

THE HINDU-RELIGIO

PHILOSOPHICAL

PERSPECTIVES

OF

EDUCATION

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF JAFFNA

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# THE HINDU RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION



'In the thoughts of Asia, one finds sources of profound wisdom'. Knowledge is not mere acquaintance with things and events. It ought to be a means towards wisdom. The ancient Hindu religious philosophical thought considered that knowledge first of all, ought to help man to understand himself, his professional and civic duties and his relation to the physical and spiritual universe; and at the same time not forget the responsibility of education for the continuation and improvement of human standards, asserts, Robert Ulich, the contemporary American educational philosopher.

Ulich in his selections from Great documents, titled 'Three Thousand years of educational wisdom', interprets Asian educational thought with clarity and understanding.

The theories of education are the educational thoughts. Educational thoughts or ideas should not be in mere abstract terms, but should be in concrete terms of life and work. No reform of educational practice could be made without scientific, comprehensive educational thought. No theorising is of value that cannot be translated into action.

In fact, the evolution of educational thoughts and practice is an impressive facet of the history of world culture and civilisation itself.

Education is one of the greatest human enterprises in immediate planning to evolve a society, the state, the nation and the world, in consonance with the wishes of the people, students, teachers, parents and educators. But, education at the

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same time is a long enduring process of religio cultural self-evolution; the daily planning and structuring of education, should constantly be in touch with the wallsprings of this total cultural evolution.

Ulich has said 'that, 'the time is ripe for a history of educational thought which conceives of the western world only as a part of a total civilization of mankind'. He further adds that inspite of the philosophical richness of the eastern countries and of the Asian soil which has produced most of the world religious leaders, who have done more for the education of mankind, than all others put together, has not been emphasised'. Ulich laments that the study of the educational-philosophical thought of these countries have been over looked.

Wherever a peoples culture has been fully nourished by its religious traditions, education has been a part of total life with its daily tasks, social contacts, beliefs about God, man and the universe.

Life is an expression of Self-realization and that is the reason why Hindu education, though metaphysical and devotional in character, it is not ecclesiastical. Self-realization is not an act of self-interest; it denotes a joy fulfilment of one's specific destiny, duty and mission and this fulfilment takes place through the natural maturing of a person through the various stages of life.

The natural maturing is religious and educational and as such education in Hindu thought, was 'Science of life'.

In origin it seems that the concept of religion meant uniting the human and the divine, binding together of man and God. Religion aims at bringing of man into harmony not only with God, but also with his universe. More generally speaking, it is an attempt or a great series of attempts at discovering the meaning of the universe and adjusting human life to it.

The concept of religion has another relatively contemporary meaning, as to take cognizance of all aspects of divine thought.

Religion is a universal phenomenon. With the progress of physical sciences, man has been taken out of isolation. Every man became neighbour to every other; people began to know one another closely. They started a comparative study of the various religions and began to question the monopoly of truth of any particular religion. The comparative study of religions and self analysis removed man's religious blinkers. Minds every where started looking for points of concord and concurrence, and soon discovered and recognised that there are universal truths among religions.

The realisation of the Ultimate Principle, is the goal and that is the most essential unifying factor of all religions. Some religionists, may conceive the Ultimate as Non-Being. This difference, in the concept of the Ultimate Principle, is a matter of interpretation; the content of realization being the same.

The goal being the same, necessarily there must be a certain amount of unity in the means of attaining the goal, however much religions may vary in their outward appearances.

When enunciating the tenets of Hinduism, it has been declared by prophets and seers that religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man. Man, is potentially divine. But the divinity has to be manifested.

Realization is the goal, and manifestation is the means. All the religions have realization of the Ultimate Truth as their goal.

Religion has two aspects - the means and ends. The end is the same for all religions; the means vary in detail but agree in essentials.

Righteousness or Dharma is another common factor of all religions.

As religion is the highest need of human nature, souls require religious experience for their perfection.

Hinduism believes in God, in some form or other, either as a personal or an impersonal Being.

It believes in Atman - the self of man. The perfection of the Atman is a principal doctrine.

A fruitful point is the importance, the cruciability of Anubhuti - realization of the individual, which is the whole aim of Hinduism. In fact, the Hindu concept of philosophy and religion is an interpretation of the whole life, of man.

It asserts that within each one of us, there is the soul which is pure and perfect. The Hindu thought, is life-affirming and not life negating. It is life affirming not in the sense of superficial optimism, but affirming the reality as the base of life.

The same high truth which we know as philosophical understanding must coincide, and be compatible with what we are doing, in our religious or sacramental life.

This religious philosophy does not consider the World as Unreal; in fact it emphasises the humanitarian, social and economic programmes for the salvation of humanity.

Man should not feel helpless or hopeless. He must have a philosophy broad enough and deep enough to provide him a substantial basis for what he does in life.

For the Hindu, all the scriptures of the world must be sacred whatever is true and whatever is eternal is sacred to him.

The laws of the human heart is found in every land with every Prophet in each scripture.

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest exponents of Hinduism, declared that Hinduism sees the necessity of a

Variety of religions and spiritual paths since the people of the world and individuals within those peoples, differ affectively and volitionally, and other, still more inward ways.

To the Hindu, these religions are equal in that they are equally paths to God or life's goal.

'May He, Who is the Father in Heaven of the Christians, Holy of the Jews, Allah of the Muslims, Buddha of the Buddhists, Tao of the Chinese, Ahura Mazda of Zoroastrians and Brahman of the Hindus, lead us from the Unreal to the Real, from darkness to light, from disease and death to eternity', is the prayer of the Hindu Prophets and Philosophers.

The great Christian monk and preacher Meister Eckart was able to say that, 'all paths lead to God and he is on them, evenly, and that God has not bound up man's salvation with any given way'.

For Romain Rolland, the French universalist, Hinduism is synonymous with re-conciliation of mankind's different philosophical ideals and spiritual tendencies. It is a philosophy of human heartedness, pacifism and civic conscience.

William Wordsworth, the poet-educator, has discussed Hinduism, as a way of life, 'which could create a Universe of inconceivable beauty on which all things are full of love'. It creates a sense of solidarity with the world and its spiritual principle. It affirms that God is love.

The author of 'Perennial Philosophy' which is also called the 'Philosophia Perennis', Aldous Huxley, the novelist essayist, poet and explorer of perception, discusses Hinduism as the metaphysic that recognises a Divine Reality, to the lives and minds of the entire world.

It is the ethics that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent God of all being.

The highest form of devotion is Atma Nivedana Self dedication.

Service to God, humanity and Motherland are the Hindu ways of life.

Responsibility, is God's test of man. Duty should be discharged to its last syllable. It must stir one to the highest effort combine idealism with practical service.

All work is sacred.

The barriers of colour, race and creed that divide humanity are frail and at the first touch of one's genuine spark of divinity all the walls crumble down.

This is the basic principle of Hinduism, and Hinduism establishes perfect understanding in the world. There is no East and West. The glorious Divine light illumines the path of every seeker who dedicates himself to God.

These are the sentiments expressed by Sister Nivedita, the Irish religious social reformer, who incessantly toiled to create a new Bharat, based on the country's fundamentals.

For the 19th Century Norwegian literary psychologist, Henrik Ibsen, Hinduism, fosters abiding human relationship based on mutual love, trust and understanding and helps in the formation of an egalitarian social order.

Professor Arnold Toynbee, while discussing about various religious philosophies had occasion to say that Hinduism is an Inter-faith dimension, an Interdialogue between religions. It is not only a dialogue among religions as such it is a dialogue among men and women of different faiths and traditions. It is a means of promoting the unity of mankind, overcoming both imperialism and exclusionism in inter-religious relationship.

Hinduism is powerfully integrative and educative. It inspires intellect, knowledge, wisdom, devotion, concerned detachment friendliness, variety and vastness of experience.

Peace is not simply cessation or absence of war. It is equanimity.

Peaceful enlightenment and a sense of vocation are the attributes of an educated man.

This is the interpretation of Hindu religious philosophy of Mohamed Daud Rakbar, of the school of Theology of the Boston University.

Hinduism has a contribution to make to the achievement of ecumenism. Ecumenism is brotherly love; it should not be qualified brotherliness.

The solid basis for the wider ecumenism is that which is not qualified by reservation. It should be based on the acceptance of all religions, and the justification of this reverence must be found in the nature of existence itself.

Because of universal ignorance, we perceive diversity; so long as man perceives diversity, so long also will his search for unity last. And the more this refined diversity, the more subtle the faculties, he must develop to establish this unity in his perception.

Many of the gains of human civilization have been achieved by the unceasing effort of man. Our civilization is 'secure' in the sense that a base has been established from which it is possible to explore, more of man's potentialities. Man is making and re-making the face of the world, and his possibilities excite our imagination. Increasingly the artificial or man-made parts of our environment are capturing the focus of our attention.

Yet it is being increasingly felt that man has not been and is not studying himself sufficiently, in spite of the fact that this is for him, an old and perennial philosophical problem.

The 'existent man' contradicts the 'essence of man', at least the essence-his absolute intrinsic worth-he himself has not fully known and recognized. Education to-day does not provide fully for either one; therefore; man is not adequately

aware of his true being and he is away from it as well. The 'crisis' of human society today is essentially the critical situation the human person has placed himself in. This crisis, although it spells danger, also offers an opportunity, a chance to make the existent man 'achieve' his own essence. The crisis, to be sure, averts **complacency** because the danger is recognised; it **circumvents** despair because opportunity is entertained.

The world is in a state of becoming; it is moving towards actualization. Man must co-operate in furthering that actualization, in which there should be consonance between the 'essence' and 'existent'.

Mankind is an evolving species, we believe, for whose continuous survival man himself has a profound and anxious concern. Education should design values in a contextual way, such that those values can sustain **mankind** -mankind which is responsible for the formulation of values through education. Education should implement the ideal of optimum development, of each individual's of each natural sovereignty; it should also direct man how to move optimally in concert with an evolving universe.

Education, is the life source of human growth and progress. It should therefore, be viewed as a process of personal growth and progress. It should therefore, be viewed as a process of personal growth and also as a social institution. The theory of education should encompass all these and thereby ensure man's evolution towards a world in which human understanding and wisdom will grow apace with human knowledge.

Hinduism has considered the concept of man and has arrestingly brought forth in its views and practices between this and the concept of education. 'The Lord Himself is playing in the form of man' 'Yet man seems to belong to the world'. 'To attain human birth is so difficult; this birth will be in vain if one does **not** realize God'. 'God is the value-giving figure behind the world; man should get all values from him.

'God is knowledge and Eternal Bliss'. 'It is only by meditation upon God that man can attain eternal bliss'. 'God is Shiva and Shakti, Both aspects are necessary for creation', In the Hindu conception, to be educated means, to know, and to know to to know God'. In God are blended knowledge and bliss. bliss is perfected and eternal joy arising through knowledge. God in whom both knowledge and bliss are synthesised is the God who gives values to the world. This is the God man should seek to realise. Seeking to realise knowledge and values is therefore seeking education, for it is through education that human values are formulated.

The personal God, for the Hindu, is both male and female. The male manifestation is called Shiva and the female Shakti. Shiva has been defined as intelligence and Shakti as energy. Intelligence, in the abstract is not meaningful; it becomes so only when given practical expression; when it is energised it becomes creative intelligence. Education, being a creative activity, requires creative intelligence, requires God.

Hinduism asserts, that the true nature of man, is unbroken existence-knowledge bliss but that he has forgotten his real nature due to egoism and therefore seems limited. Man is innately knowledgeable and blissful, but it is not manifested. Positive education would bring this out in him. and make him shed his false associations and become what he truly is. 'The Divine Being dwells in all men'. 'This human body is the temple of the Lord'; it should not be kept in darkness; let the lamp of knowledge be lighted in it'. Everyone can attain knowledge.

The lamp of knowledge is the same as God. It is also education. Man is to be illumined through the knowledge of God, through the knowledge called education.

Education is not the monopoly of anyone, The social argument that if there is equal opportunity for all, all will become educated lies in the Hindu contention that everyone can attain knowledge.

But there are two tendencies in man, one towards the pursuit of liberation, the other towards involvement in worldli-

ness and its bondage. With the former he is pulled towards God supreme knowledge and beauty, devotion and compassion) by the latter he is in reality diminished through the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world. He may add to his work many grand achievements, but all these are done for his own glorification. Such is the ancient and oft-proclaimed dichotomy.

Contemporary Hindu Prophets and philosophers have sought to show how the two forces could be harmoniously combined or integrated. The search for liberation and the finding of self-manifestation need not tear a man apart. Seeking God through knowledge and devotion develops compassion. Even to live in this world at all, compassion is essential, as are various other spiritual qualities. To live in the world and to be worldly are two different things. The worldliness which becomes a bondage is that in which a man, in his anxiety to become glorious in a personal sense becomes self-glorified and self-centred. It leads to dis-illusionment.

Leading a life in the world, however, after marshalling one's inner spiritual resources, means translating knowledge for the good of oneself and for the good of others, and thereby seeking bliss for the society as well as for oneself. Education should bring this harmonization of the tendency to pursue spiritual perfection and the tendency to play a role in the world without bondage to it.

**Harnessing and harmonising external and internal nature** is one of essential tasks of education, and man is the central figure in this task. This arises from the Hindu principle that the aim of education is controlling nature, external and internal. By conquering internal nature, we conquer external nature. Conquering internal nature leads to psychological stability and purposeful activity. It helps man to conserve the energies of nature in a positive way, and educating the inner man results in conquest of physical nature by the manifestation of the energy conserved.

Hindu thought defined man as he 'intrinsically' is and also 'potentially' how he is expected to be. But man does not express himself as he could and should.

The Hindu seers stressed that the end of all education should be man-making. Education, should be all-round-Intellectual, physical and spiritual. The all round education should make an all-round man.

Education was the basic thing that could always help a man in every aspect, and that doing work among the people meant mainly doing educational work which extends itself to social economic and cultural work. This is the idea of humanitarian man-worshlp. Man's life should be a manifestation of the will to work for others, through educated, cultivated renunciation. This would be the social function of education.

It is because man is infinite, that he can only be satisfied when his desire is infinite and the fulfilment infinite. Here the word desire has not been used in the worldly sense. Desire is vast and is really man's own infinitude. Desire is something which should be fulfilled but remains otherwise, because it has not been expended. The desire of man is for freedom. He needs freedom to express his thought; energy and intelligence. His seeking freedom is his insatiable thirst. His desire will be fulfilled when he is free and he can be free only when he is able to know his infinitude. Finding his own infinitude is finding the man in him.

Men, if they know themselves will be strong and vigorous. Their life will be one of burning love and selflessness. This illustrates the illimitable potentialities of man. Hindu philosophy advocates the raising up of the God, sleeping is man. The Hindu concept of God is no less than all living beings.

This message of energy and hope, and prayer was to raise the 'dead and bring him to life'. This message of the divinity inherent in man emphasises his capacity for indefinite evolution.

One-sided intellectual development did not give the desired results. Without a strong and healthy physique no achievement of any kind is possible. It is only the man of all-round development who could be manly; man-making

education is not to be achieved by intellectual and physical development alone; education should cultivate the heart too.

The society, needs the sacrifice of her young men and women, unselfish and thorough-going, to struggle unto life and death, to bring about a new state of things; sympathy for the poor and bread to their hungry mouths and enlightenment.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda "a hundred thousand men and women fortified by eternal faith in the Lord and nerved to unqualified courage by their sympathy for the poor, the fallen and the down-trodden, who will go over the length and breadth of land preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up and the gospel of equality, are necessary". The Swami referred to the Indian context. But it is applicable in a global scale.

It was the belief of the Hindu thinkers that a new state of things could be brought about for the people by raising them educationally, economically and socially. To achieve this the man who would venture to volunteer for the task should be prepared to struggle with life and death. That was possible only for man with cultivated hearts.

The history of the world is the history of the men who had faith in them-selves. That faith calls out the divinity within. Man can do anything. Man fails only when he does not strive sufficiently to manifest his infinite powers. The faith referred to is man's faith in his own potentiality; though infinite without being tapped through education it remains an abstraction. People are as it were, buried in a dream enslaved by prejudice allowing themselves to fail under the weight of the slightest effort.

Hindu seers urged the people to become conscious of the Nation's God's namely the people themselves, and to awake from their dream. Man becomes helpless, resourceless, abandoned and despoiled without realising that he has within himself the Force, the Freedom, the Joy-the whole of Infi-

nite Existence. Behind every man, woman and child irrespective of caste or birth, weakness or strength, there lies the infinite capacity and possibility to become great.' That is the message of living Hinduism.

The Key-note of Hindu philosophy, 'Arise, awake' is a call to man. The call to awake refers the unfortunate fact of self-oblivion and to the necessity of being fully conscious of the hidden treasure of divinity in man. The call to arise is the call to put out the whole of one's energy to manifest the possibilities latent within. This is an educational ideal. Education could and should make men awake and arise.

Nation-making in the tradition of Hindu culture and civilisation has been initiated, and has arisen, in the realm of thought, in realm of feeling, and in a sense of commitment

Each man should recognize his birthland as a supreme fact in life and should willingly surrender himself to her influence, glorifying in it and striving to discover and realise it, in its fundamentals. This should be so in the realm of thought. By this, the individual develops a sense of belonging which is fundamental for a sense of nationality.

The positive desire self-surrender should be based on educated responsibility and trained energy.

He should relate himself to the birthland in the realm of feeling and to all those who with him are born of her, the land and the people. This relationship should not be a mere sentimental one. They should realise what the country has done for them. Feeling for the sorrows of men is good in itself. But finding the causes for the sorrows scientifically and trying to help them out of their sorrows is more useful.

This is an educational task.

It is not possible for a nation to express itself, unless the nation enters its cultural past, because new expression could be given best on the knowledge of the culture of the past. A nation must have an inheritance. We must not rob a nation of

its fundamental character. In a nation's past the nation sees its reflection. The nation while revealing the essential features of its past should gather from them the prophecy of the future. The key to new conquest lies always in training up rightly our connections with the past.

Education is the balm of inspiration for national awakening. It not only inspires this awakening but also restores and develops it. It also administers it.

Education should intervene to rescue of the nation out of mental stagnation and should evolve a national programme to adopt life to the sentiments of the country.

Being concerned about the nation is not only knowing the nation. It is being aware of it. These by themselves will not be enough. The nation should be realised; realisation should manifest itself in strong commitment to national life.

Education should strive the stirrings of a nation to express its own conception of ideal manhood. The nation's great educational task is to create man who will be the highest expression of its own thought.

In fact, highest of everything of itself.

Man is the epitome; manhood is the consummation of man into men.

These men should be symbolic of the nation in all its details.

Nothing captures the intellectual flavour of any age better than the ideal of the educated man and more so of man. The conception of ideal manhood will include the development of the mother's heart and the heroes' will.

Education which fosters nationalism should cultivate nation making. Nationalism is process; Nationmaking is the product.

Nationality has the sacredness of a Church, a hallowed place, a place of worship.

A nation is a place where there should be commonality of outlook.

It is a symbol of dedication.

The evolution of nationhood through religious education appears to be a major element which has resulted from the inter-penetration of education and nation-making.

Strengthening the place of religious unity, is essential in a number of countries seeking to foster national unity.

National unity and national identity are needs recognized at educational and political levels.

Religious education is a powerful implement of the creation of life of individuals as well as of country's ethno cultural communities.

Hindu thought has prescribed some paths, to aid humanity to realise its own divine nature. They are also described as the science of union with the supreme, the universe and society in religious educational aspects.

Jnana Yoga, prescribes the Path of knowledge for people to ratiocinate, to discriminate, between the permanent and the evanescent. It helps them to arrive at the eternal substratum behind people and the universe. It helps people to prepare to live in such a manner, that their life is in conformity with the discriminative process. Jnana Yoga, is the way of self-transcending knowledge. Bhakthi-Yoga, is based on emotion. It develops the Bhakthi Marga and brings about divine communion, which world translates itself into individual and social communion. Bhakthi-Yoga is Self-forgetting devotion.

Karma Yoga, is path of right activity. It is work done not for the sake of enjoyment or pleasure, but as duty in a spirit of dedication to a Divine Ideal; not for personal betterment but for expansion of the self by identifying with one and all in spirit of love for created beings; it is love not simply for one's family, community and country but for the whole world. Karma yoga is the way of selfless-action.

These three paths of, divine and social communion cannot be followed in compartments, any more than, in a man there can be only the faculty of thinking, or feeling or the will to the complete exclusion to the other faculties of the mind.

Often devotion at a certain stage may branch out into the path of knowledge and other into higher devotion.

So also in a man of right activity to which to consecrate his life and work, right activity could merge with the Absolute.

These paths merge one into another.

It is the task of education based on Hindu religious philosophy to establish a society resplendent with Sathyam, Absolute Truth and Sundaram which means beauty.

It is a Nithya, Kalyana, Sundara society; a society to foster, Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

Sathyam, the Absolute Truth, is the basis of the whole universe; if one stands on Sathyam he is able to uphold Dharma-righteousness. It is Dharma which upholds and sustains that is within and without.

The steadfast adherence to Dharma leads one to shanti. Shanti is embracing peace. One with peace and tranquility is, always calm and serene. Such a person will look upon everybody around and elsewhere with love and kindness. It would be love for the fellow beings, love to the universe, love towards the created and creator.

This universal love is that which ultimately blossoms into ecstatic, Prema, both divine and social.

While Bhakthi emanates from a being in effluence, Ananda or Bliss automatically fills him in full. This should be the aim of every human being.

Sathyam is the root of society, and it is the basic principle on which society rest. Based on Sivam or Goodness.

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which may be considered as the trunk of the Tree of society, we act and conduct our deeds. Beauty, which is considered, as the head of society, makes society attain aesthetic fullness and sensibility.

The Society should be based on truth, live in goodness and melt and merge with everything beautiful.

One should melt in Bhakthi and merge with the Supreme and enjoy the everlasting happiness,

'Man is inherently universal', is one of the cardinal principles of Hinduism. 'The universal in man should be educated to manifest itself. The universal man does not necessitate the denial of individuality. The individuality of each man is of utmost value to society; the universal man is also found in society as the infinite extension of the individual. The universal man is the individual in his universal aspect, or the aspect that, as an expression of the universal spirit, is common to all men'. The man who has already attained a degree of universality should be educated to become more universal. This will help mankind to function as an entity. Building up the consciousness of that entity which already exists is the task of education. The individual developed both intellectually and physically, becomes socially sensitive, social sensitivity makes him universal.

The Hindu philosophical, religious thought, which wants to see the intellectual, physical, social, and universal manifested in man makes a considered plea that man should realize his own nature. The life of man, fulfilment in the knowledge of his in own spiritual nature, which is existence itself. It is therefore universal and not limited. All our misery comes through ignorance and this ignorance consists in the negative idea of the manifold, the separation of individual from individual, of group, from group, nation from nation. It is this sense of separation which is the explanation of internal tension, selfishness and all the concomitant evils that beset the world. This separation is not real; it is merely on the surface; in the heart of things there is unity.

When we go below the surface we find the unity between man and man. Deeper still, we find all, as the variation of the One, and he who has attained this conception of oneness has no more delusion, no more misery. What is needed, therefore, is a re-orientation of man's view of himself. Only religion and philosophy have been in a position to offer this. But now many fields are open to science, social sciences, psychology and education- 'Knowledge of the unity of existence extinguishes all fear, ends misery and brings infinite bliss. It gives him infinite strength to suffer and to act, and leads him to absolute freedom from all limitations. Wherever there is expansion in love or progress in well-being, individually or collectively, it springs from the perception, the realization and the putting into practice of the eternal truth the oneness of all beings'.

Education has its final aim in helping man to realize his true inwardness. The Hindu conception makes man realize, what is originally within, and what he is in purest form. When self-realization in terms of spirituality is recognised at the highest form of living, all forms of life and of culture the arts and sciences are directed towards it.

From the standpoint of absolute, non-dual one-ness the relative phenomenal world of multiplicity, may be called the manifestation of the one-ness. In a very special and direct sense the sacred traditions of Hindu scripture is the product of that one-ness. In it are contained the accounts of those who have realised in their lives the supreme identity with the universe,

Through an arduous process of investigation, contemplation and meditation, they left the highest legacy to all mankind and a challenge for each individual to complete his conversion to one-ness.

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