine of Krishna has been the rallying spot for the worship of millions in India. On the ceremonial side, Madhva emphasised the importance of the fast on the eleventh day of every fortnight (ekadasi) and the change over to the sacrifice of flour-made ewe (Pistha-Pasu) for live ones. He actually had his brother perform a sacrifice with the flour-made ewe. In 1318, in the bright half of the month of Magha on the ninth day, he departed from the view of his disciples, asking them to go forth and preach in the closing words of the Upanished Aitareya. His was a full life of vivid and varied intellectual and physical activities.

Sri Madhva proclaims himself in his writings to be the third incarnation of Vayu, the other two being Hanuman and Bhima. The Balitha and other Suktas of the Vedas are cited as authorities.

Sri Madhva has in all thirty-seven works to his credit. They are partly critical and partly constructive. He has developed his system through his commentaries on the Gita, Upanishads and Brahmasutras, and the ten tracts (Dasa Prakarana).

He has two commentaries on the Gita and four on the Brahmasutras and one on each of the major Upanishads. He has ten short monographs (*Dasa Prakarana*) explaining the basic principles of his system dialectically, its logical ontological and ethical aspects. Three of them form criticism of Advaita. The most

comprehensive on them is *Vishnutattvanirnaya*. He has given us a metrical epitome of the Mahabharata and notes on the Bhagavata. He has a commentary on the first three chapters of the Rig Veda. Among his minor works, we have *Yamaka-Kavya* on the Bharata story and book of hymns called *Dvadasa-Stotra* in the different meters in praise of Krishna called *Krishnamrita-maharnava*. He has given us a work on image worship and the way to do it called *Tantrasara-Sangraha*. He has outlined the scheme of duties for a devotee in his book *Sadachara-Smriti*.

The system that emerges from the works of Sri Madhva is a form of Theistic Vedanta based on a special scriptural interpretation, fulfilling the canons of Logic. Lord Narayana is the soul and centre of the entire system, and round him all other categories rally. Madhva has furnished a distinction in the nature of philosophical categories. To him there are only two basic categories, the Independent Real and the Dependent Reals. The only Independent Real is Lord Narayana and all else including His consort belong to the class of the Dependent Reals. For a thing to be real, it is enough if it has existed in some space at some time. All the things in the world owe their existence, knowledge, and their activities to the Lord. The very existence of "Substance, actions, time and the nature of things and souls, are willed by Him and they can be ordered out of existence by His will", says the Bhagavata. Madhva's God is both transcendent and immanent. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world, the bestower of knowledge, bondage and release. Madhva's theism is not Deism or Pantheism. God does not create the world and leave it to work itself as a mechanic leaves his machine. He is continually working in all objects as the indwelling presence. Madhva does not believe in Naturalism. For him Nature can work only when helped by the Lord. Further the Lord is not the material cause of the

world, nor is He dissolved in the universe. God to Sri Madhva is the active 'efficient cause' of the world. Lord Narayana is the home of infinite attributes and is the only independent real without a peer. When we say that He creates the world, we should not imply that He is dependent on the instruments for creation or that He has any benefit accruing to Him, derived from creation. All the instruments He makes use of in creation are in His control and He is not dependent on them. He can do, undo other than what it is as He likes. Whatever power any deity has is in His giving and does not independently belong to Him. He is to be worshipped as the supreme of in the context of His retinue in a manner commensurate with their status in the divine hierarchy. The world the Lord creates is real. He takes hold of Prakriti and creates bodies for souls according to their intrinsic nature (*Yogyata-taratamya*). He creates not for any selfish end. Creation is His sport (*lila*). The individual souls are all not of one kind. They differ in their fundamental intrinsic nature. It is this nature that is responsible for determining the contrasts and inequalities in the lives of men. God is not responsible for them nor Karma, for it does not accrue before one takes life on earth. According to Sri Madhva, there is difference in the very intrinsic nature of the souls (*jiva-yogyata-taratamya*). When we say the Lord Narayana creates the world, we have to understand the concept of creation in a specific sense in the philosophy of Madhva. He postulates that souls are eternal, and Prakriti is uncreated, and the Lord's creation needs these categories. With all these co-operative elements, one has to reconcile Madhva's view that the Lord is the creator of all things.

Madhva defines creation "as the production of change in the state of an entity dependent on God". The souls are no doubt eternal, but their acquisition of bodies as birth is dependent on God's will.

Prakriti is eternal and its transformations into different forms. (*parinamas*) are dependent on the will of God. This doctrine is called *Pradhina visesapti*. This explanation seeks to reconcile the Lord's omnipotence (*Sarva-kartrva*)' and the existence of the souls and Prakriti as eternal entities.

Sri Madhva has a theory relating to the meaning of words. According to him, all the words in the language and non-sensical sounds too have their primary significant reference for Lord Narayana. Primarily all the words refer to Him and, their reference to other things, is secondary. From the point of view of this 'primary significance', (*Paramamukhya vritti*) words refer to Lord Narayana and this he expounds in his commentaries on the Aitareya Upanishad and in the first three chapters of his commentary on the Rg Veda. God is all in all in Madhva's philosophy. Everything and every soul owes its existence, knowledge and activity to Him (*Satta, Pramiti and Pravritti*). He sustains and inspires all our mental activities (*Sarva-mano-vritti-preraka*).

Sri Madhva's God is the absolute and only independent category. Knowledge, power, freedom and glory are His. What little freedom the human being enjoys is his resolve (*Samkalpa*) He determines that particular good deeds and dispositions must reap the appropriate results (*phala*). This is determined by the Karma and the nature of the soul (*jiva-svarupa*). God in Madhva's philosophy does not bestow the prizes of life in a whimsical or arbitrary way. The greatest gift the Lord bestows on man is moksha, i.e., liberation. It is a state of existence from which there is no return to Samsara, cycle of births and deaths, and it is a state in which man lives with no tension or stress, in perfect bliss. This is attained by the grace of the Lord alone and not by any other means. He writes: "*Yato narayana-prasadah rite na mokshah, na cha jnanam vina*

*atyartha-prasadah, atah brahmajijnasa kartavya.*" The souls, according to Sri Madhva, are eternal and are infinite in number. They are indestructible and atomic in their size. Birth of soul is the association of the soul with the body determined by the actions and the nature of the soul. The soul is not the body, not the senses, not the mind. It is something different from all of them with the help of the Lord. The soul is defined by Sri Madhva "as the one who suffers sorrow, enjoys happiness and has the fitness to be bound in Samsara and to be released from it. Such a one is called Jiva".

Self-consciousness is a characteristic of the soul. The self has a sense organ which is non-different from it, yet distinct, called Sakshi (*a svarupa indriya*). With the help of this sense and outer senses, the soul cognises objects, feels its emotions and as a result acts in the external world. The existence of the soul is established on the authority of scripture (*sruti*). Its plurality as in the Sankhya system is established on the ground of diversity in the activities of men. If one is asleep, others are born. Further, there is the psychological proof of the absence of direct experience of another's experience as our own. Hence souls are many.

The relation between the soul and the Lord is stated in terms of the analogy of a reflection and its original (*bimba and pratibimba*). The Lord is the original and the soul is its reflection. Man is made in the image of God. This relationship has to be understood with great care consistent with Madhva's realism and pluralism. It means (1) the reflection does not possess all the excellences of prototype. The suggested similarity is just nominal and does not imply absolute parity. The significance of the analogy is the relation of dependence of the reflection on the prototype and not its identity. According to Sri Madhva, all the souls are not alike in their intrinsic nature. The nature of the soul is a fixity and it is unalterable. The destiny of a soul is

determined by its svarupa. In all there are three kinds of souls: (1) mukti-yoga (those destined to attain moksha); (2) those that eternally dangle between death and birth and called nitya samsarins, and (3) the last class called tamoyogyas destined to eternal hell. There is no hope for the last. No soul can outstrip and change its nature (Svarupa).

The classification of souls into three divisions has come in for sharp criticism at the hands of moderns and from other schools of Vedanta. It is characterised by some as unprogressive and inhuman. Is it not spiritual to bar the progress of the evolution of the soul? It is very much like christian doctrine of Calvinism. Madhva's answer to the critics is as follows: "The nature of the soul is eternal and to admit the possibility of a total change in the nature of the soul results in its destruction which scripture rules out." We know from our experience that it is difficult to jump over one's nature. There are definite limits to one's growth and Sri Madhva has neither white-washed the nature of man nor ignored the evil in him. It is a fair though not a flattering picture of man.

The souls, the physical world and Lord Narayana are all distinct realities. They are absolutely and eternally different from one another. Difference is fundamental and foundational to reality. There is the well-known scheme of five-fold differences adumbrated by Sri Madhva (*pancha-bhedas*). They are the differences between the Lord and souls, Lord and the world, soul and soul, soul and the world and between the worlds. Every entity is distinct from the other. He does not admit any class (*jati*) or generality (*samanya*) among the objects of the world.

The physical world for Sri Madhva is the creation of the Lord. He is its efficient cause and not the material cause. The world is absolutely real and not illusory. The real for Sri Madhva does not

mean that it must eternally exist. The real is that which is not superimposed. The Lord is the only Independent Real and the rest are all dependent reals. The world of pots and pans is not the transformation of the work of nature. The Lord is the creator. Sri Madhva in his moving devotional hymn raises the question, "if the world is not the creation of the Lord, who then created it?" If it is argued that men created it, Madhva says: "If that is the truth, men should have created themselves as creatures of complete and eternal happiness (*nitya sukham*). " Experience falsifies this, hence the Lord is the creator. To Madhva many of the Sankhya categories are acceptable. He looks upon the physical universe as the theatre for man to work out his destiny. Hence, great significance is attached to life on earth and the way it is lived. Throughout his writings Sri Madhva has argued against Nirguna-vada and Karma-sanyasa-vada, the attributelessness of the Lord and the giving up of all activities. To Madhva the world is real and the doctrine that the world is neither real nor unreal is unacceptable to him. He does not admit any middle ground between the Real and the Unreal. Further, he holds that to describe the world is illusory, goes against the glory of the Lord, for if the world is illusory, its creator will not be the omnipotent Lord.

The highest human aspiration is moksha, a state of bliss which implies release from Samsara. Samsara is our present state of bondage and existence here and now. Bondage is the result of our activities and our body is our soul. Ignorance makes us act foolishly and forget the Lord. In the state of bondage the soul has two veils covering its true nature (*svarupa*) i.e., the veil that covers the nature of God (*Isvarachchhadika*) and the cover that hides the very nature of the soul (*jivachchhadika*). Both must be rent asunder. This is done by the grace of the Lord (Prasada). Again and again Madhva states that moksha is the result of grace and not mere jnana. For

obtaining the grace of the Lord, human effort is necessary. The process by which man seeks to obtain moksha is called by the compendious term *sadhana*. It is the organised effort of man using and utilising all his resources in the proper order, with a correct perspective of their relative values and their integration. The different factors for *sadhana* are (1) Lord's grace; (2) Guru's grace; and (3) human effort. Human effort expresses itself in three ways- karma, bhakti and jnana. Madhva values ceremonial purity as the essential pre-requisite for practicing bhakti. First of all, the aspirant has to learn the meaning of the scriptures from a competent guru, proceptor. Going to the guru is not an act of formality but is a necessity. What is learnt from a guru alone is called sravana. While learning the scriptures one has to bring devout faith to one's study and must do it in a spirit of dedication to the Lord. What is learnt through the guru has to be reflected upon to arrive at a conviction (*manana*). Once the aspirant is convinced of the truth, he has to meditate on it continuously till he has the immediate vision of the lord (*aparoksha-jnana*). For achieving all these states, bhakti is essential. Bhakti comes into play at all stages. There are degrees in the efficacy of bhakti. Bhakti is necessary for the practice of ethical virtues like self-control, equanimity, withdrawing of the senses from objects, sama, dama, etc. Bhakti causes many things and is the consequence of many things in spiritual life.

Sri Madhva defines bhakti "as the deep love for the Lord born out of the knowledge of His majesty that transcends all, and it is the means for moksha and not any other." This definition is elaborated by Jayatirtha in the *Nyayasudha* - "Bhakti is the steady and continuous flow of deep attachment to God impregnable by any amount of impediments and transcending love of the one's own soul, of kith and kin and the cherished belongings, fortified by a firm

conviction of the transcendent majesty and greatness of God as the abode of all perfections, free from all blemish." Intense meditation results in the vision of the Lord (*aparoksha*). Once the Lord is seen, the aspirant's bhakti grows more and more. It becomes Pararna-bhakti. Moksha comes into operation with the grace of the Lord. Moksha is not the extinction of the soul. It is the realisation of the true nature of the souls (*Sva-Svarupa*). After moksha, the released soul continues to be the joyous servant of the Lord. The servant-master relationship is eternal, as is the difference between them. The differences between souls in the enjoyment of their bliss do not entail sorrow for them.

Sri Madhva accepts three instruments of knowledge (Pramanas) perception, inference and verbal testimony. Reason has a definite place in Madhva's philosophy. Reason is of value in resolving conflicts within the deliverances of perception and scripture. By itself, reason is no independent source of knowledge. As for the Vedas, Madhva accepts the entire Vedas as authoritative, not merely Upanishads. He accepts the authority of the Pancharatra and Mahabharata.

Sri Madhva's philosophy is a theistic school of thought reconciling the omnipotence of God and human freedom. He finds room for divine grace without impairing human responsibility and without abandoning virtue. He does not make the acts of God arbitrary nor his grace whimsical. He does not magnify grace to the point of making the Lord throw overboard the principles of morality. Madhva is not a natural theologian; for, he believes in the utterances of scripture interpreted in the light of reason.

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## GITA-NISHKAMA KARMA YOGA

- Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao

The poet W.H. Auden, speaking about books in general, observed that some books are deservedly forgotten and none is undeservedly remembered.

The Bhagavad Gita belongs to the second type. It is the most loved, adored and widely read religious scripture. Its popularity is ever on the increase. No single work of equal length, as the Gita expresses so well, the philosophical genius, and the profound doctrines of the Hindu religion. It is a basic human document, that outlines man's God-ward journey to Moksha, and his charter of duties, whose performance secures, at once, individual well-being and social welfare. No other religious scripture, ever, even emotely, approaches the Gita's influence on the life and culture of India. It is the best introduction to Indian religion and culture. It is a book for life, light and love.

It was spoken to Arjuna, nssst in a lonely hermitage, or on a mountain top, but in the thick of the battle-field, where life hangs in the balance, in his hour of crisis. In short it is India's sermon on the battle- field. It is not only a Hindu scripture, but is acclaimed to-day as a world scripture, translated into many foreign and regional languages.

There are several reasons, accounting for its popularity. Its two principal characters are India's most fascinating, darling heroes. God-manifest Himself, delivers the message. The occasion is serious and the message is imperative. Further, it is neither old nor new, but is eternal and terrifically topical. The dialogue form adds to the charm of the exposition and drives home the lessons of the scripture into the hearts of man. The approach is rational, systematic and its style pithy and the *anustubh* metre is captivating in its resonance and flow. The arguments are convincing, the treatment psychological and

the outlook elevating. The doctrines illumine the hearts and inform the minds of men, enlarge their vision and improve their understanding. There is no attempt at forcible indoctrination, nor pressurising one into the acceptance of a faith, on the basis of authority, through threats or intimidation. It is a reasoned, persuasive, calm, quiet, informing and informal discussion between an illumined teacher and a competent and earnest disciple

The Gita has lessons for all of us. It has something to teach all those who approach it. Its lessons are graded to suit the ability and the level of development, and temperamental levels of difference in men. Acharya Vinoba have raises the question and answers - " Let us not say, 'Arjuna had a Krishna, where are we to find our Krishna?' Krishna shines in the hearts of each of us. He is nearer to us, than the nearest. So let us place all the flaws and the falsehoods of our hearts before Him and say 'O! Lord, I take refuge in you, you are my sale master, show me the right way, I shall tread the path you show me.' If we do so, He who drove Arjuna's chariot will drive ours, too. We ourselves will hear the Gita in His own voice and He will lead us to victory."

The gospel of Gita is admired by all the Acharyas and modern savants from Sankara to Ramakrishna. Gandhiji looked upon the Gita as his mother and treated it as his spiritual dictionary. Aurobindo found confirmation in it, for his doctrine and the experience of Integral Yoga. Vinoba wants us to become willing flutes in the hands of Lord Krishna, to sing His song. How does one become a flute in Krishna's hands? To be flute means to become hollow. But our flutes are stuffed with passion and desires. How can then He sing through it, unless I empty myself. In short 'we must become willing instruments of the Lord. The human being experiences pleasure and pain in mixed degree, in his life in different proportions. "Some are born to endless pleasure, others to eternal misery." With the onset of reflective thinking, men normally seek to find the aim of life and astounding

them on occasions. In such men, who do not care to reflect or cannot reflect, the problem does not arise at all. They look up on human life as a chapter of accidents and do not see any design or point in its workings. Hence, they don't bother to abide by any code of conduct and live as they like, directed by their senses, propelled by their blood and prompted by their instincts and drives. They erect the ideal of 'permissive society' with a total absence of any inhibitions as the goal of human life. Men in a 'permissive society' are glorified, healthy, clever, and graceful animals, born to live and die.

Reflection discloses the moral ideal to man and all the things he has. Human life is not a pleasure garden, nor an amusement park. There are ups and downs. "We are born in other people's pain and die in our own." None but the unimaginative and the unreflective would love life on earth to be prolonged unconditionally for ever.

Human experience is graphically described by our national poet, Kalidas. It means 'None enjoys continuous pleasure all his life, nor does one experience unrelieved pain, all his life. The fortunes of man change, in the manner of the revolving spokes of a wheel'

Hence, the Gita counsels men to aspire and attain liberation through devotion to God and duty to humanity.

The supreme nostrum, that can enable us to ford the ocean of Samsara and to attain the blessings is taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita. He has taken full note of the human predicament, the possibilities of man, his potentiality, limitations and psychology. It does not prescribe, an austere morality which is impossible for man. It blazes forth a code of conduct and creed which is within the reach of all earnest human beings. Its practice certainly would bring amity among men and peace for the nation.

Sincerity is the soul of a nation. Earnestness is absolutely essential. The mere pose of piety and the going out of one's way to be religious, and even indulgence in spectacular citation of the

scriptures sound the ring of insincerity. Nor the delivery of edifying sermons in prophetic tones with attention-catching gestures is impressive.

Two things are more important than learning and scholarship. They are action and silence. The courage to act up to one's convictions and be silent about all things useless, that detract us and fretters away our energies. This boils down to three famous injunctions - (1) Unity in essentials (2) Liberty in non-essentials and (3) Charity in all. Human effort directed to one's duty born of one's status and obligations, to society and devotion to the Lord is the gospel of the Gita, labelled under the celebrated terms Karma Yoga and Svadharma. In the discharge of one's Svadharma, certain lapses do not visit one with any evil consequences, because it is the expression of one's spontaneous real nature and there is nothing phoney about it. Adoption of the fanciful roles of others, out of vain ambition, incompatible with one's ability and temperament, however scrupulously performed with care, in the language of the Gita, turns out to be a failure.

The concept of Svadharma is woven into the warp and woof of the texture of Indian culture and is held up as the way of one's life by men belonging to all stations and ranks of life.

The Gita conception of society is opposed to the conception of a 'permissive society'. The permissive society is like a high powered car with excellent accelerators, but no brake. An uninhibited society of men ends up and becomes a sick society. Culture and human well-being presuppose self and sense controls. That alone can lift us from animal existence to human excellence. "It is this power to overcome here and now the powerful sweep of desires and anger that ensures peace to us and entitles us to be called human and secures enduring happiness and bliss."

The Gita's first and foremost lesson is its insistence on acquiring self-possession and being anchored in a poise. Poise enables us to overcome unwholesome emotions. The Gita conception of *samatva* answers the description of poise. *Samatva* is not a complex of apathy to things, nor is it an aridity of feelings, it is not indifference (*Audasinya*). It is poise that enables us to remain undisturbed by the possible consequences of an act. The (*phalatyaga*) giving up of fruits, i.e., giving up the desire for the fruits of an act does not downgrade deliberation nor foresight, nor indifference to consequences. It is not an urge to slacken our efficiency. It is the means to freedom from psychic anxiety and the tension about the results. The poise of the Gita is being anchored in *God-yukta asita matparah*. It is avoiding indulgence in God-eclipsing activities.

"Yoga is the divorce of the marriage of the soul with sorrow."

Duty arising from one's station and temperament, dedicated to the Lord, performed for the good of all, as described in the scriptures is the Karma Yoga of the Gita. These characteristics are hit off in memorable phrases by Lord Krishna.

The Gita sets its face against the giving up of one's activities. It never countenances "do nothingism". It is opposed to *akarma-vada* and asks us not to be intimidated into *akarma* (*Ma te sangostu akarmani*). The Gita instruction is aptly psycho logical and is in keeping with human life. Nothing is possible without activity.

The Gita sets into current practice the tradition of the synthesis of the (*Pravritti and Nivritti margas*) ways i.e., asceticism and activism. It removes from each way its defect and one-sidedness. It infuses activity in renunciation and adds activism to the doctrine of selfishness. Such a synopsis is hinted in the *Isopanishad*. We find it elaborated in the Gita. *Manu* too, is not unaware of it. In our era, *Gandhiji* aspired to make it our national ideal.

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## UPANISHAD, GITA AND THE BRAHMA SUTRAS

- Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao

Among the six systems of Indian philosophy, the first four Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya Yoga, explain and build their philosophical systems with the help of reasoning and seek confirmation for the truths arrived at in the collaboration of scriptural testimony. Jaimini's Mimamsa and Badarayana's Vedanta primarily rely on revelation, *sruti*. The Purvamimamsa system is entirely taken up with the interpretation of the Vedas (the Mantras, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads). The Purva Mimamsa system is the largest of the darsanas, divided into twelve chapters with 60 sub-sections with over 2500 sutras discussed under 1000 topics. The system is taken up with the great effect sacrifices produce and help men.

The Vedanta system as per tradition relies on three texts. The first one is the class of work called the Upanishads. They are the concluding portion of the Vedas and are deemed as the termini of them in more than one sense. They are the Himalayas of the soul's aspiration. They represent the spiritual height to which the Indian mind has climbed and intuited. Just as the great mountain height determines the climate and rainfall and the physical features of India, so do these spiritual heights of wisdom determine the spiritual quality of India's philosophical thought. Ten of them are singled out for commentary by the great acaryas. They are culled from the different Vedas.

1. Aitareya from the Rgveda.
2. Isa
3. Brhadaranyaka                      Yajurveda.
4. Katha and

5. Taittiriya
6. Kena                                      Samaveda.
7. Chandogya
8. Satprasna                                Atharvaveda.
9. Mundaka
10. Mandukya

The term Upanishad means sitting near devoutly with the teacher. It is the secret doctrine delivered by illumined teachers to earnest students after severe test of the latter, desiring to know the truth. The Upanishads are pre-Buddhistic. Sankara has commented on two more Upanishads in addition to the ten. Ramanuja has not commented on the controversial passage of the Upanishads, whose meaning, he thought, was difficult and needed clarification. This he has achieved in his book *Vedartha Sangraha*. A luminary of the school Rangaraja has commented on all the ten Upanishads keeping close to the thought of Ramanuja. Sri Madhva has commented on all ten Upanishads. Sri Raghavendra of Mantralaya has given word for word meaning of the Upanishads under the caption *Khandartha*. The Upanishads are not alike in their presentation. They differ in their length, method of exposition and form. Some of them are very short and others long. Some are in verse and some are in prose, yet others combine both. Some are highly speculative and argumentative and other descriptive and narrative. Their tone also fluctuates. Some are highly serious, others homely and humorous, yet others are in the form of parables and analogies. The dialogue method is the prominent way in which truth is conveyed. This method scores heavily over the lecture method in the art of communication for the simple reason that then disciple is active and the thought of the guru opens up for inspection and critical examination at every stage. Hence it is popular with all great philosophers,

Socrates, Plato and Buddha. In the year 1640 the Upanishads were translated by Darashikoh, the son of Shah Jahan into Persian. This was presented to Antequetil Deperon, who retranslated it into Latin. Schopenhauer used it as his daily text for ablutions. He called his poodle Atman. He writes - from every sentence of the Upanishad-deep, original and sublime thoughts which in his mind arise and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy earnest spirit. In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishad. They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the entire world.

The message of the Upanishads is interpreted in different ways by various acaryas leading to the several schools of Vedanta, Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita. This approach to the Upanishads is the "sanctum" approach. Every acarya earnestly seeks to establish that the doctrines of his system are amply borne out by the triple texts of which the Upanishads are the basic text. Besides this "sanctum" approach there is the "forum" approach to the Upanishads, which derives spiritual nourishment, unerring guidance, moral instruction, social concern from the Upanishads. The reading of the Upanishads enlarges our vision, improves our understanding, ensures the peace of mind and enables us to live with amity with our fellowmen. "*Satyatma pranaramam mana anandam, Santi samrudham amrtam.*" Sankara finds Advaita as the philosophy of the Upanishads. He affirms the existence of Brahman, who is unexcellable bliss, unconditional knowledge and pure existence. He affirms the unreality of the world and the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. On the practical side he emphasizes total renunciation (*sarva karma sannyasa*) as the way to moksha. He holds the knowledge of the secondless Reality as dispelling the illusion of the many (*Dvaita Bhranti*) and securing self-realization

(*atmajnana*). He downgrades karma and erects an unbridgeable antithesis between karma and jnana. He regards Bhakti too as subsidiary, helpful to cleansing the mind. He is opposed to the view that moksha is obtained through karma, bhakti and jnana (*Samuccaya vada*).

Ramanuja's approach to the Upanishads is original and refreshing. His conception of the ultimate reality is an inseparable triune. The Lord Narayana is the substrate, inseparably qualified by the categories-soul and universe. The Lord is never alone. The souls and the universe cannot exist without attaching to the Lord. The conception of ultimate reality is expressed in the memorable phrase "*Cidacid visista srimam narayana eva param tattvam.*" The connection between the Lord and the souls is organic and intrinsic. The souls belong to the Lord. Connections with the universe and the taint of samsara, the lusts and the longings make the soul forget its intrinsic connection "*Svarupa Sambandha*". This alienation resulting from the amnesia of the true nature of the self is responsible for all sinful and anti-social activities. Devotion is the sovereign method to recover the knowledge of ourself and our inseparable connection as the body of the Lord. his devotion in its mature state is called "*Saranagati*" or surrender to the Lord. This is the method open to all without any pre-requisite except total surrender and ego slaying and complete faith in the Lord. Surrender to the Lord is the way to salvation. To attain this frame of mind, ceremonial purity, *acara* and ethical excellence and *atmagunas* are necessary. Ramanuja set the theistic interpretation of the Upanishads in vogue stressing the importance of grace. This was followed by Vallabha, Caitanya, Nimbarka and others.

Sri Madhva trails a unique interpretation of the Upanishads. He finds support for the following doctrines - The supremacy of

Lord Vishnu over all other deities in a ordered hierarchy (*taratamya*) ending with Agni, Lakshmi and Vayudeva taking the second and third places. The absolute reality of the world is affirmed and its illusory nature and its relative reality is rejected.

The scheme of five-fold difference is affirmed (*panca bheda*). *Jivesvara, Jivajada, Jivajiva, Jadesvara, Jadajada*. Amrta bhakti (pure devotion) is the method to reach the Lord through the grace of Vayudeva. " All the terms and words in the Vedas and secular speech are interpreted in their plenary potential sense (*parama mukhyavrtti*) Narayana. Karmayoga and dedication to the Lord, acceptance of His eternal dasatva are spelt out in the message of the Upanishads. The Upanishads constitute the revelation part of Vedanta. It is interpreted with the help of the Brahma Sutra, the second Prasthanana.

The Vedanta sutras are described as Nirnayaka sastras. The passages in the Upanishads are interpreted with the help of the sutras. The sutra literature is germane to the Indian philosophical systems. Every system has its own sutras and they are commented on elaborately. It is laid down that the composition of the sutras, should satisfy a few requirements. The sutras must use the minimum number of letters necessary. The meaning must be unambiguous and clear. It must give the essential meaning of the text and cover many topics. The vedanta sutras of Badarayana contain four chapters and each chapter contains four padas. The chapters are Samanvayadhyaya, Avirodhadhyaya, Sadhanadhyaya and Phaladhyaya. The first chapter harmonizes the apparently conflicting passages and makes them yield a unified import (Ekavakyata). The second refutes the rival schools of Vedanta based on scriptures and independent works. (The five darsanas and Buddhism, Jainism and Indian Materialism). The third chapter outlines the way to liberation, comprehending Vairagya,

Bhakti, Upasana, Jnana. The fourth chapter describes the way to attain moksa and describes the state of moksa.

According to Sankara, there are 535 sutras, according to Ramanuja 545, according to Madhva it is 564. The sutras are arranged into topics called adhikaranas. The adhikaranas vary in the number of sutras they comprehend. The first four adhikaranas of several others have only 1 sutra. Others have 2 to 9 sutras. The important sutra is the mukhya sutra, and the following ones are called guna sutras. The sutras have been commented on by different acaryas. Prominent among them are Sankara, Bhaskara, Yadavaprakasa, Ramanuja, Kesava, Nilakantha, Madhva, Baladeva, Vallabha, Vijnana Bhiksu. The oldest is that of Sankara, which is reputed for its stylistic grace and felicity in expression and sonorous effect in pleasing the ear. It is not merely a commentary and on occasions he speaks independently and forces the meaning of the sutras.

As in the case of the Upanishads here too, the acaryas have held the view that the sutras are after their hearts and affirm the tenets of their system. Modern like Thibaut who have translated more than one Bhasya hold the view that the sutra interpretation of Sankara does not disclose textual fidelity nor contextual consistency. The sutras have occupied the attention of the scholars and a large volume of enormous, polemical and controversial literature has grown about them. The rival schools of Vedanta have delighted in criticizing one another ruthlessly. But for the Vedanta Sutras it is impossible to harmonize the meaning and verify the message of the Upanishads.

The third Prasthanana is Bhagavadgita. This little classic is enshrined in the great epic Mahabharata chapter 25 to 42 of Bhishma parva. It is acclaimed the status and put on a parity with the other two basic texts. It is also commented upon by all the acaryas. In

addition it is looked upon as the most popular, universal scripture of not only the Hindus but of the world. The doctrines of Vedanta are presented here in an assimilable form giving the essence of the Upanishads. A familiar verse compares the Upanishads to a cow and the Gita to milk, Krishna to the milkman, and Arjuna to the calf, the wise man to the drinker of the milk. There are two distinct approaches to this "most beautiful bouquet of spiritual truth" (Vivekananda), - the sanctum approach of the acaryas and the forum approach of the great savants of renaissance Hinduism from Ram Mohan Roy to Radhakrishna. These have seen in the Gita the blue print for individual well-being and social welfare. It is at once a dharmasastra and a moksa sastra. It is a world scripture that wants us to do our duty, close to our nature as stated in the scriptures without the desire for the fruits in the spirit of complete dedication to Lord.

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## **MODERN SCIENCE AND VEDANTA**

**- Swami Jitatmananda**

Since the beginning of this century the sure foundations of a materialistic concept of science began to crack. By 1914 Einsteinian relativity established matter as a form of energy. It also established the relative and limited knowledge of the world of matter that experimental science can grasp. By 1925 Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" demolished once for all the unbelief of Einstein himself "two pillars of the old-science-causality and determinism". He established the irrefutable fact that an "electron" can never be known in its entirety. "Quantum Theory", Heisenberg asserted, "does not allow a completely objective description of nature," ("Physics and Philosophy" by W. Heisenberg p.96). He finally rejected the classical notion that the reality round us is actual. The reality that we claim to perceive with our senses is just an "illusion", and this truth one realises when one looks inside the sub-atomic world of electrons. "The ontology of materialism rested upon the illusion that the kind of existence, the direct 'actuality' of the world around us, can be extrapolated into the atomic range. The extrapolation is, impossible, however ("Physics and Philosophy" by W. Heisenberg p.128). The old deterministic idea that a reality can actually be cognised had to be finally abandoned in Quantum Physics. Robert Oppenheimer brilliantly puts this new indeterminism about our knowledge of matter in the following lines:

"If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains the same, we must say "no"; if we ask whether the electron position changes with time, we must say "no"; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say "no". (The Eye of Shiva by Amnary De Reincourt, p.164).

The Vedanta philosophy of the Upanishads had already conceived the phenomenal reality with its multitudinous spatiotemporal nature as "Maya", or something that "is", and at the same time, "is not". "Maya", in Vedanta philosophy, is therefore indescribable and unpredictable (*Anirvacaniya*). Erwin Schrodinger later illustrated the unpredictability of the electron existence through his well-known analogy of chrodinger's cat. The movement and behaviour of an individual electron can only be predicted by a statistical probability, since the electron behaviour betrays a free-willing, voluntaristic movement. In fact Quantum Physics discovers with surprise that an individual electron emitted in a particular direction at a particular time may not move in that direction at all. The uncertainty principle therefore nullified, once for all that a sure cause - and - effect relation, as on our normal places of experience, exists in the lectron-world. Scientific search, for a sure cause behind every effect seemed futile. In April 1973, Heisenberg declared in his presidential speech, in the congress of scientists, convened by the Smithsonian Institute and National Academy of Sciences at Washington D. C. - "What is really needed is a change in fundamental concept. We are probably forced in our concept to abandon the atomic materialism of Democritus and to turn to the ideas of symmetry in the philosophy of Plato"? He also said ... "We cannot exclude the possibility that after some-time the current themes of science and technology will be exhausted, and a younger generation will turn for rationalistic and pragmatic attitudes towards an entirely different approach". By 1970 the nucleus still considered the basic building block of matter was sub divided into as many as 216 sub nuclear particles. The smallest one found is called "resonance" which lives only 2 to 3 particle seconds (a particle second is. 0000000000,00000,0024 second), and changes into another kind of extremely small and short lived particles known as hadrons. "A

resonance", writes Fritz of Capra, "is a particle, but not an object. It is much better described as an event or happening". Heisenberg echoes the same feeling when he says that in "modern physics the world appears as a complicated tissue of events". The new findings, especially the withering of a purely objective world of matter, emergence of the "subjective element", and the consciousness of the experimenter having direct connection with the objects have brought out profound admissions from scientists like Heisenberg who says, -- "Our Judeo-Christian and Greco Roman heritage, our Hellenic tradition has compelled us to think in exclusive categories. But our experience challenges us to recognise a totality richer and far more complex than the average observer could have suspected, a totality which compels him to think in ways which logic of dichotomies denies".

This Cartesian partition, this ontological dualism, this dichotomy of mind-matter, soul-body, man-god is fundamental in the Western way of thinking in general, and is typical of the analytical mind of the West. The fundamental schism between mind and matter started in the West right from the time of Greek Democritus, and was handed down through Pascal, Dscartes, Newton and even so great an intuitive mind as Einstein. And this dualism is responsible, to put it in the words of Amuary De Reincourt (*The Eye of Shiva*, by A. Reincourt, p. 158), for the "Schizophrenie culture of the Western civilization" which repeatedly failed to correlate the mystical feelings of "one all-pervading consciousness" experienced from time to time by Western mystics with the rigid theological framework of religion that upheld an extra-cosmic god, a ruling monarch dispensing judgement, externally separate and distinct from puny mortals called men.

Even Einstein who believed in a Jewish God or the God of Spinoza had to admit intellectually that "the root of the modern conflict

between Science and Religion lies in the concept of personal God; and that contemporary theologians should have the courage to reject it" (The Eye of Shiva, by A. Reincourt, p. 170.).

Vivekananda hits at the root of this dogmatic and theological belief in a personal God in heaven, when he spoke to the Western audience in San Francisco, in 1900:

"What is the idea of God in heaven? Materialism. The Vedantic idea is the infinite principle of God embodied in every one of us. God sitting up on a cloud! Think of the utter blasphemy of it! It is materialism, downright materialism-.... We have seemingly been divided, limited, because of our ignorance.... But all nature is giving this delusion in every moment. I am not that little man or little woman out of from all else; I am the universal existence... This Vedanta is everywhere, only you must become conscious of it. These masses of foolish beliefs and superstitions hinder our progress... Throw away all matter! The conception of God must be truly spiritual". (Is Vedanta the Future Religion? Complete Works. vol.VIII PP 126 - 139).

Heisenberg's startling discoveries of "uncertainty principle", and the demolition of causality and determinism, was closely followed by another equally great Nobel physicist Erwin Schrodinger. In the middle of the twentieth century, nearly sixty years after Vivekananda's first prophetic utterance in London, 1895 that Advaita Vedanta (the monistic Vedanta) is the only religion that can have any hold on intellectual people, Schrodinger gave a powerful defence of Monistic Vedanta as the only solution to the question raised by Quantum Physics.

"In all world, writes Schrodinger in his book 'My Veiw of the World' (chap.IV), there is no kind of framework within which we

can find consciousness in the plural; this is simply something we construct because of the temporal plurality of individuals, but it is a false construction the only solution to this conflict so far as any is available (to no at all) lies in the ancient wisdom of the Upanishad". "Consciousness is numerically one", he concluded. The vision of plurality is "Maya", he asserted in the line of non-dualistic Vedanta. Such startling metaphysical conclusion, Schrodinger anticipated, might be termed as "transcendence" or 'Mysticism' which has got little to do with experimental science, but any attempt to reject this "metaphysical" and the "mystical" view of matter would only be replaced, "Schrodinger asserted (page-7, 'My view of the world') with infinitely more naive and petty ones".

The attempt to resolve the dualism of mind and matter also attempted in the West in the past but the attempt was carried always on the material plan and therefore, it failed. Schrodinger offers his comments on this attempt. "It is odd that it has usually been done on material basis ... But this is no good. If we decide to have only one sphere, it has got to be the psychic one, since that exists anyway". (My View of the World.pp.62-3). Did Einstein fail to finalise his unified field theory primarily because he failed to rise above Judian monotheism?

In the last days of 19th century Vivekananda upheld this impersonal Vedanta and interpreted Christ's words according to Vedanta to the Western man -- "The essence of Vedanta", Says Vivekananda, "is that there is but one Being and that every soul is that Being in full, not a part of that Being. All the Sun is reflected in each dew drop. Appearing in time, space, and causality, this Being is man, as we know him, but behind all appearance is one Reality... We are not drops to fall into the ocean and be lost, each one is the whole, fetters of illusion. Inifinity cannot be divided, the "one without a second" cannot have a second, all is that one...

.....The Greatest teacher of the Vedanta philosophy was Sankaracharya.... He unified all the conflicting descriptions of Brahman, and showed there is only one Infinite Reality..... We see something akin to this in the teachings of Jesus, which he evidently adapted to the different abilities of his hearers. First he taught them of a Father in heaven and pray to Him. Next he rose a step higher and told them "I am Vine, You are the branches", and lastly he gave them, the highest truth: "I and my father are one", and "the kingdom of heaven is within you." (Discourse on Jnana Yoga p. 6-7-vol. VIII.C.W).

Schrodinger's bold assertion of the Vedantic monism has broken, for the first time, the old barrier of Cartesian dualism between mind and matter and has in a sense made a big dent in the schizophrenic culture of the West. Vedanta philosophy, obviously, interprets Christ's word in acceptably rational terms. Western rationalists who tried to cling dogmatically to the old theological christianity or agnostic materialism were plunged in deep metaphysical abyss. The noted astrophysicist Fred Hoyle said that what dogmatic christianity gave him was an "eternity of frustration". (The Nature of the Universe - fred Hoyle 124.). Bertrand Russel poignantly expressed this predicament that came in his life.-- "As regards metaphysics, I experienced the delight of believing that the sensible world is real. Bit by bit, chiefly under the influence of physics, this delight has faded... I find myself in a vast mist of solitude both emotional and metaphysical from which I can find no issue". (The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, vol.2 pp. 160., quoted in The Eye of the Shiva by A.D. Reincourt,p.172). It is precisely because Einstein, a devoted Zionist, failed to rise above the idea of Jewish God that he could not accept wholeheartedly, unto the end, the quantum principle of uncertainty. Physicist Max Born who saw this failure in Einstein remarked that he died with a sense of tragedy.

The meeting of modern physics and Eastern mysticism has already triggered off far-reaching changes in the Western scientists' way of thinking. Intuition slowly emerged as the most powerful element in scientific discoveries. To Heisenberg, Einstein categorically said, "It is the theory which decides what can be observed," and coruscates the traditional way of experiment-observation-interference as "nonsense". In his Herbert Spencer lectures Einstein admitted, "I hold that pure thought can grasp the reality as the ancients dreamed". (*Essays in Science* by Albert Einstein, p.17). Closely following Einstein, Nobel physicist Hideki Yukawa wrote (*Creativity and Intuition* by H. Tukawa, p.57-58).... "but the fact remains that in order to synthesize contradictory it is necessary first to survey the whole with intuition".... For us the scientists' imagination is an important ingredient...it would seem that Indians are amply endowed with imagination".

British astronomer James Jeans anticipated the Vedantic approach to modern science long ago when he said, "the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality;-...Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter" (*Mysticism and the New Physics* -Michel Talbot, pp.16). The concept of interconnectedness between the observer and the observed reality was further developed by John F. Wheeler.

"Nothing is more important about quantum principles than this that it destroys the concept of the world as "sitting out there" with the observer safely separated by a 20 cm. slab of glass.... The measurement changes the state of Electron. *The Universe will never afterwards be the same*\_(Italics author's). To describe what has happened one has to cross the word. "observer" and put in its place

the new word "participator". (The Physicists Concept of Nature - John F. Wheeler, p.244). Biophysicist Lyall Watson writes humourously in his latest book "Lifetide" (p.314, Bantam Image Book, first published in 1979. New York) "Experiments about electrons boil down in the end to experiments on professors."

Quantum physics has already entered by 1960's right into the realms of Vedanta. One must know the knower, says Vedanta. Then only the whole universe is known. How to know the knower, how to dive into the consciousness of man himself in the depth of which alone the mysteries of this universe has been resolved -- This is the theme that the Upanishads deal with. Vivekananda is the first oriental who boldly spoke out these ideas to the West in the last century. Vivekananda says:

"Physics is bounded on both sides by metaphysics. So it is with reason -- it starts from non-reason and ends with non-reason. If we push enquiry far enough in the world of perception, we must reach a plane beyond perception ... *Religion is the science which learns the transcendental in nature through the transcendental in man (Italics author's)*. We know as yet but little of man, consequently but little of the universe ... Man is the epitome of all things and all knowledge is in man." (pp.21. Complete Works. Vol.III)

The Upanishads, again and again, assert that the senses cannot reach the Ultimate Reality, the (unenlightened) mind cannot grasp it, words fail to describe it. The mystic author of *the Cloud of Unknowing* says that a cloud of unknowing always persists when man goes to comprehend God by ordinary mind. "The letter killeth" -- says St.Paul: this negative approach, so far described, is also accepted by agnostics. But Vedanta goes further. The Ultimate Reality can be known, says the Upanishad, when a pure mind (freed from

all other desires) guided by an enlightened will meditates on it in the case of one's heart. It is in this way that man can touch the immortal core of life, the immutable bedrock of eternal existence. Therefore, the constant refrain of the Upanishads is - - Meditate (*Anupasyati*), and know the Real self which is *Pratyag-Atman* or the Reality which is hidden inside one's consciousness. And without this supreme realisation, says the Upanishad, man is condemned to live suicidal existence.

Reality, in Quantum Physics, therefore, is no more purely objective, but connected with the subjective in man. Michael Talbot coins the word "omnijective", to express the new conception of Reality. And this acceptance of the "omnijective" Reality, he believes, is going to have a far-reaching influence in the West. Mr. Talbot says, "How the omnijective nature of reality will change Western civilisation remains to be seen. The only certainty is that the changes will be stupendous" (p.17 "Mysticism and the New Physics" by M. Talbot). Talbot also admits that "mystic" Vivekananda spoke in a language which is "indistinguishable" and "interchangeable" with the language of mathematician Hermon Minkowski who first theorised that space and time are continuum. Talbot quotes Vivekananda's exposition on Vedantic concept of causality (i.e., causality in the ultimate analysis is a misnomer.) and says, (p.114-115 *Mysticism and New Physics*) "*Vivekananda further exposes a view that has become the backbone of quantum theory (italics author's)*; there is no such thing as strict causality". In Jnana Yoga Vivekananda analyses the futility of search for cause when man realises the Reality as the One all, pervading existence and consciousness -- "What you call motion and causation cannot exist when there is only one" (Lecture on the Absolute and Manifestation, London, 1895, vol. II Complete Works of Swamy Vivekananda).

"Therefore, Vedanta formulates", says Vivekananda, "not universal brotherhood, but universal oneness.....It is one body, one mind, one soul throughout. Spirit never dies". (p.129. Complete Works, vol.VIII).

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## GANDHI ON RELIGION

- Prof. G.S. Herbert, M.A., Ph.D.

Gandhi is considered to be the greatest man of the century. He was a political leader, religious reformer and in addition gave a direction to social and economic reconstruction leading to a new world order. Einstein remarked, "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth". Gandhi was essentially a man of religion. He claimed to be an orthodox Hindu. He was also a revolutionary in thought and action. For the ordinary man there is a conflict between being orthodox and having revolutionary ideas, but it was not so for Gandhi. This paper is an attempt to understand the ideas of Gandhi on religion.

### Views on Religion in General

Gandhi holds that the fundamentals of all religions are the same. These fundamentals are eternal truths. They are (i) There is God, (ii) God is the creator, (iii) God is the ruler of this Universe and (iv) God is the saviour of the world. These ideas are quite familiar and easily understandable. Any religious person would accept the existence of God and that God is the creator, ruler and saviour of the world.

Gandhi is of the view that religion proceeds from God. It is wrong to think that man makes religion. God is the only source of religion and man becomes aware of God and tries to understand and follow Him to the extent of his capacities. Some are able to realise God more than others. In a sense the realisation of God by man depends upon both. God's grace is very important for man in all respects. Especially in man's attempt to know and understand God, God's Grace is a must. Man by his own efforts would never be able to reach God. God out of His mercy and grace blesses the efforts of man and reveals Godhead in several ways.

Every religion as we find it today is imperfect to some extent. The following question is likely to arise: when God is the source of religion, how can it be imperfect. There seems to be a paradox here. Gandhi explains that though God is the source of religion, it proceeds and evolves through the instrument of man. Man is the medium. Man interprets and in the course of such interpretations imperfections creep in. Thus imperfections are due to human instrumentality.

Gandhi compares religion to the river Ganges which is pure at its source and gathers dirt as it flows along. Thus in spite of the fact that God is perfect, due to human agency, ideas of God get distorted and become imperfect. Every religion is replete with rituals which are prescribed by man. A ritual is a religious observance instituted by tradition. Often more importance is attached to ritual which is an outward observance to the neglect of the real aim of worshipping God. It is often the rituals that contaminate religion and give a distorted picture of God.

Several times a few imperfections are magnified and the whole religion is discredited. Gandhi admonishes us against such an attitude. We should try to understand and assimilate the best in every religion. Further the best way of trying to know about religion is to go to true follower of that religion. A true follower of any religion in practice, rather than none who merely professes, would be able to explain to others all about the religion. Moreover it is important to be true to one's own religion in order to understand others. A true follower of any religion neither tries to pick holes in others nor boasts of his own religion as being superior to others.

### **Views On Hinduism**

Gandhi agrees with the traditional view that the origin of Hinduism is in the Vedas. Any particular Veda is not written just by one and at a time. Veda is a compilation of several Rishis.

The sages by meditation and tapas have been trying to know the truth. They have committed to writing what they have been able to know. In every Veda, the Upanishads occupy a very important place. The Upanishads are the more philosophical than religious. The essence of the Upanishads and the message of the Vedas is contained in the Bhagavad Gita. Gandhi attached greatest importance to the Gita. The Epics and Puranas also constitute the sacred literature of Hinduism. The sacred literature is the product of sages and saints during the course of time and there is a human element in them. It is easy to misinterpret and misunderstand several passages. Gandhi gives two principles to guide us in getting a right understanding of the Vedas. (i) One should follow the spirit but not the letter. (ii) Whenever there is a conflict between the Vedas and reason, follow reason. If we adopt these two principles, there will not be any difficulty in understanding the Vedas. For example, passages indicating animal sacrifices and untouchability need not be defended or reinterpreted. Whatever cannot be supported by reason can be rejected and Hinduism has nothing to lose by such rejection. Gandhi has firm confidence in human reason, and in the goodness of man.

Hinduism has no official creed. While agreeing with such a view, Gandhi puts forward the idea that the first verse of the Isa Upanishad may be considered as the creed of Hinduism, It says:

1. The great universe is pervaded by God.
- ii. Renounce the world and enjoy.
- iii. Do not covet anybody's wealth.

Every one of these sayings is pregnant with meaning. The first point is of greatest importance. When one accepts that the whole universe is pervaded by God, his whole life would be lived in the fear and love of God. Such a person would not claim anything for himself and would treat everybody else with love and charity.

The statement that 'the universe being pervaded by God' should be properly understood. It is not pantheism according to which God is identified with the Universe. God is not exhausted by being in the universe. He is immanent and transcendent. The statement means that God is everywhere.

It also means that everything is God's creation. Everything in the universe and the universe as a whole exhibits the glory of God. Every man is in the image of God and there is divinity in him. With such an understanding Gandhi considers all men as brothers and equals.

The next point is to renounce the world and to enjoy life. Here again is an apparent paradox. How is it possible to enjoy by renouncing the world? Gandhi tells us that 'renounce the world' does not mean to run away from the world into the forest. To run away into the forest is to escape from the responsibilities of the world. Gandhi by his life and teachings has shown that man should live in this world, but should not be of the world. Renunciation means detachment. Attachment leads to suffering, whereas detachment gives peace and joy. That is one way of understanding 'renounce and enjoy'.

Another way of understanding the principle is to renounce into the hands of God. We have to surrender everything to God and enjoy whatever He gives us. God out of His merciful nature would never allow us to suffer. One who relies on God does not know starvation. God provides for His children out of His abundance. Thus the Isa Upanishad tells us to renounce and enjoy. As a matter of fact there is real joy in such renunciation only.

The third tenet 'do not covet' teaches contentment. Greed is one of the worst enemies of man. There is no end for covetousness. Covetousness leads to deceit, theft etc. One should be satisfied with what one has and what God gives. In a sense 'do not covet'

follows from 'renounce and enjoy'. Both the principles of life imply one another. There is real contentment and peace only when one is able to renounce. Thus Gandhi holds that a creed of Hinduism can be found in the first verse of the Isa Upanishad.

Gandhi also says that the fundamentals of Hinduism are: belief in God, rebirth and salvation. Salvation indicates that the final goal of man is moksha and the whole life should be tuned to achieve that aim. The fundamentals can also be taken as the creed of Hinduism.

### **Religion and Politics**

According to Gandhi there should be a close relationship between politics and religion. He says, 'politics bereft of religion is death trap'. Politics is a science and an art which aims at establishing conditions for the best and happy living of man. Power politics is exactly the opposite of such an ideal. A person's life should be pervaded by divinity, i.e., a person who is pure in life in order to be a leader and ruler. In the context of political life, religion should not be misunderstood as a mere ritual, but understood as a way of life. Pure life is absolutely necessary in politics and then there would be a just society and welfare state.

A true leader must be prepared to be a servant; one who does not know how to serve others cannot be a master. Hence Gandhi speaks of religion of service. He is of the view that service of the fellow-man leads one to God. It is not necessary for an individual to go to renunciation of service, but renunciation in service. Gandhi upholds the Gita ideal and exhorts every one to do his duty and to do it well.

Gandhi said, "I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven nor down below, but in everyone." God is in every living creature and in every man. Wherever there is suffering and affliction, there is an opportunity

to see God. "God manifests Himself to us in the form of the helpless and the stricken." Service to humanity is service to God. That is why Gandhi served and fought for the lowliest and the neglected ones. His war against untouchability is not merely a social reform but a religious war in the name of God to show that God is in every man. Thus Gandhi advocated a religion of service and to reach God through service to humanity. His whole life has been a life of service and sacrifice and through such a life he attempted to find God and serve Him .

National service is not exception to Gandhi's general theme of religion of service. He considered national struggle for liberation as national struggle in a religious way literally and spiritually. Gandhi's strength in his leadership has been his supreme faith in God. The final goal of man is liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. Gandhi holds that national service is a means of liberation and thus a means of achieving the final goal of man.

### **Gandhi on Temples and Temple Worship**

According to Gandhi, the temple is a common place of worship. Every religion has a common place where the community gathers at an appointed time for worship. These places are called by different names in different religions -- temple in Hinduism, church in Christianity, mosque in Islam and so on. A common place of worship appears to be a human necessity and Gandhi subscribes to such a view. Religious sentiment is one of the strongest sentiment in man and a fundamental requirement for the satisfaction of such a sentiment is to join the community in a common worship.

Gandhi holds the temple to be an integral part of Hinduism and its nature is dynamic. It is an institution which has grown into Hinduism. Being a necessary part of Hinduism temple is bound to be integral to Hinduism. The temples are sure to exist as long as man exists as religious life is an integral part of human life.

The temple has developed an organisation of its own and consequently a large amount of human element has crept into it. Priestcraft has entrenched itself in every temple. There is an administrative setup to look after proper observance of rites, rituals, finance etc. A certain amount of evil and corruption has entered in priest-class and temple administration. Gandhi neither tries to justify nor ignore the evil but recognises it and asks us to face the evil and eradicate it. He does not condemn the temple because of the presence of evil but calls for reformation. Such an attitude of Gandhi is the same as his attitude to a sinner with reference to whom he says that it is not the sinner but the sin which should be condemned.

Temples are said to be hot beds of superstition. Any belief or observance even though it is sanctioned by the Vedas, if it does not stand the test of reason, should be rejected, according to Gandhi. (*Young India* 18.8.1927). He fought against untouchability and all types of discrimination between man and man and sought entry into the temples for Harijans. He said that God does not dwell in those temples which do not allow Harijans to enter their portals and he refused to worship in such temples.

It may take a long time to eradicate superstitions, evil practices like animal sacrifices, and misuse of the premises and properties of temples. Gandhi cautions us not to take an attitude of condemnation but accept the presence of evil as challenge and fight to wipe it away.

Gandhi holds that the priest is the most important factor in a temple. There can be no temple without a priest. Gandhi reminds us that in the ancient days the priest, in addition to temple duties used to instruct and teach in the temple. The priest was a seer and rishi, learned and wise.

Gandhi laments that unfortunately the present day priests are not properly educated, selfish and given to all sorts of evil ways.

Here again he warns us that there is no meaning in merely condemning the priest, but we should try to reform him. As long as there are temples there are bound to be priests as the priest is an integral part of a temple. Hence it is the responsibility of the concerned authorities to see that the priests are given the required training before entering into the cadre of discharging sacred duties. Priests should be learned in Vedas. If the priests conform to the ideals set for them we can have temples as real houses of God.

Gandhi suggests educating the public in an appropriate way in order to reform the temple and the priest. This suggestion of Gandhi is worthy of note when several people express helplessness in bringing about any religious reform. An educated and well-informed public can go a long way to check evil and bring about the required reforms in temples.

Gandhi formulates the following ideas of a model temple.

The temple, being a common place of worship and an integral part of daily life should be located in a central place in village accessible to all people.

It should preferably be in an elevated place. Perhaps Gandhi is of the view that the temple should be seen from all parts of the village so that people can always be reminded of the presence of God in their midst.

Surroundings of a temple should be kept clean, tidy and healthy. There should be a school, library and hospital attached to a temple. People should be encouraged to spend more time than it is done now in the temple and its premises. In other words, the temple should not only be a place of worship but also a place of inspiration and help in the day to day life of man.

'In the past temples carried the message of God in stone and metal' and the priest was a friend, philosopher and guide. Gandhi

wants to lift the temple and the priest to the high ideal which they had once occupied in the past.

### **Gandhi's views on God**

There are two possible conceptions of God, one of philosophy and the other of religion. God of philosophy is impersonal, abstract principle of explanation of the universe; whereas God of religion is personal, creator and saviour of man. Both the views are amalgamated in the teachings of Gandhi. Further, Gandhi believed that all religions are true and consequently he presents a synoptic and synthesised view of God. He however maintained very close to the Hindu conception of God throughout his life. He kept open the doors and windows of his mind and spirit to the currents and cross-currents of various religions which shaped his views on God but all the time, remained anchored in Hinduism from which none and nothing could shake him.

Gandhi holds that God would reveal Himself to man. How this revelation comes is left to Him and depends upon the aspirations of man. "He is personal God to those who need His touch." ..... He simply is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. "Depending upon his nature and capacities of understanding man finds God in the name of form suitable to him Thus in the true spirit of Hinduism, Gandhi admits infinite forms and innumerable names for God. Evidently that which is formless and nameless can be attributed to have any form and name as such attribution is immaterial and does not touch the real essence of God. Any particular deity caters to the needs and aptitudes of the individual worshipper. That is the reason why Gandhi is opposed to religious fanaticism. He values the spirit behind the idol and idol worship and hence he is against fanaticism of considering any particular Deity alone as God. Gandhi writes, "so long as there are different religions, everyone of them may need some distinctive symbol. But when the symbol is

made into a fetish and an instrument of proving the superiority of one's religion over other's, it is fit only to be discarded."

Gandhi traces all difficulties in the way of understanding God to the limitations of man. "The human mind is limited and it has to work under limitations when you think of a being or an entity beyond its power." Moreover, Gandhi says, "We are all thinking of the unthinkable, describing the undescribable, seeking to know the unknown, that is why speech falters and we are involved in contradictions." The very nature of God is beyond the comprehension of man and the language at his disposal is inadequate to describe Him.

Gandhi has the following specific views about God. He writes, "I have always believed God to be without form." Then, how can God be known? Gandhi answers that God is known by listening to the inner voice. Inner voice is God's voice. "It is within every one. But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparation." Gandhi prescribes a discipline of five-fold path in order to be able to listen to the inner voice. It consists in the observance of non-violence, truth, brahmacharya, non-stealing and non-possession.

Gandhi says, "I do not regard God as a person. Truth for me is God." This is a hard saying for the religious man and the common man who considers God as a person. A personal God helps man to worship Him and to go to Him for comfort and succour. Gandhi admits such a notion of God, (as already seen) as a personal God satisfies the requirement of those who seek him as a person. In the above quoted passage Gandhi goes deeper than the ordinary man and attempts to say that the real essence of God is 'simply is'. Gandhi explains his point of view 'Truth is God' as follows.

1. Usually God is defined as Love. Love has different meanings. Love of the parent is different from that of the child; and love of a

friend is different from that of a teacher and so on. Love means different things to different people. So Gandhi would not use such an ambiguous word to indicate the real nature of God, though love in its own way certainly indicates God.

2. The atheist may deny God but he cannot deny Truth. Thus the whole humanity, both the theists and the atheists would be brought to God, as all accept Truth and Truth is God.
3. The Sanskrit word for Truth is Sat. Sat means existence. By saying Truth is God, we say God exists. Existence is the very essence of God. Hence it is correct to say that Truth is God.
4. God is undefinable and there are difficulties in whatever manner we attempt to define and describe God. 'Truth' is beyond all controversy as every one wants and accepts Truth. So the best way to think of God is in terms of Truth.
5. There is subtle distinction between the two propositions, "God is Truth and Truth is God" which Gandhi wants us to notice. In the former we are defining the undefinable God; whereas in the latter we are defining Truth. The verb 'is' in the statement 'Truth is God' is neither predication nor equation. It indicates that 'Truth' is the means for the realisation of God. Gandhi considers truth and non-violence (love) as convertible terms. Thus, through non-violence one knows the truth and by truth one comes to God.

Gandhi titled his autobiography as 'My Experiments with Truth'. In searching for truth, he has been in pursuit of God. Gandhi writes "if it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself. . . . . Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after truth."

What is Truth? Gandhi does not enter into a philosophical discussion of the various theories of truth. He maintains that truth is

the 'inner voice' in every man. God speaks and is known to every man through his inner voice.

The Gandhian conception of God cuts across all religions and all notions of God. Gandhi wants man to realise that the whole universe is pervaded by God and the fullness of man's life consists in living close to Him. Religion cannot be neglected to a section of one's life, leading the rest of his life in an irreligious way. Gandhi says, "I do not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind. For me the tiniest activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion".

The whole world is full of conflicts, tensions, wars and rumours of war. Even in the contemporary days, there are nations founded and functioning fanatically on the basis of religion. Man appears to be drifting away from God. There is hope for humanity only when man decides to walk a life closer to God. Gandhi points out that instead of accusing others every individual should look into himself and try to listen to the inner voice of God within. Anyone who is close to God is like light which dispels darkness. Though not all, at least a few should listen to the message of Gandhi. "God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings."

### **Conclusion**

Gandhi believed in God. He acted with such a belief as a basis of his life. The greatness of Gandhi lies in the fact that he preached not in words, but through practice. He was a man of God, lived in God and served mankind.

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## **THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ANCIENT INDIA**

**I.V. Chalapathi Rao**

At the outset, let us have a profile of the teacher in our ancient India. The rishis gave a comprehensive check-list of the qualities of a teacher after making a scientific study. "Desiko Navalakshanaha" - A good teacher should have nine essential qualities. "*Suchir; Vachasvi, Varchasi, Dhritiman, Smrutiman, Kriti, Namrata, Utsahi, Jijnasu*" -

He should be a person with external and internal cleanliness, effective speech, bright countenance; brave and firm, should have good memory, ability to write, humility, enthusiasm and eagerness to acquire more knowledge.

The teacher occupied the central place in society and he was honoured even by the kings, He played an important role in the life of the nation because he was wise and service-minded. He did not show any inclination towards wealth or luxury. In popular estimation, "the teacher is Brahma - the teacher is Vishnu" - the teacher as equal to Gods. They said: "Acharyadevo bhava". The very word Acharya shows that he was also teaching "acharas" or how to lead a good life. Manu said that there were three types of education - *Laukika, Vaidika and Adhyatmika*. The teachers taught about things here and hereafter.

No one was fit to be a teacher unless he possessed "anubhuti" (experience) and "darshana" (vision). The teacher treated his students like his own children. There was no discrimination between pupil and pupil. Prince and pauper were treated alike. For example, Sandipani sent both Kuchela and Krishna to the forest to fetch firewood and sacrificial twigs. On one occasion, he went in torrential rain at midnight when they had not returned from the forest. This is

not only a typical example of the teachers's concern for his student but also irrefutable evidence of the fact that manual work formed part of education in ancient India. Students were made to fetch water, gather fire-wood, tend cattle and sheep, watch fields, go on errands and stop breaches in dykes.

Generally education was given free. Only after earning, the pupils were expected to contribute to the maintenance of the ashrams. Teachers were not greedy. They believed in the ideal of simple living and high thinking". The rich contributed money to run the ashram schools. The poor invariably received free education. When they finished their education, the pupils offered "Gurudakshina" to their teachers. It was only a token to show recognition of the deep debt of gratitude that the pupil owed to the teacher. It was often a turban, a pair of sandals, an umbrella, upper cloth or vegetables. Kings and queens who visited the ashrams offered money to students to be given as gurudakshina. For example in Bhasa's 'Swapna Vasavadatta' princess Padmavathi went to an ashram and said: "Who is in need of gurudakshina? Let him come forward and take it from me in order to offer it to his teacher". King Raghu of Ayodhya, who had renounced everything, presented fourteen crores of gold coins to Kautsa, Varatantu's disciple, when he approached him for money. One of the Jatakas relates the story of the sixteen year old son of the Rajah of Benaras who went to Takshasila with a thousand pieces of gold as offering to the teacher who had to take him through the various branches of learning. Universities and ashram schools received substantial donations from kings and emperors like Kumara Gupta, Baladitya, Harshavardhana and Kanishka. In Vikramasila University, the patron king presided over the function of award of degrees and certificates. The Tibetan authorities said that Jetari and Ratnavajra had received degrees in this university at the hands of king Mahipala and king Kanaka respectively. Rich men competed

with one another in giving financial help to educational institutions, often anonymously as the merit of the gift was believed to be higher if the donor remained nameless. According to the scripture of Manu, the teacher who charged money on a compulsory basis was unworthy of company for inter-dining.

The teachers in ancient India believed in the concept of life-long and continuing education. There is the story of Bharadwaja who went to Indra seeking a favour. When Indra wanted to know what he could do for the sage-teacher, the latter requested him to grant the favour of extension of the span of the day from 24 hours to 26 hours as he did not get sufficient time for his studies. There is an injunction in Taithireyopanishad which says "*Svadyaya Pravachanabhyam na Pramaditavam* (In learning and teaching there should not be any slackness or let-up). No wonder students always mentioned the names of their teachers but not the institutions when they introduced themselves. They went about saying "I am the pupil of Bharadwaja", "I am the student of Vasistha".

The great universities like Takshasila, Nalanda, Benaras, Vikramasila, Oddautapuri, Tamralipti, Ujjaini, Kalyani and Kanchipura enrolled thousands of students who went to them seeking admission. Although there were vacancies, there were no indiscriminate admission and automatic promotions. They were admitted only after they were tested for their ability and character. Yuan chwang, the Chinese Traveller, has described how in 7th century A.D. admission to the Nalanda University was open only to students with aptitude and diligence. Some of them had to wait for months and years. They had their own system of entrance examinations. It was recorded that in Vikramasila University there were six gates leading to the University and each entrance was guarded by a reputed scholar who put questions to the potential students. Seventy to eighty percent of the candidates failed in the admission test.

The teacher and his students lived together, a kind of joint-family life in ashrams which were far from the noise of the towns but not too far to make them feel isolated. For example, in 'Raghuvamsa' king Dilipa began his journey after his mid-day meal and reached the ashram before sun-set. There was no communication gap between them and the real world of social activity. The channels were kept open through visits.

The Upanishads point out the true relationship of the students and the teachers. Their daily prayers prove this.

Sahanavavathu	: May He protect us. (Let us live together)
Sahanau bhunaktu	: May He nourish us. (Let us acquire knowledge together)
Tejaswi navadheetamastu	: May our study be bright. (Let our education become powerful or dynamic)
Ma Vidvishava hai	: May we not hate. (Let not hatred divide us)
Om Santih, Santih, Santih	: Let there be peace, let there be peace.

No wonder, teachers prayed to God to give them good students. One such prayer was "O Creator, just as water flows to the lower level, just as months pass in an unbroken succession, so may Brahmacharis (young students) come to me". The ancient Universities honoured their distinguished students by exhibiting their names or images on the walls. It was the practice of the Vikramasila University to display on the walls the portraits of students of outstanding merit. In accordance with this custom two portraits of Nagarjuna (after whom a great project and university have been named to-day) and Atisa (a prolific writer who wrote 200 books) were exhibited on the walls of that university.

What were the goals of education and its main objective in our ancient India? The concept of "vasudhaiva kutumbakam" meant international brotherhood or world family. The Indian teachers proclaimed 6000 years ago in the Atharva Veda: "The whole world is our Mother Land. We are the sons of Mother Earth " (*mata bhoomi; putroham prithivyah*). The Rig Veda said, "Upasarpa mataram bhoomin" (dedicate yourself to the service of the world) and "Krinvanto Visvamaryam" (and make the whole world noble in action). The Vishnu Purana said, "loka samasthah sukhino bhavanthu" (may the whole world prosper). The Yajurveda further said: "Vidyaya amritam asnute" (Through knowledge man attains immortality). Obviously they did not think in terms of narrow regionalism - not even nationalism. They did not judge their fellow men by their post-office address. They did not settle for less than a world- outlook.

One of the objectives of education was to equip the students to play his part as a citizen. Performance of sacrifices with Svarga as goal or Vedanta for release of the soul must have come later. In Vedic times education was divided into (1) an optional part and (2) an obligatory part. A ceremonial bath was taken after completion of each of them. Perhaps it was symbolic dividing line between the primary and secondary education too. In the beginning education was common for all people. But the Grihya Sutras prescribed different ages, for initiation of education for different castes. At that time perhaps heredity made its appearance in the differentiation of castes. The restriction of Vedic studies and performance of sacrifices to a particular caste must be a latter-day deterioration in the social life of the Aryans. It is not an aspect of Vedic culture.

There is an interesting passage in the Taithiriya Upanishad which gives a glimpse of the educational policy of the time. In a convocation address, the teacher gave parting advice to the students: "Speak the

truth.....practice dharma. Do work for *lokasangraha*.....  
 .....Worship your mother and father, the teacher and the guest as gods. Do such acts as approved by good men.... This is the hidden import of the Vedas. This is the message". No wonder, the Manusmruti says that if a king riding his caparisoned elephant sees a student returning from *Snatakotsava* (convocation) the former should dismount and give way to the latter. Evidently power and wealth bowed before knowledge and character.

It is a mistake to think that education of those days was other-worldly and that it neglected the utilitarian aspect or material development. The third Mantra in Rigveda (chapter 10-section 155) is an illustration to the point. It says -

"Technical Science is a wonderful thing.  
 It removes poverty and brings in prosperity.  
 O poverty-stricken man! Acquire technical  
 knowledge And through the help of technical  
 science Remove poverty and want" -

For example, in Takshasila which was the intellectual capital of India and a central university exercising its influence all over India, there were job- oriented and need-based courses too. There was a wide variety of courses -literary, scientific and technical. The terms used for these different types of subjects were (i) the Vedas and (ii) the Silpas.

There were 18 Silpas indicating a craft or vocation based on practical skill as contrasted with religious or literary subjects. They were holy tradition, secular law, Sankhya, Nyaya (logic), Vaiseshika (Atomic theory of creation), arithmetic, music, medicine, four vedas, Purana (antiquities), Itihasa (history), military art, poetry and conveyancing. The courses which were available to the student were: conveyancing or Law, mathematics, accounting, agriculture, commerce, cattle-breeding, smithy, carpentry, medicine and surgery,

archery and allied military arts, astronomy, astrology, divination, magic, snake-charming, art or finding hidden treasures, music, dancing and painting. There were 64 faculties to choose from. The earlier books said that there was hardly a human being who could not be taught one of these faculties by a knowing teacher.

The number of Vedas taught in the university was three. Only Atharva veda was not taught. The scientific method of teaching Vedas included:

1. Memorisation/chanting of the Vedas.
2. Exposition and interpretation of their content.
3. Comprehension of their meaning.
4. The study of its six auxiliary sciences-phonetics, aphoristic literature, guiding the performance of rites and sacrifices, grammar, astronomy, prosody, etymology.

The author of *Nirukta*, a treatise on Vedic etymology said: "A man who knew merely the chanting of the Vedas but did not know its meaning was like a pillar merely carrying the burden of the building". Meaning was more important. And the Veda meant the Samhita, the Brahmana and the Vedangas, The Dharma Sutras deal with the civic duties or citizenship. Therefore, both temporal and religious laws formed part of Vedic study.

Education in ancient India by and large was systematic. The teachers carefully considered the entrance behaviour and the terminal behaviour of the students. For example, when Narada approached Sanat Kumara and said "Teach me, sir". Sanat Kumara said to him, "Please tell me what you know; afterwards I tell you what is beyond." From the available data we can say that primary education was at home, middle and secondary education was in Ashrams and higher education was in universities. Broadly speaking, primary education was upto 8 years, secondary education dealt with age-group of 8 to 16 (in some cases upto 19) and university education was pursued

by men who attained the age of 17 and above. There was no rigid regulation of any sort to regiment the duration of the courses. The studies terminated when the teacher was satisfied with the achievement of the student. Normally specialisation in the various subjects took eight years. But there was flexibility in the system so that the period could be reduced or extended according to the level or response of the student. There was no final examination. There were no large scale external examinations. There was built-in system of internal assessment based upon procedures of thorough and critical understanding of the subjects. Unless one unit of syllabus was thoroughly mastered, the student was not allowed to proceed to the subsequent portions of the syllabus. This naturally required individualised instruction. No teacher had more than ten students to facilitate individual attention to every one.

Methods of instruction followed in ancient India appear to be modern methods which are often recommended by our experts today but rarely implemented in the current educational set-up. Questioning and discussion were often used in imparting education. The Gita says that knowledge is got by obedience to a teacher, service to him and questions put to him. Hiuen Tsiang, the Chinese traveller, said: "The day is not sufficient for asking and answering profound questions. From morning till night they engage in discussion." The teachers who did not prepare their lessons well used to hide themselves in the bushes in shame because they were afraid of the barrage of questions coming from their students. The Upanishads, which treat of the loftiest metaphysics known to man, mean literally "sitting together and discussing the problem". Obviously, instruction was not confined to the solo straight jacket lecture method which is a one way street. There was dialogue involving interaction. To aid memory, poetry and sutras (epigrams) were used. Through discussion, efforts were made to encourage criticism and creativity. The Gita says "Thus has wisdom more secret than all secrets been

declared to you. Reflect on it fully and not according to your choice". Speaking about Nalanda, Hiuen Tsiang said, "The pupil reads a portion of the text and reflects on what he has learnt. He acquires new knowledge day by day and searches into old subjects month after month without losing a minute". Rig Vedic instruction regarding the conduct of assembly says, "Assemble, discuss with one another. Let your minds be of one accord."

Jerome Bruner, the modern expert in education has said, in his introduction to 'Revolutionary Teaching' that any subject-matter can be taught to any student of any age provided it is presented in a form that is simple and within the comprehension of the learner. Another expert Benjamin Bloom has said: "There are no slow learners. There are only slow teachers." Compare these fascinating and challenging theories of education with what Vishnu Sarma, the author of 'Panchatantra' said: "He is not fit to be called a teacher who is not understood by the dullest of his students." We know how 'Panchatantra' was written by this innovative teacher to educate the two sons of King Sudarsana of Pataliputra when the conservative teachers with orthodox methods failed to educate them. It is interesting to see how Lilavathi made even the study of mathematics interesting. She taught about the power and value of unity thus: put two 1's separately; they are only two. Put them together; they are 11. put 51's separately; they are only 5. Put them together; they become 11, 111. Thus a Panchayat of 5 persons is more than 2000 times stronger than the 5 persons composing it. "That is the might of unity, my dears." There were innovative teachers who did research and perfected the art of embellishing the dull and sugarcoating the quinine pill.

The 64 arts recommended by Vatsyayana as essential equipment of a cultured person cover a large portion of the modern syllabus in Domestic Science and Fine Arts. They include decoration, embellishment with rice powder and colours, flower arrangement,

cooking delicious dishes, wines, parties, outings in the open, magic, drama, drum, veena and theatre.

In the edicts of Asoka, we have evidence of the practice of writing large numbers where the place of the digit indicates its power as a multiple often. The original European method was to split the number with tens, hundreds and thousands and use additive symbols. The great French Mathematician Laplace called it the greatest contribution to mathematics and a brilliant method. India was the first country to discover and use the zero as a mathematical symbol. Aryabhatta made significant contribution to Algebra in the 5th century. Brahmagupta in the 7th century and Bhaskara in the 12th century individually discovered and used the concept of a negative quantity.

The education system produced great scholars and writers. There were grammarians like Panini (whose sutras are in 8 books called *Ashtadhyayi*) and Patanjali, astronomers like Aryabhatta and Varahamihira, philosophers like Kapila, Sankara, Madhva and Ramanuja, politico-economists like Chanakya, experts in law and jurisprudence like Manu and Yajnavalkya, poets and play-wrights like Kalidasa, Bhasa and Bhavabhuti, logicians like Jaimini and Gargi, physicians and surgeons like Charaka, Susruta and Jivaka, mathematicians like Brahmagupta, Bhaskaracharya and Lilavathi and moralists like Bhatruhari. By any standards, these were great men and women who made notable contributions to their fields of study.

At least one university of ancient India, Takshasila (1000 B.C. to 500 A.D.) flourished several centuries before the ancient universities of the world like Alexandria, Athens and Constantinople. The universities of ancient India had an impressive programme of teaching and research. The staff of Takshasila, Nalanda and Vikramasila were outstanding scholars of high eminence and reputation. There was complete autonomy for teachers who never misused this privilege. No king or local authority interfered with their

administration. The teacher had a free hand in (1) deciding the duration of the course (2) in designing and directing the course (3) in enrolling or rejecting a student and (4) in laying down the rules for the day-to-day work. There was no formal examination. Panini, Chanakya and Jivaka were products of Takshasila University. Jivaka cured king Bimbisara of fistula and king Pradyota of Ujjain of jaundice. He did surgery and even treated cases of twisted intestines.

Nalanda became a university in the latter half of 6th century B.C. Its magnificent buildings were built by Buddhist and Hindu donors. Hiuen Tsiang said "All these buildings were majestic in size and height with richly adorned towers, fabulous turrets and observatories lost in the mist of the morning. The upper rooms towered above the clouds, the sun-set splendours and moon-lit glories. The grounds were beautified by ponds with blue lotuses intermingled with *kanaka* flowers of deep red colour. The whole place was shaded by mango groves."

The university was one mile long and one mile wide. The central college had 7 halls and 300 rooms for teaching work. There were six monasteries. It was a residential university with hostels containing single rooms (11ft. x 10ft.) and spacious double rooms. Each room had stone benches and niches for books and lamps. There was a common mess. It had an observatory and clepsydra. According to Hiuen Tsiang, this clepsydra gave correct time for all Magadha.

The library which had a large collection of books was housed in beautiful buildings called Ratnasagara, Ratnodadhi (a nine-storied building) and Ratnaranjaka. Foreign scholars came from different countries to study and copy them. It is reported to have copied from Nalanda 400 Sanskrit works amounting to 500,000 verses.

At one time 10,000 persons lived on the campus and 1510 of them were faculty members. On an average there were 100 lectures or discussion classes every day. The teacher-pupil ratio was 1 to 7

or 8. The vice-chancellor of the university was a Bhikshu possessing scholarship, character and seniority. He was elected by the various sanghas constituting the federation. The university had an academic council and a senate.

Kulapati is defined in puranas as one who educates and gives food and drink to 7 to 8 thousand students. The term is equivalent to our modern vice-chancellor. Kalidasa used the adjective, "Kulapatina" to Vasishtha in 'Raghuvamsa' when Dilipa and Vasishtha went to the forest.

Botany and medicine were developed on systematic lines in ancient India. Atreya of Takshasila asked his students to collect, identify and describe the properties of all the plants found within 4 yojanas of the university town. There were plant specialists like Kasyapa and Bhattotpala who made a deep study of the etiology, diagnosis and treatment of plant diseases. Susruta knew the germ or microbe theory of disease, dissection and the use of anaesthetic drugs. The Rig Veda refers to the Asvins giving an iron leg to Apala to replace the one lost by her in battle. This also proves that there were women-warriors in that period.

We find ample evidence to show that women did not occupy a lower position either in social life or education. Some of the Vedic poets were women. There were women soldiers who fought bravely in wars. Educated women, who distinguished themselves, include Ghosa, Sikata, Nivavari, Lopamudra, Gargi and those who wrote Vedic hymns. There was co-education of the grown-up men and women. Taittiriya Upanishad contains a reference to this when the teacher, who was about to discuss a topic in Eugenics, asked the expectant mothers to leave the class and return after the discussion. The Upanishads mention several women as teachers.