

STUDIES IN HINDUISM



KALAI PULAVAR
K. NAVARATNAM



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By KALAI PULAVAR K. NAVARATNAM

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by

KALAIPULAVAR K. NAVARATNAM

With a Foreword by

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JAFFNA, CEYLON

1963.

294.54
NAV

First published in 1963

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PRINTED AT THE
THIRUMAKAL PRESS, CHUNNAKAM, CEYLON.

TO
Dr. S. SUBRAMANIAM, J. P., O. B. E.
Retired Provincial Surgeon, Ceylon.

PHILANTHROPIST AND PATRON OF LEARNING

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*This posthumous publication of the **Studies in Hinduism** which is an exposition of the main features of Hindu Religion, Philosophy and Mysticism by my husband, the late Kalaipulavar K. Navaratnam, has been rendered possible by the generous grant of the Hindu Religious Affairs Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ceylon. Dr. S. Subramaniam, the patron of all good causes in our country, also helped with a kindly gift. The courtesy of the Eelakesari Ponniah Memorial Publication Society who undertook, as a labour of love, the responsibility of bringing out this sumptuous volume is worthy of the highest commendation.*

My profound gratitude is also due to Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, Head of the Department of Philosophy, Madras University, who has so kindly contributed an appreciative Foreword.

Maheswary Devi Navaratnam

*“Shantiniketan”,
1, B. A. Thamby Lane,
Jaffna, 22-6-1963.*

FOREWORD

The late Sri K. Navaratnam's *Studies in Hinduism* will be welcomed by everyone who knew him, as a moving testament of his profound faith in the spiritual values that inspire Hinduism. It is not easy to combine scholarship with faith. Sri Navaratnam was an exact scholar and a man of deep faith. It is with great conviction that he writes, but not as a partisan or dogmatic theologian. The best that Hinduism has to offer is non-dogmatic and above every kind of narrowness. In these *Studies*, Sri Navaratnam has entered into the spirit of Hinduism and has expounded its many-sided nature with penetrative insight and lucidity of expression.

Hinduism is a difficult religion to understand. More than any other religion, it has suffered on account of misrepresentations and unkindly criticisms arising from prejudice and lack of understanding. Being an old faith, probably the oldest living faith, it runs the risk of being regarded as outmoded and as out-of-date. Because it is bewilderingly complex, the critics take it

for a set of ill-assorted doctrines and irrational practices. The unfortunate history of India for the past few centuries, when she had to suffer foreign domination, has also been responsible for the down-grading of Hinduism. For the thinking minds, it may not be difficult to comprehend that intrinsic worth is not to be measured by material success. But, nevertheless, the practical world identifies the two, and is ready to pay obeisance to the physically mighty and the materially prosperous.

Fortunately for India and Hinduism, a new order is unfolding itself. The Renaissance which started in the last century is now in its flowering season. The Hindus, as a result, are getting to be awake to the greatness of their faith. A religious tradition that has produced in every age seers, saints and sages must have in it a vitality that defies the challenge of time, and a precious legacy which humanity cannot ignore. A religion that has been constantly renewing itself in the lives and teachings of master-minds cannot become obsolete or out-of-date. Slowly but surely, the elements of value in Hinduism are gaining world-wide recognition; and this is quite essential for the enrichment of the cultural gains of humanity.

The strength of Hinduism lies in its inseparable alliance with philosophy. Hinduism is a faith that inquires. That is why dogmas do not dominate the different schools and sects of Hinduism. Anything that is believed in without proper inquiry will not result in any good, says Sankara, the great teacher of Vedanta. The Sanskrit term *mata* which means religion stands for 'conclusion which has been arrived at after inquiry'. It is the spirit of inquiry stressed by the great teachers that is responsible for Hinduism's catholicity and comprehensiveness. 'There is no sage without a view of his own', declares the *Mahabharata*. In the words of Max Muller, "This religion has room for almost every religion, nay it embraces them all." "Hinduism", says Mahatma Gandhi, "is a grand evolutionary process and not a narrow creed."

When a plea is made for a reverential study of all faiths, the critic remarks that such a plea assumes that all religions are the same, which is a characteristically Hindu belief. With reference to this criticism, it has to be pointed out that Hinduism does not say that all religions are the same, but only that there are several approaches to the ultimate truth, and that the various religions which are but different approaches have, each of them, elements

of value. Those who have bestowed some attention to the branch of study called Comparative Religion tend to agree with this conclusion. Dr. Wilfred C. Smith, Professor of Comparative Religion at McGill University, makes the significant remark that it is unchristian to think that Christianity is the only true religion and the others are either false or insufficient. "It will not do", he declares, "to have a faith that can be undermined by God's saving one's neighbour; or to be afraid lest other men turn out to be closer to God than one has been led to suppose."

It is as imbued with the deeply catholic spirit of Hinduism that Sri K. Navaratnam expounds in this book the philosophy, ethics and mysticism of this fascinating faith. His exposition makes a great contribution to authentic religious literature.

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

University Buildings,
Madras,
May 27, 1963.



KALAI PULAVAR K. NAVARATNAM

(1898 — 1962)

PREFACE

The subject matter of this volume consists of a series of ten lectures delivered under the auspices of the Institute of Christian Study, Jaffna, at the Christa Seva Ashrama, Chunnakam, during 1959 and 1960. These Lectures were meant to serve as an introduction to the study of Hindu Religion and Philosophy by non-Hindus. They are now being published, after revision and addition of footnotes.

My approach to the study and interpretation of Hinduism is based, to a great extent, on the writings of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Abhedananda, Sir John Woodroffe and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. My aim has been to present in a clear and concise form the fundamentals of Hinduism in the light of modern research. I have avoided discussions of metaphysical and epistemological theories. In keeping with the Hindu tradition, I have maintained the religious aspect of philosophy, more than the pure intellectual aspect of it, and have throughout, emphasized the mystical and spiritual aspect of religion in preference to the dogmatic. In summarizing the different Darsanas I have followed modern scholarship.

It is not easy to mention individually the various scholars, both Indian and Western, whose

writings have been my source books. I have in many places used their own words, phrases and sentences, for the sake of clarity and beauty of expression. I must acknowledge my great indebtedness to all those from whose writings I have drawn freely, and express my sincere gratitude to the publishers of their works. The bibliography at the end of the book gives the names of the books, their authors and the publishers.

'Shantiniketan',
Jaffna, Ceylon,
February, 1962.

K. NAVARATNAM

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Chapter One

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF HINDUISM

All religions can be studied from more than one point of view—Historical, Theological, Philosophical and Mystical. In the historical study of a religion an attempt is made to trace the origin and development of the various doctrines, beliefs, institutions and sects. Anthropological and ethnological sciences have helped a great deal, in modern times, the historical study of religion. The theological study deals with the dogmas and doctrines in relation to the religious institutions and the practical application of these to everyday life. The philosophical aspect is concerned with the rational analysis of the doctrines in relation to the Reality with the aid of logic. This study is purely an intellectual activity which, if done in the right way, will help to promote a better religious life. The mystical approach to religion investigates the pure religious experiences of the mystics and saints with a view to understanding them and to formulate a course of discipline to experience the highest truths. We are, here, concerned only with the philosophical, theological and mystical aspects of Hinduism.

The Word 'Hindu'

There are a few in Jaffna and in South India who proclaim that there is no such religion as 'Hinduism', and that *Saivism* is the name of the religion of the Tamils. This is a new form of attack adopted by those who are opposed to Sanskrit culture and Brahminism. It is a socio-political agitation not based

on any religious doctrine or historical fact. Moreover, it is absurd to maintain that *Saivism* is the only religion of the Tamils. There are *Vaisnavites* among Tamils to whom the *Nālāyira Pirapantham* is as sacred as the *Tevārams* are to the *Saivites*. *Māyōn* the Tamil counterpart of *Visnu*, was the God of the *Mullai Nila* (pastoral) people according to *Tolkāppiam*, the oldest Tamil grammar. Nobody can maintain that the cult of *Māyōn* was introduced into the Tamil country by the *Āryans*. The *Vaisnava* Tamils of today may be the descendants of the worshippers of *Māyōn*, in the same way as the present *Subramanya* or *Muruka* worshippers are descendants of the worshippers of *Seyōn* of the *Tolkāppiam* period.

It is true that the term 'Hindu' does not appear in any of the Hindu scriptures. This word was used by the Persians to denote the people who lived on the eastern side of the river *Sindhu*. The people were known by the name of the river as *Sindhūs* and this later became Hindus. The common name used to denote the people of the area, gradually gave rise to the word 'Hinduism', meaning the religion of the Hindus.

Excluding the Buddhists and the Jains, all the others who followed the religion based on the teachings of the Vedas, were then known as *Vaidikas* and their faith was known as *Vaidika-Dharma* or *Sanātana-Dharma* the religion based on Eternal Truths. This *Vaidika-Dharma* was given the geographical name of 'Hinduism' by the early foreigners who came in contact with the people of India. When any one now uses the word 'Hinduism', it actually refers to the religion which is based on the teachings of the Vedas or which considers the Vedas as its final authority. Whether one is a *Saivite* or a *Vaisnavite*, or a *Sākta*, or a devotee of *Muruka*, he must accept the Vedas as his final authority. By long usage, the terms

Sanātana-Dharma and 'Hinduism' have come to mean the same thing. Hinduism is the modern name given to *Sanātana-Dharma* and *Saivism*, *Vaisnavism*, *Sāktism* etc., are sects belonging to it. It is therefore, meaningless, to quarrel over the words 'Hinduism' and '*Saivism*' and to maintain that *Saivism* is the religion of the Tamils and that the Tamils have nothing to do with 'Hinduism'. Mr. S. Sivapāthasundaram, the great *Saiva* scholar of Jaffna, maintained that *Saivism* is a sect of Hinduism. He writes, "Hinduism is a group of religions which accept the authority of the Vedas. The most important members of this group are *Saivism*, *Vaisnavism* and *Sāktism*".¹ In view of what I have said so far, Hinduism may be said, in the words of Sir P. S. Sivaswāmy Aiyar, to connote among other things a belief in the authority of the Vedas and other sacred writings of the ancient sages, in the immortality of the soul and in a future life, in the existence of a Supreme God, in the theory of Karma and re-birth, in the performance of *Srāddha*, in the social organization represented by the *Varnāshrama Dharma*—classification of social life and activities into four divisions, in the theory of the four *Purusārthas*—*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mōksha*, and in the theory of the four stages of individual life—*Brahmacharya*, *Grhastha*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa*.²

Hindu Scriptures

The scriptures of Hinduism are divided into two main sections: The Common Scriptures and the Sectarian Texts. The common scriptures are those which are accepted by all the sects as the basis of their religious doctrines and dogmas. The sectarian books are those which are authorities for a particular sect only. The common scriptures are the Vedas, the *Dharma-Shāstras*, and the Epics.

The Vedas

The Vedas are four in number. They are: The *Rig-Veda*, *Sāma-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda*. Each Veda is divided into four sections known as *Samhitās*, *Brāhmanas*, *Āranyakas* and Upanishads.

The *Samhitās* are also known as Mantras which are hymns addressed to the Vedic Deities. They are recited at the time of a sacrifice by special priests who have a specialized knowledge of the proper mode of chanting them. *Brāhmanas* are books mainly in prose, explaining the sacrifices and the rituals connected with them. *Āranyakas* are treatises which deal with the mystical interpretations of the rituals and they are meant more for intellectual apprehension and meditation than for any practical performance of rituals. The Upanishads which form the last section of the Vedas deal with metaphysical problems relating to God (*Brahman*), Soul (*Ātman*), Liberation (*Mukti*) etc. They are in the form of dialogues and deal with the various aspects of the spiritual life of an aspirant and chalk out the path of realization which is the goal of human existence. The Upanishads are said to be 108 in number, but actually there are more than that number in existence. This is due to the various sects adding their own Upanishads to the original ones. Even, Sri C. Rajagopalachariar had added one Upanishad—the Ramakrishna Upanishad—to the already existing number. The most important Upanishads are twelve *Īsa*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Prasna*, *Aitareya*, *Taittirīya*, *Brhadāranyaka*, *Chāndogya*, *Mundaka*, *Māndūkya*, *Svetāsvatara* and *Kausītakī*.

The Vedas are also divided into two divisions according to their use and purpose. They are *Karma-Kānda* and *Jnāna-Kānda*. The *Karma-Kānda* includes the *Samhitās* and the *Brāhmanas*. The *Jnāna-Kānda* includes the *Āranyakas* and the Upanishads. *Karma-*

Kānda deals with the sacrifices and the rituals connected with them. *Jnāna-Kānda* is meant for the sole purpose of intellectual study and contemplation. That is why it is known as *Jnāna-Kānda* or knowledge portion. It is also the custom to classify them into *Karma-Kānda*, ritual section, *Upāsana-Kānda*, meditation section and *Jnāna-Kānda*, knowledge section. The Mantras and *Brāhmanas* constitute *Karma-Kānda*, the *Āranyakas* *Upāsana-Kānda* and the Upanishads *Jnāna-Kānda*.

The Vedas are considered as revelations* and are eternal in character. *Sruti* is another name by which the Vedas are known. Anything which is of the character of revelation may be classified as *Sruti*. The truths experienced or perceived by the saints in their super-conscious state form the contents of *Srutis* and as such they are eternal and ever new. They are not limited by the conditions of time and space. Traditional doctrines and dogmas are of a socio-religious character and they should not contradict the *Srutis*.

Vedāngas

For a correct understanding of the Vedic Hymns and the correct performance of Vedic Sacrifices, a good knowledge of the *Vedāngas* is indispensable. The *Vedāngas* are six: *Sikṣā*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta*, *Chandah*, *Jyotisa*, and *Kalpa*. *Sikṣā* deals with phonetics, pronunciation and accent. *Vyākaraṇa* is grammar. *Nirukta* is philology and etymology. *Chandah* deals with metre and prosody which is a matter of vital importance in connection with the reciting of the

*The real meaning of Revelation seems to the present writer to be not any external message delivered to man from without, but a divine afflatus springing from within, the result of inspiration through God-intoxication,

—*A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 9

hymns. *Jyotisa* includes astronomy and astrology. It deals with the movements of the planets and their influence on human affairs. *Kalpa* deals with the method of rituals and the conduct of individuals. *Kalpa* is divided into three sections. *Srautam*, *Grhyam* and *Dharma* (Law). *Srauta-Sūtras* explain the method of general sacrifices. *Grhya-Sūtras* explain the domestic rituals. *Dharma-Sūtras* explain the rules relating to individual and social conduct. To understand and appreciate the principles and philosophy of Vedic religion one should possess a detailed knowledge of the *Vedāngas*.

Smrtis

The *Dharma-Shāstras* which are also known as *Smrtis* come next in importance to the *Srutis*. The *Dharma-Shāstras* are books which lay down the laws that regulate the conduct of the daily life of a Hindu wherever he may be. The whole social order of the Hindus is based on the *Dharma-Shāstras*. *Smrtis* are not eternal and they can be altered to suit the changes of time and environment. Different *Smrtis* were written to suit different geographical areas. The law books are known by the names of the compilers. The most important of them are *Manu*, *Yajnavalkya*, *Gautama*, *Parāśara*, *Nārada*, *Sankha* and *Āpastamba*. Whenever there arises a conflict between the law of a *Smrti* and the doctrine of a *Sruti*, the latter prevails.

The one great fact which we should not fail to note in the case of all the *Smrtis* is that the authors themselves are men of religious realization and not mere socio-political leaders. The laws governing the conduct of social and religious life of the Hindus are the creations of men of spiritual insight and wisdom. That is the reason why Hindu society insists on everybody who calls himself a

Hindu, to conform to a particular social pattern, which is indispensable for the spiritual well-being of an individual*. The social life of the Hindus is based and controlled by spiritual principles and not by economic and political laws which are temporal and changing. Sir Charles Eliot, very correctly states, "Here (India) more than in any other country the national mind finds its favourite occupation and full expression in religion. This quality is geographical rather than racial, for it is possessed by Dravidians as much as by *Āryans*. From the Rajah to the peasant most Hindus have an interest in theology and often a passion for it. Few works of art or literature are purely secular: the intellectual and aesthetic efforts of India, long continuous and distinguished as they are, monotonous in as much as they are almost all, the expression of some religious phase".§

According to the *Smrtis*, every Hindu is expected to live up to the four human ends which are called *Purusārthas*. The daily life of an individual and the normal social activities of the community are built on the firm foundation of Righteousness and Truth, which is known as *Dharma*. *Dharma* is the eternal

*It is doubtful whether life can be significantly lived without conscious relation to some tradition. Those who do live without it live as a kind of moral proletariat, without roots and without loyalties. For to be significant life needs form, and form is the outcome of a quality of thought and feeling which shapes a tradition.

—*The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking*, p. 163.

§With them (inhabitants of India,) first of all, religion was not only one interest by the side of many. It was the all absorbing interest; it embraced not only worship and prayer, but what we call philosophy, morality, law, and government—all was pervaded by religion. Their whole life was to them a religion.

—*India, What Can It Teach Us?* pp. 107,8

law which governs the whole universe both, animate and inanimate. It is neither a physical law which operates in the phenomenal world of cause and effect, nor is it a product of circumstances. This law is divine and immutable. It is the Hindu equivalent of Kant's 'Categorical Imperative'. *Artha* is the pursuit of wealth without violating the law of *Dharma*. Wealth, according to the Hindu *Shāstras*, should not be acquired solely for the purpose of promoting one's own selfish ends. It should be acquired by moral means for the good of the whole community, and should be held as a trust to be used or placed at the disposal of the community when the need arises. Wealth will not be a bondage if acquired according to *Dharma* and utilized unselfishly for the benefit of the community. Hindu society is founded on a spiritual communism and every individual is expected to live not only for his own well-being but for the collective good of humanity. The Vedic injunction that every householder should perform daily the *Pancha-Yajnas* exemplifies this great truth. The *Pancha-Yajnas* (five daily sacrifices) are *Brahma-Yajna*, *Deva-Yajna*, *Pitr-Yajna*, *Bhuta-Yajna* and *Manusya-Yajna*. *Brahma-Yajna* is the chanting of the Vedas and contemplation of the Supreme Reality. *Deva-Yajna* is the offering made to the *Devas* or Gods; *Pitr-Yajna* is the offering to the ancestors; *Bhuta-Yajna* is offering to the non-human beings; *Manusya-Yajna* is the feeding of the guest or visitor. The above five daily acts create in the mind of the individual who performs them, a feeling of fellowship and oneness with everything, seen and unseen, and widens his outlook on life.

Tiruvalluvar defines the duties of a householder in the following verse:

தென்புலத்தார் தெய்வம் விருந்தொக்க ருனென்றும்
கைம்புலத்தா ரும்ப றலை.

The chief duty of the householder is to preserve the five fold rule of conduct towards the *manes*, God, his guests, his relations and himself.

Kāma is the pursuit of pleasure or happiness through ethical means. All enjoyments and sensuous pleasures should be so controlled as to sublimate the emotions and bring peace and contentment to an individual. The place assigned to pleasure provides also for its regulated enjoyment, rather than for its suppression. Life should not be converted into a battle-ground for emotional conflicts. Individuals should train themselves by self-control and attain an inner calm and peace. Spiritual perfection is the goal of life and the whole activity of an individual should be carried on in such a way as to lead him finally to attain Liberation or *Moksha*.

Ithihāsas

The Epics come next in importance to the *Smṛtis*. The Epics are *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. They centre round the lives of kings and their activities. The great scripture, *Sri Bhagavad Gītā* forms a part of the *Mahābhārata*. *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* doctrines and teachings are also found in it. Practically everything connected with the composite Hindu culture of India finds a place in the *Mahābhārata*, and because of this it is respected and revered by all the sects of Hinduism as the fifth Veda.

Āgamas

Among the sectarian scriptures of Hinduism, the *Āgamas* occupy the first place.* Each sect has

*The Vedic *Āryans* possessed no temples and used no images. The Dravidian Culture promoted image worship, and insisted on *puja* in place of *Yajna*. The various treatises on temples and image worship took their shape after

its own *Āgamas* and they are considered revelations by the sects concerned. The *Āgamas* accept the Vedas as the final and unifying authority, as a matter of principle and uniformity. Wherever there is a difference of opinion regarding a doctrine or dogma between the Vedas and *Āgamas*, the Vedic doctrine prevails.

Purānas

The *Purānas* are sectarian in character and speak about the doctrines, dogmas and stories of Deities connected with the sects to which they belong. They are 18 in number. The following are the **Mahā Purānas*: *Brahma, Padma, Vishnu, Siva, Bhāgavata, Nārada, Mārkandeya, Agni, Bhavishya, Brahmavaivarta, Linga, Varāha, Skānda, Vāmana, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda, and Brahmānda*. There are an equal number of 18 *Upa Purānas*. In the provincial languages of India, there are many *Purānas* which are of local interest and should not be confused with the *Mahā Purānas* spoken of in the Hindu Scriptures. *Periapurānam* of *St. Sekilar*, *Kanthapurānam* of *St. Kachchappa Sivāchariar*,

Hinduism grew out of Vedism. Vedic hymns were, however, used, and the inspiring genius of the seers fused the Vedic and the non-Vedic elements, and gave to the *Āgamas* equal authority with the Vedas.

— *Religion and Society, p. 125*

* The *Mahāpurānas* are grouped into three Sections as *Saiva, Vaisnava and Brahma*. Dr. M. Winternitz, in his "*A History of Indian Literature*" mentions the classification according to *Padma Purāna*, as follows:

Vaisnava Purānas: *Visnu, Nārada, Bhāgavata, Garuda, Padma, Varāha*.

Saiva Purānas: *Matsya, Kurma, Linga, Siva, Skānda, Agni*.

Brahma Purānas: *Brahmānda, Brahmavaivarta, Mārkandeya, Bhavishya, Vāmana, Brahma*.

Thiruvilayādal Purānam of *Paranjōti* and *Tiruvāta-vooradigal Purānam* of *Kadavul Māmunivar* which are all in Tamil are examples of provincial *purānas*.

The *Mahā Purānas* and the provincial *purānas* have played a very important part in the cultural synthesis of Hindu India. They are a lasting monument to the wonderful power of adaptability of the *Hindu Dharma*. The various cults found in ancient India were brought into the Hindu fold, without injury to their individuality by means of these books which have no parallel in any other religious literature of the world. The puranic literature of Hinduism proclaims to the world the process by which the seers and wise-men of Hindu India put into practise the great truth of the Vedas, "That which exists is one, sages call It variously," by recognizing the different tribal cults as the natural development of man's instinctive urges towards religious activities and conceptions, irrespective of geographical and cultural differences.

Devotional Literature

In addition to the *Āgamas*, there are devotional anthologies and purely theological manuals belonging to each sect. They are very helpful in promoting the spiritual life of individuals and are a source

Srila Sri Ārumuga Nāvalar in *Kanthapurāna Vachanam*, mentions the classification as follows:

Saiva Purānas: *Siva, Bhavishya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Linga, Skānda, Varāha, Vāmana, Matsya, Kurma, Brahmānda.*

Vaisnava Purānas: *Garuda, Nārada, Visnu, Bhāgavata, Brahma Purānas*: *Brahma, Padma.*

Agneya Purāna: *Agni.*

Surya Purāna: *Brahmavaivarta.*

Dr. R. C. Dutt in his "*Civilisation in Ancient India*" classifies the *Purānas* in the same way as Dr. Winternitz. *Siva Purāna* is also known as *Vāyu Purāna*.

of great help in the practice of devotion. The *Tevārams*, *Tiruvāchakam* and *Nālāyirapirapantham* are devotional books. The fourteen *Saiva Siddhānta Shāstras* known as *Meihanda Shāstras*, are theological treatises which deal with the practice and philosophy of *Saiva Siddhānta*. The theological manuals are completely sectarian in character and are fully based on the sectarian *Āgamas*. They undoubtedly accept the Vedas as final authority.

Different Sects of Hinduism

The most important orthodox sects of Hinduism today are *Saivism*, *Vaisnavism* and *Sāktism*. *Gānapatyam* and *Kaumaram* also existed as separate sects, but now they have been absorbed into *Saivism*. *Ganapathy* worship is even now prevalent in *Mahārastra*. Sun-worship as a separate cult existed in the middle ages, and there are temples dedicated to the sun, now found in ruins, in *Madhya Pradesh*. *Kaumaram* is the cult which considers *Skānda* or *Muruka* as Supreme Being. This cult does not now exist as a separate sect. It now forms a part of Siva-worship. *Sāktism* is very popular in Bengal. *Sāktas* worship the mother aspect of God.

Saivism and *Vaisnavism* have their own sub-sects. Popular *Saiva* sects of modern India are: *Saiva Siddhānta* of South India, *Vīrasaivism* or *Lingāyatism* of *Karnāṭaka* and *Trīka* System or *Kashmir Saivism* of North India. *Sri Vaisnavam* and *Dvaitam* of *Madhvācharya* are the prominent sects of *Vaisnavism* in South India. In North India there are many *Vaisnava* sects such as the followers of *Sri Chaitanya*, *Sri Nimbarka* and *Sri Vallabha*. Worship of *Sri Rāma* and *Sri Krishna* is very popular in North India.

There are three elements in the religious sects of Hinduism. They are the Philosophical or Metaphysical, the Devotional and the Ritual. The Devotional and Ritual aspects centre round temple worship. The religious philosophies of the sects are theistic in form and structure and are more spiritual in aim and purpose.

Beliefs Common To All Sects

Irrespective of doctrinal differences between the various sects of Hinduism, they have a fundamental unity in their way of life and beliefs. All sects accept the following beliefs:

1. A belief in the existence of God. Names only vary.
2. A belief in the existence of a soul separate from the body.
3. A belief in the existence of the finitising principle known as *Avidyā* or *Mala*.
4. A belief in the principle of Matter—*Prakṛti* or *Māyā*.
5. A belief in the theory of *Karma* and Reincarnation.
6. A belief in the indispensable guidance of a *Guru* to guide the spiritual aspirant towards God Realization.
7. A belief in *Mōksha* or Liberation as the goal of human existence.
8. A belief in the indispensable necessity of temple-worship for all beginners in religious life.
9. A belief in graded forms of religious practices, both internal and external, till one realizes God.
10. A belief in *Ahimsa* as the greatest *Dharma* or Virtue.

11. A belief in mental and physical purity as indispensable factors for spiritual progress.

Samskaras or Socio-Religious Activities

A Hindu is expected to perform all his work in an attitude of dedication to God, and therefore, there is a religious undertone in everything he does. Social rules and regulations are so framed as to direct one more towards spiritual values than towards worldly gains. Economic and political factors are not considered as ends in themselves. But, they are looked upon as aids to help people to live in comfort and health, so that they may pursue the higher ideals without frustration.

The Rituals which the Hindus are called upon to perform in their course of life are of two kinds. They are Domestic and Public. The following are the Domestic Rituals:

1. *Jātakarma*: Rites performed immediately after the birth of the child by the father welcoming it and praying for its long-life, intelligence, wisdom and well-being.
2. *Nāma-Karanam*: When the child is eleven days old, or on the tenth or twelfth day, the naming ceremony is performed with devotion to God. Generally the name of a Divine Being or a saint or the name of a man of learning and wisdom is given to the child.
3. *Annaprāsanam*: In the sixth month the ceremony of feeding the child with solid food is performed, and this is known as *Annaprāsanam*.
4. *Chūdā-Karanam*: In the first or third year, the ceremony of shaving the head is

performed. It is called *Chūdā-Karanam*. This is generally done at a sacred spot.

5. *Karna-Vēdanam*: The ear-boring ceremony is performed in the fifth year. This is known as *Karna-Vēdanam*. This ceremony is not mentioned in the authoritative lists of *Samskaras*. But it is prevalent among all Hindus. Fifty or Sixty years ago this ceremony was performed irrespective of sex. But it is now only observed in the case of females.

With the above five *Samskaras*, the child-stage or infant period of one's life ends. The period of youth begins with the Sixth *Samskara*.

6. *Vidyārambha*: At the age of five or six a child is taught the alphabets and the period of study begins.
7. *Initiation or Dīksha*: At the age of seven or eight the youth is given the necessary guidance to start the religious practices according to the sect to which he belongs. This is performed by the family priest called the *purohita*. Brahmins receive their *Upanayanam* at this age.

At the close of the period of studentship known as *Brahmacharya*, which is at the age of 21, the youth becomes an adult and he is considered fit to enter the life of a *Grhastha* or householder.

8. *Vivāha*: With the ceremony of *Vivāha* or marriage the adult enters the life of a householder.
9. *Preta-karma*: The ceremonies performed after death on the body (*Annamaya-Kosha*), before cremation, are called *Preta-karma*.

10. *Srāddha*: The annual performance of a ceremony at home in memory of one's parents and ancestors is known as *Srāddha*.

Fasting and worship of one's own *Ista Devata* is enjoined on all during the performance of the above *Samskaras*.

Public Rituals

Temple worship and rituals connected with temples form, not only an indispensable part of the spiritual life of the Hindus, but are also connected with the socio-religious life of the people. Each sect has its own days of fasting and people are expected to attend the temples, after physical purification, and perform their worship in conformity with the rules prescribed for such occasions. On the days of fasting, non-vegetarian food is strictly prohibited. One who is addicted to non-vegetarian diet is prevented from entering the inner court yard of the temple. The rules relating to mental and physical purity are common to all the Hindus irrespective of their sects. *Thai Pongal*, New Year and *Deepāvali* are festivals common to all Hindus, and on these days they are expected to fast and offer worship at home or at the temples.

From what we have so far enumerated, it should be evident that the Hindus, irrespective of their sects, have a common religious tradition and culture of their own. No one can call himself a Hindu who does not observe the rules and regulations prescribed in the scriptures and perform the *Samskaras* described above. A Hindu can follow any metaphysical doctrine, but it is obligatory on his part to accept the socio-religious rules and act

according to them. In this he has no freedom of choice unless he is a *Sannyāsin* or a Saint.*

Four Āshramas

The life of an individual is divided into four stages or periods. They are the period of study—*Brahmacharya*, the period of married-life—*Grhastha*, the period of meditation and penance, *Vānaprastha* and finally *Sannyāsa*. A *Sannyāsin* has no socio-religious duties to perform. He lives in complete communion with God. The life of every Hindu is expected to end ultimately in Spiritual Perfection.

There is a belief in certain quarters that Hinduism advocates the philosophy of 'world and life negation' and that Christianity advocates the doctrine of 'world and life affirmation'. It is not our purpose to discuss here the correctness of this view. But, we would like to point out that Hinduism by its theory of the Four *Āshramas* has completely advocated the philosophy of 'world and life affirmation'. By the *Āshrama* classification Hinduism seeks to sanctify the worldly life so that every activity of the individual may be directed towards spiritual development. It does not expect everyone to renounce everything he has but to live in the world and perform all duties in the

*Hindus are those who adhere to the Hindu tradition, on the understanding that they are duly qualified to do so really effectively, and not simply in an exterior and illusory way; non-Hindus, on the contrary, are those who, for any reason whatsoever, do not participate in the tradition in question ...Such is the true distinction, and there can be no other, although it is admittedly a rather difficult one for Western people to grasp, accustomed as they are to judging by quite different standards, which are entirely absent here.

—*Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, p. 179.

spirit of dedication to God* so that ultimately one may be free from bondage and reach the Absolute. Westerners who have only studied the writings of *Sankara* falsely maintain that Hinduism preaches a doctrine of other worldliness. According to *Sankara*, the world is unreal only to the person who has attained the *Paramarthika* State or the state of Absolute-Oneness with God. A *Sannyāsin* or a man of realization alone can hold the world to be unreal and not a *Brahmachāry*, or a *Grhastha* or a *Vānaprastha*.

Sri Krishna in the *Gītā* has definitely taught a positive attitude towards life. He commanded *Ārjuna* not to run away like a coward from responsibilities but to face his enemies and do his duty by fighting against them. He did not preach a doctrine of abstinence from work, but pointed out that the way to God realization lies only through un-selfish work. This is the great truth which Hinduism preaches through the *Gītā* to Humanity.

Some again entertain the belief that Hinduism advocates absolute celibacy as a necessary condition for spiritual illumination. The doctrine of absolute celibacy as a necessary condition for spiritual life is a post Buddhistic belief. It was no doubt true that *Sankara* was the first *Ācharya* to organize Hindu Orders of Monks. But, this act of his was the result of the social and religious conditions and circumstances that prevailed in the country during his time owing to Buddhism and Jainism.

The *Rishis* of the Vedic period were all householders. The *Dharma Shāstras* make the householder

* Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in sacrifice, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerity thou practisest, O son of Kunti, do that as an offering unto Me.

—*Bhagavad Gītā*, Chap. IX. 27.

the guardian of the *Dharma* and the protector of all the other three—*Brahmachārya*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyasin*. The Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gītā* share the same view. *Tiruvalluvar* says:

இல்வாழ்வா னென்பா னியல்புடைய முவர்க்கும்
நல்லாற்றி னின்ற துணை.

He will be called a true householder, who is a firm support to other three orders in their good path. The *Saiva Nāyanmārs* of Tamil India, with the exception of three or four, were all householders.

The Hindu *Shāstras* do not preach the physical act of renunciation, but only advocate a mental detachment while living in the world. However, we must not forget the fact that 'World and life affirmation' never meant to the Hindus that they should extract the maximum pleasure out of it as long as they live. Though life in the world was considered as a necessary and indispensable period of existence for attaining spiritual perfection, yet it was given a secondary place in the scheme of values. This position need not be interpreted as an attitude of world negation. All great religions of the world that posit a hereafter and an eternal bliss should have an element of world negation in their philosophy of life. If spiritual perfection or devotion to God is considered the highest aim of human existence, then the doctrine of 'World and life negation' should find an important place in the pursuit of it.*

In conclusion, we would like to point out that Hinduism or *Sanātana-Dharma* is a religion based on the fundamental spiritual experiences of the great sages of Hindu India from time immemorial

* If any man come to me and hate not his father, his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

—St. Luke

to the present day. It is not built on the life and teachings of one single individual nor are its doctrines based on any single historical event. It is not an agglomeration of different cults as some erroneously think it to be. The various sects found within its fold might have originated in different times and under different conditions, but they have all been transformed and knit together to form an integrated whole.

The greatness of the Himalayan Mountains is not judged by the hills and valleys found in them, but by the great snowcapped evershining peaks which are the wonders of Nature. Let us not judge Hinduism by the superstitious beliefs, mythological legends and emotional frenzies of the misguided. These are found in all religions. Judge it by the lives of the galaxy of saints and mystics, philosophers and theologians, it has produced down to date. "From the high spiritual flights of the *Vedānta* Philosophy of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion,"⁴ said *Swami Vivekānanda* sixty-five years ago. His statement conveys to every one the grandeur of Hinduism in a nut-shell.

References :

Chapter One

1. *Saiva School of Hinduism*, p. 13.
2. *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideas*, pp. 3, 4.
3. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. 1, XIII.
4. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekānanda*, Vol. 1, p. 6.

Chapter Two

HINDU PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS: VEDĀNTIC SCHOOLS

Philosophical systems are founded either on the conclusions of the Physical Sciences or on the Mystical Experiences of saints and mystics. Hindu systems of philosophy are based solely on the experiences of saints and seers of religion. Western systems, with the exception of one or two, are the results of intellectual speculation based on the conclusions of the Physical Sciences. Hindu systems are fully and completely religious in outlook, and their aim has been to understand and interpret religious experience or to attain religious experience. Therefore, they are purely spiritual in character and purpose rather than speculative. Sensory experience and intellectual reasoning are given a secondary place in the Hindu systems. Wherever intellectual knowledge is in conflict with religious experience, the latter is upheld as against the former. "In the East," writes *Sri Aurobindo*, "especially in India, the metaphysical thinkers have tried, as in the West, to determine the nature of the highest Truth by the intellect. But in the first place, they have not given mental thinking the supreme rank as an instrument in the discovery of Truth, but only a secondary status. The first rank has always been given to spiritual intuition and illumination and spiritual experience; an intellectual conclusion that contradicts this supreme authority is held invalid. Each philosophical founder (as also those who continued his work or school) has been a metaphysical thinker doubled with a *Yogi*."

Those who were only philosophic intellectuals were respected for their learning but never took rank as truth discoverers. And the philosophies that lacked a sufficiently powerful means of spiritual experience died out and became things of the past because they were not dynamic for spiritual discovery and realization.”*

The religious outlook of philosophical systems of thought, necessarily, compels them to place too much reliance on religious scriptures, and this, in the long run, generally tends towards a kind of blind faith and sectarian fanaticism. Very many systems of thought which emphasize religious experience as the final authority have invariably, turned out to be dogmatic and anti-intellectual. Students of philosophy of religion should be careful to detect this tendency wherever found.

Fanatical adherence to doctrine and dogmas is not a characteristic peculiar to religious minds only. Even the so called intellectuals who follow the dogmas of modern science exhibit this tendency to a very great extent. Darwin and Huxley, Einstein and Max Planck, Jeans and Eddington, Freud and Jung have taken the place of *Sankara* and *Rāmānuja*, *Sambandhar* and *Appar*, Buddha and Jesus, St. Paul and St. Francis. Man always tries to cling on to something either human or divine as authority for his beliefs and conduct. What has actually happened today is the substitution of scientific beliefs for religious beliefs. A belief in modern scientific materialism is a fashion among our intellectuals and they swear by their belief in it in the name of the scientists. Anything said in the

* Philosophy is more closely connected with religion in India than in Europe. It is not a dispassionate scientific investigation but a practical religious quest.

—*Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. 11, p. 291.

name of a religious mystic or a saint is anathema to them.

There is no unanimity of opinion among the modern scientists of repute as to the conclusions or the philosophical hypotheses they put forward. Hence, speculative philosophy in the West is still a battle-ground of different epistemological theories.* But, on the contrary, the Hindu systems of philosophical thought are all agreed on the nature of the Ultimate Reality. They only differ in interpreting the Relationship the Ultimate Reality has with the objective universe of name and form. Finality and perfection are not in the realm of human endeavour. Perfection is a spiritual ideal and is transcendental. It manifests itself in degrees only, in the process of attaining it. By the scientific study of phenomena the Reality behind nature can only be inferred. But, by the process of religion, Reality can be experienced. "The aim of the higher philosophy is not merely to ascertain the established

* It was the superstition of the nineteenth century that science was absolute and would in time produce its own metaphysic. It is high time that we got rid of this vain hope.

—*Meaning and Purpose*, p. 8.

Some of the results of modern physics are, for example, at the moment incompatible with the findings of a well-known school of psychologists, so that, if what certain physicists say about the world is true, what certain psychologists say cannot be true.The record of science is strewn with the debris of discarded theories, and the scientific laws and formulae of one age are superseded in the next. At the moment the physicists are presenting us with new theories about the constitution of the material universe at the rate of one in every ten years, while biology is in a perpetual state of controversy about the cause and character of the evolution of life. But more important than difference in the data about which the philosopher speculates are the differences in the minds of the philosophers.

—*Return to Philosophy*, pp. 142, 143.

conjunctions of events which constitute the order of the universe, or to record the phenomena which it exhibits to our observation and refer them to the general laws, but also to lead the human mind from the realm of the knowable to that which is beyond knowable. We are now living in the realm of the knowable, but that which teaches simple the laws which govern the knowable phenomena is not the highest kind of philosophy. We must know the laws of the knowable, yet at the same time we should aspire to go beyond the knowable and plunge into the realm of the Infinite. If any philosophy can help us in this attempt, then it must be higher than the ordinary system which keeps us within limits of time, space and causality of these knowable phenomena."²

Hindu philosophy guides us above all wordly knowledge and directs our attention towards the Absolute. Philosophy in the West is either phenomenological or epistemological but not spiritual in the sense of promoting religious realization. The Hindu system of thought satisfies the three-fold aspect of philosophy—Phenomenology, Epistemology and Religion. Philosophers in ancient India were not mere professors of philosophy in secular universities who engaged themselves in system building for the sole purpose of satisfying their intellectual need, but were religious mystics and saints who elaborated their systems to vindicate the truth of their spiritual experience. A student of Hindu systems of philosophy should bear in mind the aforesaid facts to enable him to understand the view points of both schools of thought, Western and Eastern.

Hindu Systems of Philosophy

The classical Hindu systems of philosophy are Six: *Nyāya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yōga*, *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*,

and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā*. Philosophy in Hinduism is called '*Darsana*'. The word *Darsana* means "view" or "insight". According to Hindu tradition, there is only one Ultimate Reality. "*Ekam Sat: That which exists is One*", says the Vedas. But, there are many interpretations of that Reality. Philosophy enables man to understand in the light of reason, the super-sensible Truth experienced by the mystics and saints and recorded in the sacred Scriptures.

Nyāya

The *Nyāya* is a system of logical realism. It believes in the existence of an external world independent of thinking minds, and seeks to establish this belief by the process of logical reasoning. Although its philosophical aspect has not gained popularity, its logical technique has been adopted by all the philosophical systems of India. The later followers of the *Nyāya* system separated the technique from the philosophy and specialized in the logical technique. It has been the tradition in India to begin the study of philosophy with a grounding in *Nyāya*, otherwise known as *Tarka*.

Each school of philosophy has its own theory of knowledge—epistemology. The number of *Pramanas*—means of right knowledge—varies in each system. Perception is the only *pramana* accepted by the *Charvakas*—Materialists; *Nyāya* accepts *Pratyaksha* (perception), *Anumāna* (inference), *Upamāna* (comparison) and *Sabda-Sruti* (testimony).

God, in the *Nyāya* system, belongs to the class of souls. He is *Paramātman*, as distinguished from the *Jivātman* or the individual soul. He is the efficient cause of the universe, and not its material cause. He is the prime mover of the primary atoms which by coming together in different ways

constitute the things of the physical world. According to the past *Karma* of the souls, God creates, protects, and destroys the universe, and recreates it. Souls are many and liberation is gained by the correct knowledge of the categories supported by the religious life based on ethics. *Mukti* is not a union with God but the cessation of pain and sorrow. What is important about *Nyāya* is not its metaphysics but its methodology. The systematizer of the system of *Nyāya* was *Gautama*—450 B. C.

Vaisesika

The *Vaisesika* is an atomistic pluralism, believing in a plurality of reals and regarding the physical world as consisting of things each of which is reducible to a number of *Paramānus*.

Paramānu is a physical entity playing a similar role in Indian philosophy as ions, electrons or protons in modern physics.³ Though as a system of thought it began independently of the *Nyāya*, yet it coalesced with the latter because of close metaphysical kinship. The most important doctrine of the *Vaisesika* is the division of the universe into seven categories (*Padārthas*). They are: (1) *Dravya* (substance), (2) *Guna* (quality), (3) *Karma* (activity), (4) *Sāmānya* (generality)—generic feature or *Jati*, (5) *Visesa* (particularity), (6) *Samavāya* (inherence) and (7) *Abhāva* (non-existence). Originally it classified the *Padārthas* into six but later the seventh was added.

The *Vaisesika* accepts the universe as it is found extended in space and changing in time, displaying a mixture of sounds, colours and forms of the phenomenal world. By the process of logical reasoning, it organizes the various aspects of the world into a coherent and intelligible whole, and presents a system that sets forth the cosmic plan

which shows the inter-relation of all its parts as an integrated whole. There is no desire to indulge in intellectual speculations about the origin of things, but only to seek the practical means of philosophic understanding. The sole interest is to analyse and synthesize the world of experience, striving to explain rationally the true nature of things.

According to *Vaisesika*, the *Dravyas* (substances) are nine: (1) Earth (*Prthvi*), (2) Water (*Appu*), (3) Fire (*Tejas*), (4) Air (*Vāyu*) (5) Ether (*Ākāśa*), (6) Time (*Kāla*), (7) Space (*Dikku*), (8) Self (*Ātman*), and (9) Mind (*Manas*). These are the things which constitute the stuff of the universe, both physical as well as spiritual. The first four are in the form of *Paramānus*, which are partless, and ether is an element, but it does not consist of atoms.

As regards the nature and destiny of the individual, the *Vaisesika* view is not different from that of the *Nyāya*. Here also there is a plurality of souls, each going through *Samsāra* in accordance with its past *Karma*. Liberation is attained through good conduct and knowledge of the categories. *Mukti*, in *Vaisesika* also, is a state of the absolute cessation of pain. What is of value in the *Vaisesika* system is its technique of inquiry into the nature of categories. Its conception of God is the same as that of *Nyāya*. The founder of the system was *Kanāda* who is placed in the third century B. C. *Kanāda* is the father of the Atomic Theory of Matter.

Sāṅkhya

The *Sāṅkhya* is the oldest system of Hindu philosophy. The unique position of the *Sāṅkhya* in the history of philosophy is due to the fact that

it expounds by careful reflection the first systematic account of the process of cosmic evolution (*Parināma*), which attempts to comprehend the universe as a sum total of twenty-five categories (*Tattvas*). This exposition is no mere metaphysical speculation, but is a purely logical account based on the scientific principles of conservation, transformation and dissipation of energy. The *Sāṅkhya* is held to be the most notable attempt in the realm of pure philosophy. The founder of the system was *Kapila* who lived about the sixth century B. C. Throughout India, *Kapila* is respected and revered as a great sage and philosopher.

The *Sāṅkhya* reduces everything—the twenty-five categories—to two ultimate principles known as *Purusha* and *Prakṛti*—Spirit and Matter. *Prakṛti* is the Cosmic Substance or the material cause of the world of name and form. It is said to be the unity of three *Gunas* held in equilibrium. The *Gunas* are *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. The quality of *Sattva* is luminosity, *Rajas* is activity and *Tamas* is heaviness.

The purpose of the system is to provide that knowledge which will for ever remove the cause of misery and thereby release the soul from its bondage. The misery of the soul is said to be caused by its intimate association with the body. When the true nature of the soul is understood, bondage will no longer exist, and the soul will be for ever free from all suffering. The *Sāṅkhya* leaves the uncaused cause (God) undefined as being impossible to be conceived by the intellect.

All philosophic and religious schools of thought in Hinduism have based their theory of cosmic evolution on the categories of the *Sāṅkhya* system. It provides the key to understand the Hindu conception of the evolution of the Universe both subjective and objective.

Yōga

The *Yōga* System of philosophy expounds the path of Realization by the practice of *Yōga*, which is more psychological than physical. The philosophical categories of *Yōga* are the same as those of the *Sāṅkhya*. All religious sects of Hinduism, nay, of India, have incorporated the *Yōga* disciplines into their religious practices as indispensable factors. It is a very scientific system and its conclusions are provable by practical demonstration. The codifier of this system was *Patanjali* and his date is assigned to the second century B. C. *Yōgic* practices were even current before the Buddha.

Yōga accepts the existence of God but does not give Him an important place. He is considered as the Supreme *Purusa* who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and is responsible for the association and dissociation of *Purusa* with *Prakṛti*. Devotion to God is the best way of obtaining concentration. God brings about the union of *Purusa* with *Prakṛti* according to the individual *Karma* of the soul and removes the obstacles in the path of His devotees towards liberation from *Prakṛti*.

Pūrva Mīmāṃsā

This system of philosophy solely deals on interpreting the Sacrifices enjoined in the Vedas, leading to freedom of the soul. The systematizer of *Mīmāṃsā* was *Jaimini*. He did not originate the teachings but reduced to writing the traditional interpretations that have long been in the memory of the people. He is assigned the 4th century B. C. *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* has no place for God in its scheme of things. *Sabaraswamin* wrote a commentary on the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras* of *Jaimini*, A. D. 200. There are two schools on *Mīmāṃsā* known by the names

of two commentators, *Prabhākara* (A. D. 650) and *Kumarila Bhatta* (A. D. 700), on *Sabarāswamin's* commentary.

The *Mīmāṃsakas* see no reason to posit the existence of a God. The world was never created and never shall it be destroyed. Vedas are eternal and not made by anybody. Early *Mīmāṃsakas* believed only in the attainment of Heaven by performance of sacrifices enjoined in the *Karma-Kānda* of the Vedas. But, later *Mīmāṃsakas* abandoned this belief and considered liberation from the bondage of the soul to the world through the body as the aim of life. This they maintained can only be achieved by performance of *Nityakarma*, obligatory duties, and by knowledge of the self.

Uttara-Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta

Vedānta literally means 'the end of the Vedas'. The philosophy of *Vedānta* is based on the text known as *Vedānta Sūtras*. Because the central topic dealt with in the *Vedānta Sūtras* is *Brahman*, it is also known as the *Brahma Sūtras*. *Vedānta Sūtras* is an epitome of the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads concerning the nature and relationship of the three principles—God, Soul and the World.

Vedānta philosophy endeavours to sum up all aspects of human knowledge, presenting as Truth all that is universal, and reconciling all that is different. It accepts every thought, idea and concept as a step forward. It evades nothing and encompasses everything, it discards nothing and collects everything that is within the realm of human experience. However, it does not accept anything as final, dogmatic, or as the last word. It is therefore considered to be the 'treasure-chest of the glittering gems of spiritual insight gathered by the truth-seekers of the past'.

Vedānta preaches Supreme Identity as the goal of human aspiration and shows the way to all who earnestly endeavour to attain it. It enables all to realize its teachings during their life-time and expressly states that the aim of religion is not to attain heavenly bliss after death but to attain the Supreme Beatitude during this life-time.

Bādarāyana Vyasa, the compiler of the *Vedānta Sūtras* is given a date anterior to B. C. 400.

The systems of philosophy other than the *Vedānta*, have now only a historical value and practically do not exist as separate schools of thought with any considerable following. The various schools of *Vedānta* have absorbed the cardinal tenets of *Nyāya*, *Vaisesika*, *Sāṅkhya* and *Yōga*. The epistemological portions of all Hindu schools of philosophy are based on *Nyāya*. The theories of cosmic evolution are based on the *Sāṅkhya*. *Yōga* forms a part of the religious practices of all schools of thought.

The most important divisions of *Vedānta* philosophy in modern Hinduism are: *Kevalādvaita* or Absolute Monism of *Sri Sankarācharya*; *Visistādvaita* (qualified-monism) of *Sri Ramānujācharya*; *Bhedābheda* (different and non-different) of *Nimbarka*; *Suddha-Advaita* (pure-monism) of *Vallabhācharya*; *Achintya Bhedā-bheda* of *Sri Chaitanya*; *Sivādvaita* of *Sri Kāntha*; *Viseshādvaita* of *Sri Pati Pandita*; and *Dvaita* (dualism) of *Sri Madvācharya*. These *Ācharyas* have elaborated their systems of philosophy by writing commentaries on all or any of the following: The *Vedānta Sūtras*, *Bhagavad Gīta* and the Upanishads, which are called the *Prasthanā Traya*. It is a Hindu tradition that any one who attempts to propound a new school of philosophy; should base his exposition on the teachings of any one of the three texts: Upanishads, *Vedānta Sūtras*, *Bhagavad Gīta*. *Sri Kāntha* and *Sri Pati Pandita*

propounded their systems of philosophy by writing commentaries only on the *Vedānta Sūtras*.

Kevalādvaita or Absolute Monism of Sankara

Sri Sankara—8th Century A. D.—is the foremost exponent of the philosophy of *Kevalādvaita* or Absolute Monism. He was a follower of the teachings of the Upanishads and considered them as revelations. He elaborated his philosophy by writing commentaries on the principal Upanishads, the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad Gīta*; in addition to these he has also written books expounding his religious and philosophical doctrines. He was a great scholar and undoubtedly the greatest philosopher of India. His commentaries on the *Prasthanā Traya*, are the earliest now existing, except that of *Gaudapāda's* commentary on the *Māndukyōpanishad*.*

According to *Sankara*, the Reality is Absolute and is not conditioned by time, space and causality. The human mind cannot comprehend the Supreme in its entirety. Therefore, the only guide for the knowledge of *Brahman* is the *Sruti*. He defines *Brahman*, basing his definition on the Upanishads, as *Nirguna*, without attributes, *Niskriya*, without any activity, *Niravayava*, without any parts,

* *Gaudapāda* occupies an important place in the history of *Advaita Vedānta*, as he was, so far as we know, its first systematic exponent. Doctrinally, there is no difference whatsoever between what is taught by *Gaudapāda* in the *Karika* and what is expounded by *Sankara* in his extensive works. Not only did *Gaudapāda* teach that the ultimate Reality is the non-dual Spirit and that the world of plurality is an appearance thereof, but also, as did *Sankara* later on, that the principal means to release is *jnāna* or knowledge. It is clear, then, that *Gaudapāda* was a great teacher of *Advaita-Vedānta* who set the model for *Sankara* to follow.

—*Gaudapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, pp. 224 & 231, 232.

Nirupādika, unconditioned, and *Nirvisesha*, having no distinguishing elements in it. This definition leads one to ask: "In what sense can the phenomenal world of changes be said to be emanating from, subsisting in, and dissolving in the Absolute *Brahman*?" According to *Sankara* in no way could this be answered. If *Brahman* is the only Reality, then the phenomenal world is unreal. The non-existence of time, space and causality as real categories reduces the phenomenal world to an appearance without reality. Any attempt to reconcile it with the Absolute *Brahman*, the Supreme Transcendental Experience of religion, will only end in reducing *Brahman* to a thing endowed with qualities or conditions which is opposed to the teachings of the *Sruti*. The statement of the *Sruti* is a result of spiritual experience and not of intellectual reasoning and, therefore, cannot be negated by intellectual knowledge.

Whatever may be the inference of spiritual experience, the human mind always struggles to reconcile the phenomenal with the Absolute. The attempt of man to grasp by his intellect the relationship that exists between the phenomenal and the Absolute has brought into existence the various schools of philosophy. *Sankara* solves this riddle by his doctrine of *Māyā* or *Adhyasā theory* of illusory superimposition. *Māyā* is not a principle or an attribute of *Brahman* as some erroneously imagine it to be. *Māyā* is the term which *Sankara* uses to explain the inexplicable, indefinable and ununderstandable relationship that exists, between the Absolute and the phenomenal.*

* *Māyā* which is the principle of illusion has not an independent ontological status. It is not an entity or reality having a subsistence of its own. As we have said several times there is no reality other than *Brahman*. To the in-

Brahman is the *Pāramārthika Sat*—the Transcendental Existence, and the phenomenal world is the *Vyavakarika Sat*—the world of relative existence. *Brahman* is the only Reality that exists in the Transcendental Mystic State. When *Brahman* is experienced as the Reality in that state, there is no world of manifoldness. Nothing exists apart from That, It exists without a second. But, in the *Vyavakarika* State, that is, in the condition where the world exists as real, *Brahman* does not exist. When a man is conscious of the phenomenal world, he is not conscious of *Brahman*. *Sankara*, therefore, considers one as absolutely real, the *Pāramārthika Sat*, and the other *Vyavakarika Sat*, as relatively real. The phenomenal world is negated in the Absolute Experience, but the Absolute Experience is not negated by any other experience. When a man is in bondage, the world is real and it is foolish to deny its existence. The world is only unreal to the saint who has realized the Highest, but to the others it is a reality.

The *Atman* or the pure Self is the same as *Brahman*, but its finiteness and other related conditions are due to *Avidya* or ignorance. When ignorance is removed, as a result of true knowledge—*Jnana*, the *Jivatman* loses its limited consciousness of individuality and realizes its true infinitude. Individuality is an illusion just as the phenomenal world is an illusion. Liberation is the realization of the identity of *Atman* with *Brahman*. The example quoted by *Sankara* to illustrate this union is the identity of the pot-space and the space outside the pot when the pot is broken. The space inside

quiring intellect *Māyā* is a riddle. When the Absolute is realized there is no *Māyā* to be explained. As *Gaudapāda* says, *Māyā* is that which does not really exist.

—*Gaudapāda: A Study in Early Advaita*, p. 236

the pot is separated from the space outside it by the clay form which is called the pot. The very minute, the clay form is broken, the identity is apparent. The existence of two spaces is a visible illusion due to the *upādhi*—limitation—the pot.

Sankara's theory of transformation is known as *Vivarta-Parināma-Vāda*—illusory transformation, because the transformation of *Brahman* as the world is not real but apparent. His monism has nothing in common with the doctrines of monists like *Ramānuja*, *Nimbarka*, *Vallabha*, *Sri Kantha* and others. His philosophy is not a pantheistic monism but a transcendental Absolutism. The appearance of the world is illustrated by the analogy of the rope which appears as a snake in the dark. The reality is the rope, but it appears as the snake owing to darkness, or to lack of correct perception. The rope never at any time transforms itself into a snake. The snake is only an appearance superimposed on the rope by ignorance.

Sankara's standpoint is more metaphysical than theological. He is an uncompromising *Advaitin* but tolerant enough to recognize the needs of the religious minded aspirant. His doctrine of *Saguna-Brahma upāsana* provides the necessary basis for a religion of *bhakti* and faith. Through devotion to *Saguna Brahman* or *Īsvara* or God, the spiritual aspirant should gradually rise to *Nirguna upāsana* and realize the *Nirguna Brahman*. The path of religion outlined by *Sankara* is not in any way opposed to the religious practices of other schools of Hindu thought. As a religious teacher, he preached the universal religious doctrines common to all sects of Hinduism. Only as a philosopher he differed from others. According to *Sankara*, *Saguna Brahma upāsana* or devotion to a particular sectarian ideal, will lead one only to the attain-

ment of *Krama-Mukti*. To attain the Highest *Jīvan-Mukti*, one should transcend devotion to a Personal God, and practise *Nirguna upāsana*. Until one is fit for *Nirguna upāsana*, he should continue his devotion to a Personal God and follow the injunctions of the scriptures relating to the performance of religious practices.

The only philosopher mystic of the West to whom *Sankara* may be compared is Plotinus. Like *Sankara* he also speaks of two aspects of the Reality. One he calls the Spirit (*Saguna Brahman*) and the other he calls the Absolute — (*Nirguna Brahman*). Behind the Spirit, Plotinus postulates the Absolute — the Ultimate one. It is only in trance or *Samādhi* that it may be given to some to experience that from which Spirit comes. According to him we postulate the Absolute but we neither perceive it nor understand it. The only way to be one with the Absolute is, in fact, in the mystical trance. The Absolute of Plotinus is unconditioned and unknowable. It transcends all qualities and has a sort of supra-existence. It transcends even the quality of Being. It does not create, it takes no action, possesses no motion. It is beyond description, or indeed conception. This Absolute One has a philosophic interest only, and may be passed by for the purpose of religion. There is a very beautiful stanza in *Siddhyār* which explains the Absolute more or less in the same way:

சிவனரு வருவு மல்லன்
 சித்தினே டசித்து மல்லன்,
 பவமுதற் ரெழில்க ளொன்றும்
 பண்ணிடு வானு மல்லன்
 தவமுத லியோக போகந்
 தரிப்பவ னல்லன் ருனே
 யிவைபெற வியைந்து மொன்று
 மியைந்திடா வியல்பி னுனே.

Siva is neither a *Rūpi* nor an *Arūpi*. He is neither *Chit* nor *Achit*. He does not create nor sustain nor perform other functions. He was never a *Yogi* nor a *Bhōgi*. Though present in and pervading all these inseparable, yet he is of a nature different from all these.⁴

But, the *Saiva Siddhāntis* reject the doctrine of *Nirguna Brahman* of *Sankara* and give a different interpretation to this stanza. Rudolf Otto, the great German theologian, has compared *Sankara* with Meister Eckhart, the German Mystic, and has given parallel passages from their writings in his book on '*Mysticism: East and West*'. Dr. Paul Deussen, the great German philosopher and orientalist writes as follows about *Sankara*, "The system of the *Vedānta* as founded on the Upanishads and *Vedānta Sūtras* and accomplished by *Sankara's* commentaries on them, equal in rank to Plato and Kant, is one of the most valuable products of the genius of mankind in its researches of the Eternal Truth."

Visistādvaita of Sri Ramānuja

Sri Ramānuja (1017—1127)—the *Vaisnava* saint and philosopher, is the greatest exponent of the philosophy of qualified monism in India. He wrote commentaries on the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad Gīta*. His views on the teachings of the Upanishads are found in his book '*The Vedānta Sangraha*'. In addition to the *Prasthanā Traya*, he accepted the *Pancharātra Āgamas* and the hymns of the *Ālvārs* as authoritative scriptures. His philosophical doctrines are largely influenced by the *Svestāsvatara* Upanishad, *Bhagavad Gīta* and teachings of the *Ālvārs*. The life and teachings of *St. Nam-mālvar* influenced *Ramānuja* deeply.

Visistādvaita or qualified-monism is essentially a philosophy of religion. The central truth of *Visis-*

tādvaita is the identity between the Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion. *Ramānuja's* system may be considered as a product of the combination of the doctrines found in the *Svetāsvatara* Upanishad and the teachings of the *Ālvārs*. He also drew from the *Bhagavad Gīta* and *Vaisnava Purānās*. According to him *Brahman* is the whole of Reality and the home of eternal attributes of Truth, Goodness, Beauty and Bliss. The theology of *Ramānuja* is based on the *Pancharātra Āgāmas*. According to them God is said to have five forms or modes. They are *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmin* and *Arca*.

Para is the highest aspect of the Supreme Being as He exists in *Vaikunta* with *Sri*. The Supreme manifests as the *Vyūhas* which are *Vāsudeva*, *Samkarsana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*. *Vāsudeva* is the transcendental aspect. *Samkarsana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha* are the three different aspects of *Vāsudeva*. *Samkarsana* is the form of *Īsvara* by which the *Jīvas* were separated from the *Prakṛti* at the beginning of creation. When this separating activity dominates over men as their *manas* and brings them ultimately to the path of virtue, it is known as *Pradyumna*. *Aniruddha* is the form of *Īsvara* by which the external world is generated and kept, in which the attempts of men to attain right knowledge are fulfilled. These forms or aspects or modes are not different from the Supreme Being but are said to represent the different functions of God.

Vibhava represents the incarnations of *Viṣṇu*. They are *Matsya* (Fish), *Kūrma* (Tortoise), *Varāha* (Boar), *Narasimha* (Man-lion), *Vāmana* (Dwarf), *Parasurāma*, *Rāma*, *Bala-Rāma*, *Krishna* and *Kalki*. *Antaryāmin* is the immanent aspect of God by which He manifests as the indwelling spirit and

object of meditation. *Arca Avatāra* is the manifestation of God in the idols of temples so that He may be an object of worship and be of easy access to His devotees.

The aim of *Vaisnavism* is to attain the transcendental realm of *Vaikunta*, the home of all eternal values and perfection. Liberation or *Mōksha* can only be attained by the Grace of God. In liberation the soul does not become one with *Visnu* but attains his likeness and realizes its absolute inseparable dependence. *Karma-Yōga*, *Jnāna-Yōga*, and *Bhakti-Yōga* are the means to liberation. *Karma-Yōga* is the process of self-purification; *Jnāna-Yōga* is the process by which the soul realizes its true nature; *Bhakti-Yōga* is the practice of intense devotion to God and communion with Him. The highest form of Divine Love is known as *Prapatti* or absolute self-surrender.

The uncompromising logic of *Sankara* initiated a strong reaction against philosophy and created a thirst for a religion that could satisfy man's emotional needs. *Ramānuja* provided the religion which the people needed. He stressed the theistic aspects of the Upanishadic teachings and reconciled them with the devotional religion of the Tamil *Vaisnava* mystics known as *Ālvārs*.

According to *Ramānuja*, God has three essential characteristics which are known as *Ādhāratva*, the quality of being the ground, *Vidhatrtva*, the quality of being the supporter and *Sesitva*, the quality of being the whole. *Brahman* or Reality has qualities and can be described by enumerating them. Dualism insists in the separateness of the world and God. Absolute monism denies reality to the world and considers *Brahman* as the changeless Reality. But, the qualified-monism of *Ramānuja* speaks of God as full of qualities and considers

Chit (Spirit) and *Achit* (Matter) as inseparable qualities of Him. The three *Īswara*, *Chit* and *Achit*—are inseparably connected to one another as a complete organic whole, and *Brahman* expresses Itself in their intimate relationship. *Chit* and *Achit* connote the Absolute and are parts of it. The distinction which exists between *Chit* and *Achit* and *Īswara* comes under the type known as '*Swagata-bhēda*'.—It is like the distinction that exists between the limbs and the organism. The limbs are not separate from the organism because they form parts of the body.

Though *Brahman* is the ground of all change, It in itself does not change. The *Jīva* is not an entity existing by its own rights. It is really a part of *Brahman*. *Brahman* the super—of all experience is distinguishable from the finite self and the world of matter, but cannot be separated from them. *Brahman* is the all inclusive Reality which has *Chit* and *Achit* as its eternal and inseparable attributes. According to *Ramānuja*: "The Absolute is an organic unity, an identity which is qualified by diversity. It is a concrete whole (*vishista*) which consists of the interrelated and inter-dependent subordinate elements which are called '*vishesanas*' and the immanent and controlling spirit which is called '*vishesya*'. Unity means realization of being a vital member of this organic whole. God or the Absolute is this whole. He is the immanent inner controller, the Supreme Real who holds together in unity the dependent matter and individual soul as His body".⁵

Visistādvaita, in its practical aspect, insists on the idea of God as the ruler and redeemer and lays down the path of *Bhakti* or *Prapatti*, self-surrender, as the means to the attainment of eternal Bliss. The whole scheme of *Karma-Yōga* and

Jñāna-Yōga elaborated by *Ramānuja* is but a preparation to *Bhakti*. *Karma-Yōga* finds its consummation in *Jñāna-Yōga*. *Jñāna-Yōga* finds its consummation in *Bhakti-Yōga*. In *Bhakti-Yōga* the centre is shifted from self-consciousness to God-Consciousness. *Mukti* or liberation is not only the immediate apprehension of *Brahman* but also the attainment of His *Paramapada*—Supreme Status—after death.

According to *Visistādvaita*, *Brahman* is not only the efficient cause of the universe but also the material and the instrumental cause as well. Therefore, *Ramānuja's* theory of cosmic evolution is known as *Nimittopadhāna—Parināma-Vāda*—the theory that God is the efficient and material cause. The *parināma*, spoken of is not for *Brahman* as *Īswara*, but to His attributes *Chit* and *Achit*. The *Īswara* Aspect is changeless.

Sri Ramānuja is the greatest exponent of philosophical theism. His qualified-monism is the meeting ground of the extremes of philosophy like Absolute-monism and Pluralism. His writings and teachings provided the necessary philosophical background for the development of *Vaisnava* mysticism both in the North and in the South of India. The philosophical mysticism of the *Upanishads* and the devotional mysticism of the Tamil mystics found in *Ramānuja* an able and erudite exponent. In place of the passive, incomprehensible Absolute of philosophy was substituted a Supreme Being who is full of Grace, Goodness, Love and Power and with whom man could establish a relationship through devotion and service. This attitude enriched life and brought a new sense of values to life and its objects. Things of the world were not considered illusory. Beauty, Grace, Love, Charity and Service were all given a place in life with a new meaning.

Ramānuja's religious philosophy was also known as *Sri Sampradaya* or *Sri Vaisnava Sampradaya*.

Other Schools of Vedānta

The other schools of *Vedānta* are the *Bheda-bheda* of *Sri Nimbarka* whose date is not definitely known; the *Suddhādvaita* of *Sri Vallabhācharya*, (1473—1531), *Sivādvaita* of *Sri Kāntha* who lived in the early part of the 12th century; *Viśeshadvaita* of *Sri Pati Pandita*; the *Achintiya-Bhedābheda* of *Sri Chaitanya*, 15th century.

Bhedābheda

Sri Nimbarka's philosophy bears a close resemblance to that of *Sri Ramānuja*. But difference and non-difference are equally real to him. *Brahman* even in its causal state is not without difference. Souls and matter are parts of *Brahman* and are dependent on Him. *Brahman* is the efficient and material cause of the universe. He is identified with *Krishna*. Prof: *V. S. Ghate* who made a critical study of the *Brahma Sūtras* with the *Bhāṣyas* of *Sankara*, *Ramānuja*, *Nimbaraka*, *Madhva* and *Vallabha* writes as follows about *Nimbarka's Bhedābheda*: "If at all we insist on seeing in the *sūtras* one of the five systems under discussion, it can be at the most the '*bhedābheda*' system of *Nimbarka*, according to which both *bheda* and *abheda* are equally real, without the idea of any subordination of one to the other."⁶

Suddhādvaita

Vallabha's system of philosophy is known as *Suddhādvaita* or pure-monism. To him the Supreme *Brahman* is *Krishna-Gōpāla*. The *Bhāgavata Purāna* occupies a unique place in the system of *Vallabha*. According to him *Brahman* has three aspects.

Para-Brahman or *Krishna*, the *Antaryāmin*—the immanent principle behind all souls, and the *Akshara Brahman*. Souls and matter come out of the *Akshara* aspect like sparks from fire. According to *Vallabha* souls and matter are real manifestations of *Brahman*. *Māyā* is His Power through which He manifests Himself as many. The relation between *Brahman* and His Power or *Sakti* is one of absolute identity. This manifestation is real and not illusory. His system is called *Suddhādvaita* or pure-monism to distinguish it from that of *Sankara's Kevaladvaita* or absolute-monism which considers the world as an appearance and unreal. To *Vallabha*, *Brahman* is the efficient and material cause of the universe. *Brahman* really manifests as the world of souls and matter without undergoing any change. "This manifestation is neither an error nor a confusion; it is a real manifestation of God in diverse forms without implying the notion of change or transformation. The world is thus real, being a real manifestation of God." *Mirābai* (1498—1573), is a follower of *Vallabha's* school of *Bhakti*.

Sivādvaita of Sri Kāntha

Sivādvaita of *Sri Kāntha* is a *Saiva* school of philosophy based on the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Saiva Āgamās*. What *Ramānuja* did to *Vaisnava* theism, *Sri Kāntha* did to *Saiva* theism. Hence, his system was also known as *Saiva-Visistadvaita*. *Sri Kāntha* does not accept the *Saiva Siddhānta* view that God is only the efficient cause of the universe. For him, God is also the material cause. *Appaya Dīkshita* in his *Sivādvaita Nirnaya* maintains that *Sri Kāntha* was at heart a true *Advaitin* but preached qualified-monism for the sake of those who were in need of theism or devotion to *Saguna Brahman*. Prof: S. S. *Sūryanarāyana Sastri* pre-

senting the arguments of *Appaya Dikshita* writes as follows: "*Sri Kāntha*, apparently recognizes the existence and validity of the concept of *Nirguna Brahman*. The reason for his referring to it only casually is not that he attaches no value to it, but that his purpose for the moment is the creation of faith in and devotion to *Saguna Brahman*; for such devotion is a necessary propaedeutic to the attainment of the mental steadiness and concentration needed for the uninterrupted contemplation of *Nirguna Brahman*. The object he has primarily in view can be secured best by emphasizing the *Saguna aspect* and concealing (nay, even condemning) the *Nirguna aspect*, though the latter be known to be the final truth."⁸ Whatever may be *Appaya Dikshita's* view, taking the system as a whole, *Sri Kāntha's* philosophy is fully *Visistādvaitic*.

The system of *Ramānuja* and *Sri Kāntha* have very many points in common. *Sri Kāntha* was not a believer in the doctrine of *Jīvan-Mukthi* or liberation in this life. The commentary of *Sri Kāntha* on the *Vedānta Sūtras* was translated into Tamil by the late *Brahma Sri Kāśivāsi Senthinātha Iyer*, a scholar of Jaffna.

Viseshādvaita of Sripati Pandita

Sripati Pandita who lived in the latter part of the 14th century wrote a commentary called *Srikara Bhāṣya* which is accepted as the basis of *Vīrasaivism*. His system is called *Viseshādvaita* or *Dvaitādvaita*. He does not accept the indeterminate aspect of *Brahman*. According to him the world and the *Jīvas* form the *visesana* or qualities of *Brahman*. This view, on the face of it, appears to be identical with those of *Ramānuja*. But, *Sripati* criticizes *Visistādvaita* and explains the relationship in a different way. To him the souls and the

world are not the body of *Siva* but are in reality *Siva*. The *Jīva* is different from *Siva* while in bondage; but in *Mukti* it becomes identical with *Siva*.

According to *Sripati*, everything we see in the world is real and has *Siva* as its substratum. It is by his *Sakti* that He makes the world appear in diverse forms. The *Sakti* or Energy of *Siva* is of the nature of *Siva* Himself. *Sripati's* system is a kind of *Bhedā-bheda* interpretation of the *Vedānta Sūtras*. The world is, from one point of view, different from God; and from another point of view, one with God.⁹

Achintya-Bhedābheda of Sri Chaitanya

Sri Chaitanya (1485—1533) is the exponent of *Achintya-bhedābheda* or identity-in-difference. The meaning of the word '*Achintya*' is 'indescribable' 'unthinkable'. According to this school *Brahman* has three kinds of *Sakti*: *Parā-Sakti*, *Aparā-Sakti* and *Māyā-Sakti*. *Brāhman* becomes the efficient cause of the world through *Parā Sakti*. Through *Māyā Sakti* he becomes the material cause and through *Aparā Sakti* he creates the souls. The relation between God and his *Saktis* is like that between fire and heat. Though there is no difference between fire and heat, yet we recognize them separately.

Brahman or *Krishna* is described as *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*. Though *Brahman* is free from all differences, yet He manifests Himself as the world and souls through His *Saktis*. The *Saktis* are identical and yet different from Him. God is the material and efficient cause of the universe. The souls are related to God as sparks to fire and are absolutely dependent on Him. They remain distinct from God even in liberation. *Bhakti* is the only means to liberation.

Dvaita of Madhvācharya

The only popular *Dvaita* school of philosophy based on the *Vedānta Sūtras* is that of *Madhvācharya*, (1197—1278), a *Vaisnava* saint of South India. He expounded a purely dualistic system of philosophy basing it on the *Prasthanā Traya*. He was very much influenced by the *Vaisnava Purānas*.

Madhva makes an absolute distinction between God, Souls, and the World. He insists on the distinction between God and the world, between one individual soul and another, between the individual soul and the inanimate world and finally between one inanimate object and another. His system of thought may be said to be a philosophy of pluralism. The chief functions of God are eight: Creation, Protection, Dissolution, Controlling all things, Giving knowledge, Manifestation of Himself, Involving the *Jīvas* in the knowledge of the world and helping them towards liberation.

Souls are all distinct from God and are themselves distinct from one another. They are innumerable and go through a succession of births because of ignorance and attain liberation in the end by the Grace of God.

The world is created from *Prakṛti* which is distinct from the Supreme Being who is only the efficient cause and not the material cause of the world. *Madhva* considers it against reason to suppose that the non-intelligent world can be produced from a being that is intelligent. God energizes *Prakṛti* through *Lakshmi*, His *Sakti*, and there is creation. *Mōksha* is attained by the direct knowledge or perception of *Hari*. Even in *Mōksha* the *Jīva* cannot be one with *Brahman*. *Bhakti* is the means to *Mōksha*. There are four kinds of experience spoken of in *Mōksha*. "The enjoyment of liberated souls is of four kinds: *Salōkya*, *Samīpya*,

Sarūpya and *Sayujya*. *Sayujya* means the entrance of individual souls into the body of God and their identification of themselves with the enjoyment of God in His own body;*Salōkya Mōksha* means residence in heaven and being there with God to experience satisfaction and enjoyment by the continual sight of Him. *Samīpya Mōksha* means continuous residence near God, such as is enjoyed by the sages. *Sarūpya Mōksha* is enjoyed by God's attendants, who have outward forms similiar to that which God possesses."¹⁰

Madhva believes in the incarnation of God to help the people towards righteousness and devotion and to subjugate evil and *Adharma*. His philosophy is realistic and takes a commonsense view of the world and its constituents. It is also known as *Brahma Sampradaya*.

CONCLUSION

It may be said without fear of contradiction, that in the philosophic thought of the West from the very earliest times down to the modern period, there is nothing new which we do not find in Indian philosophy. "In the Upanishads, we have doctrines of Absolute Monism, of Personalistic Idealism, of Pluralism, of Solipsism, of Self-Realization, of the relation of Intellect to Intuition, and so forth,—doctrines which have divided the philosophic world of today.The same problem which at the present day divide a Bradley from a Bosanquet, a Ward from a Royce, a Pringle-Pattison from a McTaggart, also divided the Upanishadic philosophers of ancient times,"¹¹ writes R. D. Ranade, M. A.* Frederic Schlegel, the German philosopher

* The empiricism of Locke and Berkeley and the scepticism of Hume, the flux of Heraclitus, William James and Bergson, the Copernican revolution of Kant and the abiding

writes; "Even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, the idealism of reason as it is set forth by the Greek philosophers, appears in comparison with the abundant light and vigour of oriental idealism like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noonday sun, faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished."¹² Victor Cousin, the eminent French philosopher writes: "When we read the poetical and philosophical moments of the East, above all, those of India, which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discover there many a truth, and truths so profound, and which make such a contrast with the meanness of the results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East, and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy."¹³

Professor Max Muller declares: "It is surely astounding that such a system as the *Vedānta* should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of an ancient Gothic Cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. We need not praise or try to imitate a Colossus, but if we have any heart for the builders of former days we cannot help feeling that it was a colossal and stupendous effort. And this is the feeling which I cannot

contribution of Hegel, the positions of Green, Bradley and McTaggart—all have been long before anticipated in this dialogue (between Prajapati and Indra, narrated in the Chandogya Upanishad, VIII, 3-12).

—*A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, p. 21.

resist in examining the ancient *Vedānta*.”¹⁴ In another place he says: “At the same time I make no secret that all my life I have been very fond of the *Vedānta*. Nay, I can fully agree with Schopenhauer, and quite understand what he meant when he said, ‘In the whole world there is no study, except that of the original (of the Upanishads,) so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Oupnekhat (Persian translation of the Upanishads). It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.’ Schopenhauer was the last man, to write at random, or to allow himself to go into ecstasies over so-called mystic and inarticulate thought. And I am neither afraid nor ashamed to say that I share his enthusiasm for the *Vedānta*, and feel indebted to it for much that has been helpful to me in my passage through life.”¹⁵

Writing about the philosophers of ancient India, Prof: Max Muller states: “What I admire in Indian philosophers is that they never try to deceive us as to their principles and the consequences of their theories. If they are idealists, even to the verge of nihilism, they say so, and if they hold that the objective world requires a real, though not necessarily a visible or tangible substratum, they are never afraid to speak out. They are bona fide idealists or materialists, monists or dualists, theists or atheists, because their reverence for truth is stronger than their reverence for any thing else.”¹⁶

Writing about the aim of Indian philosophy, Dr. Heinrich Zimmer, one of the leading indologists observes: “Maya manifests its force through the rolling universes and evolving forms of individuals. To understand that secret, to know how it works, and to transcend, if possible, its cosmic spell-breaking outward through the layers of tangible and visible appearance, and simultaneously in-

ward through all the intellectual and emotional stratifications of the psyche—this is the pursuit conceived by Indian philosophy to be the primary, and finally undeniable, human task.”¹⁷ In another place he states: “India, that is to say, has had, and still has, its own disciplines of psychology, ethics, physics, and metaphysical theory. But the primary concern—in striking contrast to the interests of the modern philosophers of the West has always been, not information, but transformation: radical changing of man’s nature and therewith, a renovation of his understanding both of the outer world and of his own existence; a transformation as complete as possible, such as will amount when successful to a total conversion or re-birth.”¹⁸

What is lacking in modern Hindu thought, is an organized effort to interpret the eternal truth of spiritual experience enshrined in the Hindu *shastras* and philosophical treatises in the light of contemporary culture of the world. Modern theories of science and philosophical speculations based on them, lend support and amplify Hindu thought. Therefore, Hindu religious and philosophic doctrines require a new presentation in the light of contemporary culture. If this is done, the study of Comparative Religion and Philosophy will advance a great deal, ending narrow sectarianism and promoting a better understanding and fellowship among all religions of the world.

The philosophical lore of Indian culture is a noble and valuable heritage to all Tamils whether Hindus or Christians, and therefore all, irrespective of creed or caste, should study it and assimilate the best in it.



References :

Chapter Two

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9. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. V. p. 173.
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11. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* p.10.
12. Quoted by Max Muller in 'Vedānta Philosophy' p. 7.
13. *ibid* p. 6.
14. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 183.
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18. *ibid* p. 4.

Chapter Three

HINDU PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS: ĀGAMIC SCHOOLS

In the previous chapter, I dealt with the schools of thought which are built on the *Prasthāna Traya-Upanishads*, *Vedānta Sūtras* and *Bhagavad Gītā*. They are more Vedic than *Āgamic*. The most prominent *Āgamic* schools of thought are the *Trīka* System or the *Pratyabhijnā Darsana* of Kashmir, the *Vīrasaivism* or *Lingāyatism* of *Karnataka*, *Āndhra* and *Mahārastra*, *Saiva Siddhānta* of Tamil India and *Sāktism* of Bengal. *Pratyabhijnā Darsana*, *Vīrasaivism* and *Sāktism* are monistic in structure and form. *Saiva Siddhānta* is dualistic.

Āgamic culture is *pre-Āryan* and is *Dravidian* in origin. The *Āgamas* preach a religion theistic in form and connected with temple worship. Devotion or *Bhakti* is the highest form of religious *Sādhana* according to the *Āgamas*. Symbolism in the form of Idols and *Yantrās* play a very great part in the religious practices of the *Āgamic* schools of thought. The basic teachings of the *Āgamas* are dualistic in form and consider God, soul and matter or *Māyā* or *Avidyā* or *Mala* as separate independent categories. The monistic form of *Pratyabhijnā Darsana*, *Vīrasaivism* and *Sāktam* is due to the influence of the Upanishads and the doctrines of *Sankara's Advaita*.

Pratyabhijnā Darsana or Kashmir Saivism

Kashmir Saivism is a type of monism based on the *Sivasūtras* of *Vasugupta* who lived in the latter

part of the eighth century, and the early part of the ninth. According to Kashmir tradition, the *Sivasūtras* were revealed to *Vasugupta* by *Siva* Himself. The followers of this school of thought trace all the doctrines and practices of their religion to the following *Āgamas* which have come down through the ages, being handed down from teacher to pupil. The most important *Āgamas* of this school are:

Malini Vijaya, Svachchhanda, Vijnāna Bhairava, Uchchhushma Bhairava, Ānanda Bhairava, (lost) Mrgendra, Mātanga, Netra, Naishvāsa, Svayambhuva, and Rudra-Yāmala.

“Most of these”, writes, J. C. Chatterjee, “had existed long before the appearance (or reappearance) of the *Trika* and taught mostly a dualistic doctrine; at any rate they seem to have been interpreted in a dualistic, even a pluralistic sense.”¹ According to Dr. K. C. Pandey, M. A. PH. D., “The Monistic, Dualistic and Dualistic-cum-Monistic schools of *Saivism* arose in the last quarter of the 4th century A. D.”² The *Advaita Tantras* consist of eight groups, each comprising eight *Tantras* having separate names. The *Dvaita Tantras* are ten in number and the *Dvaitādvaita Tantras* are eighteen. The Twenty-eight *Saiva Siddhānta Āgamas* differ from the two groups mentioned above only in respect of the names of three.

The influence of *Sankara's Advaita* is visible in the doctrines of *Vāsugupta*.³ According to Kashmir *Saivism*, the universe is only an expansion of the Power of *Siva* in His aspect as *Sakti*, by which aspect He both becomes and pervades the universe thus produced, while yet He remains the ever Transcendent *Chaitanya*.

As the individual soul is the same as the Universal Soul, the doctrine of a plurality of souls is

denied. Owing to the influence of *Māyā*, the soul has forgotten its essential nature. Kashmir *Saivism* postulates a single Reality with two aspects, one Transcendental and the other Immanent. The former is beyond all manifestations, and the latter pervades the universe of manifest phenomena. Both are real. Therefore, the universe is as real as the Transcendental. The world of matter is only another form of consciousness in the same way that the web of a spider is a part of its substance in another form.

Mōksha, according to Kashmir *Saivism*, is nothing but the state of Perfect Unity. It is the realization of the identity of the Self with the *Para Samvit* or the Supreme Consciousness, which is beyond the reach of thought and language and is the ultimate source not only of the Self but also of the objective universe.

Vīrasaivism or Lingayatism

The early history of *Vīrasaivism* is obscure and no systematic attempt has yet been made to unravel it. The most authoritative scripture of this sect is *Siddhānta Sikhāmani* which belongs to the 13th Century A. D. The *Vīrasaivas* consider the twenty-eight *Āgamas* of the *Saiva Siddhānta* school as their Scriptures also. Modern *Vīrasaivism* may be said to start with *Basava Deva*, 12th Century A. D.

Caste and Sex differences do not have a place in the *Vīrasaiva* ceremonials. *Vīrasaivism* disapproves of image-worship as strongly as possible, and maintain that the Supreme is to be worshipped in one's own *Ista-Linga*, the *Linga* obtained from the *Guru* at the time of initiation—*Deiksha*. It looks with disfavour even upon the worship of the *Linga* consecrated in temples. The *Vīra-Saiva* writers, hardly saw any difference between their creed and that

of the Tamil *Saiva* saints of the pre-*Meykanda* period. Indeed, the *Vīrasaiva* saints claimed the Tamilian saints of *Saiva Siddhānta* as their own, and the *Vīrasaiva* literature teems with accounts of the Tamil *Saiva* saints.

According to *Vīrasaivism* God, the Supreme *Siva* is the ultimate cause of the manifested world and the souls. The soul is a part of God. *Sakti* or *Māyā* evolves as the phenomenal universe. Owing to ignorance or *Avidyā* or *Mala*, the soul imagines itself to be different from the Supreme Reality. When ignorance is destroyed it realizes its inseparable union with *Siva*.

The eight indispensable aids to spiritual life are called *Astāvarana*. They are, *Guru*, *Linga*, *Jangama*, *Vibhūti*, *Rudrāksha*, *Padōdaka*, *Prasāda* and *Panchākshara*.

Though the ultimate goal of the *Vīrasaiva* philosophy is "merging of the soul in the Supreme", it begins with a belief in the distinctness of the soul from God. To efface this distinctness, the soul has to climb six steps. Hence the *Vīrasaiva sādhanā* is divided into six stages. They are: *Bhakti Sthala*, *Mahevara Sthala*, *Prasāda Sthala*, *Prānalīnga Sthala*, *Sarana Sthala* and *Aikya Sthala*. In the sixth stage or step called *Aikya Sthala*, there is complete union and identification of the individual soul with *Siva*. In the earlier stages there is distinctness between the soul and God, in the final stages there is unity. It is because of this dual aspect, *Vīrasaiva* philosophy is styled *Bhedābheda* or *Dvaitādvaita*. It is also known as *Sakti-Vasistādvaita*, because the world is considered to be the manifestation of *Sakti* and not *Siva*. The Supreme Reality is a union of *Siva* and *Sakti*.

The doctrines of Kashmir *Saivism* and those of *Vīrasaivism* are very closely connected. *Vīrasaivas*

consider their system an improvement on that of Kashmir *Saivism*.

Sāktism

The philosophy of *Sāktism* is also based on the teachings of the *Āgamas* which are called by the *Sāktas* as '*Tantras*'. The most important *Tantra* of the *Sāktas* is *Mahānirvāna Tantra*. The principal categories of *Sāktism* are identical with the other schools of *Saivism* and are 36 in number. Spiritual practices also are similiar to *Kashmir Saivism* and *Saiva Siddhānta*.

Sāktā philosophy is a qualified-monism which traces all manifestation to *Sakti* which is an inseparable quality of *Siva*. *Mukti* according to *Sāktism* is the complete identification with *Siva*. In *Saivism*, the emphasis is on *Siva*, the Supreme Reality, but in *Saktism* the emphasis is on *Sakti* and the worship of the Mother Aspect of Reality—*Sakti* known as *Parāsakti*. *Sri Rāmakrishna*, the great religious teacher and saint of modern India, started his religious practices as a devotee of the Mother-Aspect of God and in the end became a great *Advaitin* of the *Sankara* school.

Saiva Siddhānta of South India and Ceylon.

Saiva Siddhānta is the most popular philosophy of religion followed by the Tamils of South India and Ceylon. Though *Saivism* is a pre-Vedic religion, *Saiva Siddhānta*, as practised today in South India and Ceylon, is traced to the teachings of *Meykanda Deva* who lived in the 13th century A. D. The most important scripture of this school of thought is *Siva-Jnāna Bodham* of *St. Meykanda*. There are two opinions regarding the *Siva-Jnāna Bodham*. One is that *St. Meykanda* translated into Tamil the 12 verses of *Siva-Jnāna Bodham* found in the *Raurava*

Āgama. The other is that he himself is the original author of the 12 verses in Tamil which embody the teachings of the *Saiva Āgamas*. The *Saiva Siddhāntis* trace their religious doctrines to the 28 *Saiva Āgamas*.

Saiva Siddhānta Scriptures

In addition to the four Vedas, *Saiva Siddhānta* considers the 28 *Saiva Āgamas*, the 12 *Saiva* anthologies known as *Panniru Tirumuraigal*, and the 14 *Meykanda Shāstras*, both in Tamil, as authoritative scriptures.

Saiva Siddhānta considers the *Āgamas* as revelations of *Siva*. There are 28 *Āgamas* with 198 *Upāgamas*. According to *Siva-Jnāna Siddhyar*, the Vedas are for the worldly minded who desires to enjoy the pleasures of the world, and the *Āgamas* are for the spiritual aspirant—*Saktinipatha*—whose sole aim in life is to realize God. *Āgamas* are divided into four sections known as *Charyā-Pāda*, *Kriyā-Pāda*, *Yogā-Pāda* and *Jnāna Pāda*. The whole system of religious practices enjoined in the *Āgamas* is mainly based on temple worship and rituals connected with temples.

The *Āgamas* are more religious than philosophical. They elaborately deal on temple architecture, instalation of images and *yantras* and conducting of festivals in temples. The earliest reference in Tamil literature to *Saiva Āgamas* is found in the *Tirumandiram* of *Tirumūlar*, who lived before the seventh century A. D., *Tirumandiram* contains [a comprehensive summary of the religious doctrines and dogmas and philosophy of the *Āgamas*.

The *Jnāna-Pāda*—philosophical section—discusses the relation that exists between *Pati* (God), *Pasu* (Soul), *Pāsa* (Principle of Ignorance and Matter) and outlines the path of realization. Temple ritual

is connected with *Pūjā* and is *Āgamic*. *Homa* or the fire ritual is Vedic. It is the opinion of modern scholars that *Āgamic* worship is non-Vedic and therefore, *non-Āryan*. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji says: "Indian tradition has all along admitted two strands in Indian religion, philosophy and ritual—the Vedic, and the non-Vedic traditions—the *Nigama* and the *Āgama*, respectively, to give the Sanskrit names. The non-Vedic *Āgama* tradition is that which has come down, from the time immemorial: it embodies the special teaching of *Siva* imparted to *Uma*, and the *Tantrīc* doctrines and ritual and *Yōga* ideas and practices come under it. The *Āgamic* tradition is non-Āryan in origin, and it is exceedingly likely that it is very largely Dravidian."*†²

The *Panniru Tirumuraikal* are:

1. *Tevārams* of *St. Tirujnāna Sambandhar*
2. do.
3. do.
4. *Tevārams* of *St. Tirunāvukarasar*.
5. do.
6. do.
7. *Tevārams* of *St. Sundaramoorthy*.
8. *Tiruvāchakam* and *Tirukovaiyār* of
St. Mānīckavāchakar.
9. *Tiruvīsaippā* and *Tiruppallāndu*.
Compositions of 9 mystics.

* Presidential address at the All-India Oriental Conference, Ahmedabad, 1953.

† Mr. J. M. Nallaswamypillai in his English Translation of *Sivajnāna Siddhyar* gives the names of only 198 *Upāgamas*. Brahma Sri Senthinatha Iyer, in his *Sivajnāna Bodham Vachana Alangara Deepam*, mentions the number of *Upāgamas* as 207.

10. *Tirumandiram* of *St. Tirumūlar*.
11. Miscellaneous Collections of Ten mystics.
12. *Siruthondar Purānam* by *St. Sekkilar*.

The above anthologies are all in verse and are of a purely devotional and mystical nature. What the Upanishads are for *Vedānta* philosophy, the *Tirumuraikal* are for *Saiva Siddhānta*. The rich and varied spiritual experiences of the *Saiva* mystics of Tamil India are found in the twelve *Tirumuraikal* of *Saiva Siddhānta*.

St. Tirujnāna Sambandhar, *St. Tirunāvukarasar*, *St. Sundaramoorthy* and *St. Mānickavāchakar* are known as the *Saiva Siddhānta Samayāchariars*. *St. Tirunāvukarasar* lived in the reign of Pallava Mahendravarman I. *St. Sambandhar* was a junior contemporary of *St. Tirunāvukarasar*. They belong to the 7th century A. D., *St. Sundaramoorthy* belongs to the 9th century A. D., *St. Mānickavāchakar's* date is in dispute. Some place him in the 3rd century A. D., and others in the 9th century A. D. *St. Tirumūlar* is earlier to *St. Tirunāvukarasār*. He is placed between the 5th and the 6th centuries A. D.

Meikanda Shāstras

Next in importance to the *Tirumuraikal* are the fourteen *Siddhānta Shāstras*. They are:

1. *Sivajnāna Bōdham* of *St. Meikanda Devar*.
2. *Sivajnāna Siddhyār* of *St. Arulnandy Sivā-*
3. *Irupā-Irupahtu* do [charyar.
4. *Unmai Vilakkam* by *St. Tiruvadigai Manavasa-*
kam Kadanthar.
5. *Sivaprakāsam* by *St. Umāpathi Sivāchariar*,
(Early 14th century. A. D.)
6. *Tiruvarutpayan* do
7. *Pōrrippahrodai* do

8. *Vina Venba* by St. *Umāpathi Sivāchariar*, (Early 14th century A. D.)
9. *Unmai Neri Vilakkam* do
10. *Nenju Vidu Thōōthu* do
11. *Kodi Kavi* do
12. *Sankarpa Nirākaranam* do
13. *Tiruvunthiyar* by St. *Tiruvīyaloor Uyyavantha Devar* (1147. A. D.)
14. *Thirukaliruppādiyar* by St. *Tirukadavoor Uyyavantha Devar* (1177 A. D.)

St. Meikanda Devar, *St. Arulnandhy Sivāchariar*, *St. Maraijnāna Sambandhar* and *St. Umāpati Sivāchariar* are known as *Saiva Siddhānta* 'Santhanāchariars.' *St. Meikanda Devar* is said to have lived in the early part of the 13th century A. D.

Sivajnāna Bōdham of *Meikanda Devar* is a work of 12 *Sūtras*. *Meikanda Devar* has himself written a short explanatory commentary on the *Sūtras*. *Sivajnāna Swamigal*, 18th century, has written a smaller and bigger commentary on *Sivajnāna Bōdham*. The smaller commentary is known as *Sivajnāna Bōdha Chitturai* (சிவஞானபோதச் சிற்றறை) and the bigger commentary is known as *Sivajnāna Bōdha Mahā Bhāsyā*. There are six commentaries on *Sivajnāna Siddhyār*. The names of the commentators are: *Nirambavalakiar*, *Maraijnāna Desikar*, *Sivagra Yogin*, *Jnānapirakasar*, *Sivajnāna Swamigal* and *Subrahmanya Desikar*. *Jnānapirakasar* was a Jaffna Tamil who crossed over to South India during the Dutch period. M. Thiruvilangam, Proctor, of Colombo, has written a modern commentary on *Sivajnāna Siddhyār* and *Sivapirakāsam*. His commentary on *Siddhyār* may be considered as the quintessence of all the six commentaries mentioned above. S. Shivapathasundaram, B. A., of Jaffna has written a commentary on *Tiruarutpayan*.

The fourteen *Siddhānta Shāstras* are said to contain the essence of the teachings of the *Saiva*

Āgamas and deal with the practical aspect of religion and are not treatises on pure philosophy. They are more theological and are meant to help the spiritual aspirant towards the highest religious experience as embodied in *Saiva Siddhānta*.

Saiva Siddhānta as a System of Thought

Saiva Siddhānta is not a pure philosophy nor is it a religion without a philosophical background. It is not interested in speculating on the nature of the Ultimate Reality irrespective of the reactions, such speculation has on the practical religious life of the people. It is concerned only with the way of life one should lead for the purpose of final emancipation from ignorance. Therefore, it emphasizes the practical aspect of religion more than the speculative aspect of philosophy.

Saiva Siddhānta may be classified under those schools of thought which belong to Realism as opposed to Idealism. Though, it is monotheistic, it is not monistic in form and structure. It is more correct to call it a Pluralistic Realism. It believes in the existence of eternal entities which are separate from one another and accepts the categories of life as fundamental. By life, I mean, the temporal operative life of animals and men, the life of instinct and desire, of adaptation and environment, of civilization and progress—in *Saiva Siddhānta* terminology, the world of He, She and It. In evaluating the theories and doctrines of *Saiva Siddhānta*, a student of comparative religion and philosophy should not attempt to understand them or attempt to criticize them from a point of view fundamentally foreign to it. An evaluation of *Saiva Siddhānta* from the standpoint of Absolute Monism or Qualified-Monism is wrong and unfair by it. *Saiva Siddhānta* as a religion, is rigorous

and exacting in its discipline, methodical and rational in its practices.

Tenets of Saiva Siddhānta

Saiva Siddhānta believes in three entities known as *Pati* (*Siva*), *Pasu* (soul), and *Pāsam* (principle of ignorance). Souls are many and they are different from each other. *Ānava Mala*, the principle of ignorance, *Māyā*, the principle of matter, and *Karma*, the cause of rebirth, are collectively known as *Pāsam*. All the above categories are eternal and are independent of each other. *Saiva Siddhānta*, true to its religious aim and purpose, has not attempted to reconcile the categories to the Ultimate Reality. Metaphysical truths are matters of intuitive experience and, therefore, cannot be intellectually understood.

God—Sivam

Saiva Siddhānta defines God in two ways. One is the *Svarūpa Lakshanam*—the ontological definition, where God is defined as Pure Being. According to this definition *Siva* is neither *Rūpi* (having form) nor an *Arūpi* (formless). He is neither *Chit* (intelligence) nor *Achit* (matter). He does not create nor sustain nor perform other functions. This is also called the *Nishkala* (beyond qualities) aspect of *Siva*. When *Siva* is considered in relation to souls and the world of matter, He becomes the efficient cause of the universe. His *Sakti* is the instrumental cause. In this aspect, His functions are said to be Creation (*srsti*), Preservation (*sthiti*), Destruction (*sankāram*), Concealment (*tirobhava*) and the Bestowal of Grace (*ānugraha*). God provides bodies and objects of enjoyment out of *Māyā*, the principle of matter, to enable the souls to get rid of the bondage of *Ānava Mala* and attain *Mūkti* or liberation. This active aspect of *Siva* is called *Tadata Laksha-*

nam or the *Sakala* (possessed of qualities) aspect. The *Svarūpa Lakshanam* is the transcendental state and the *Tadatalakshanam* is the immanent aspect.

Souls

Souls are infinite in number and are eternally in contact with *Ānava Mala*. They come into physical existence by the Grace of God to exhaust their *Karma* and attain *Mukti*. They are divided into three groups: *Vijnāna Kalar*, *Pralayā Kalar* and *Sakalar*. *Vijnāna Kalar* have only *Ānava Mala*. *Pralayā Kalar* have *Ānava* and *Karma Mala*. *Sakalar* have the three *Malas*—*Ānava*, *Karma* and *Māyā*. The first two attain *Mōksha* without coming into the world of *Prakriti Māyā*; but the *Sakalar* will have to go through a series of births and deaths and after exhausting their *Karma*, attain *Mōksha*.

Siddhānta Shāstras very clearly explain the nature of the soul by defining it in two ways. The first definition speaks about the pure spiritual nature of it. The second defines its psychophysical characteristics. *St. Arulnandy Sivāchariar* explains the spiritual nature of the soul as follows:

It is formless (*arupī*) and all-pervasive (*vibhu*) but unlike that of *Achit* or matter. Its *vyapaka* (omnipresence) consists in becoming one with the thing it dwells in for the time being (body or God). Its eternal intelligence and power is eternally concealed by *Pāsa* (bondage) —*Ānava Mala* and hence called *Pasu*.³

அசித்தரு வியாப கம்போல்
 வியாபக மருவ மின்ருய்
 வசித்திட வரும்வி யாபி
 யேனும்வழக் குடைய னாகி
 நசித்திடா ஞானச் செய்தி
 யநாதியே மறைத்து நிற்கும்
 பசுத்துவ முடைய னாகிப்
 பசுவென நிற்கு மான்மா. —சி. சி. 4-2-20

In this verse is brought out the real nature of the soul as understood in *Saiva Siddhānta*. Its power or nature to become one with another thing to which it is attached is known as 'athu athu āthal or sānthathin vannamāthal'. The soul, according to *Saiva Siddhānta*, cannot exist on without holding on to matter or to God. It must either serve God or *Mammon*. In the worldly life it identifies itself with matter and enjoys psycho-physical pleasures and pains. In *Mukti* or liberation, it identifies itself with *Siva* and experiences eternally His In-effable Presence and Bliss—*Ānandam*.

The psycho-physical definition of the soul is as follows: The soul is separate from the body. It is existent; it is united to a body, and possessed of faults (the feeling of I and Mine); it wills, thinks and acts (*ichchā, jñāna, and kriyā*); it becomes conscious after dream; it experiences pleasures and pains, (the fruits of *Karma*); it undergoes the five *Avasthās* (conditions); it rests in *Turiyātīta*.⁴

உயிரெனப் படுவ திந்த
 வுடலின்வே றுளதா யுற்றுச்
 செயிருறு மிச்சா ஞானச்
 செய்திக ளுடைய தாகிப்
 பயில்வுறு மின்பத் துன்பப்
 பலங்களு நுகரும் பார்க்கிற்
 றுயிலொடு மஞ்ச வத்தைப்
 படுமுண்மை துரியா தீதம். —சு. சி. 3-1-1

This definition is of a general type and is called the *Tadata Lakshanam*—a description which takes into consideration the subject defined in relation to the immediate surroundings and its psycho-physical reactions to them. The soul is here defined as a non-material substance having the qualities of willing, thinking and acting. Body and mind are indispensable adjuncts for experiencing the pleasures and pains of life. Worldly knowledge

and experience are not possible without the physical body (*Tanu*), organs of knowledge and action (*Karana*), the objective world (*Bhuvana*) and objects of enjoyments (*Bhoga*).

When the soul dwells in the physical body, it passes through five different states or conditions known as *Avasthās*. They are *Jāgrā*, the waking state of physical activity; *Svapna*, the dream state; the dreamless sleep—*Susupti*; the deep sleep *Turiya*; *Turiyātīta*, the state beyond deep sleep. These *Avasthās* are daily occurrences to a soul. During the waking state the consciousness of an individual is centred in the forehead and all the thirty five *Tatvas* (instruments of knowledge and action) are present. In the dream state, the organs of knowledge and action do not function, and consciousness is centred in the throat. In dreamless sleep, the life force *Prāna* and the organ *Chitta* (the faculty of pleasure and pain) only function. Consciousness shifts to the area of the heart. In deep sleep, *Chitta* disappears leaving the *Prāna* and the soul, and the centre of consciousness shifts to the navel. In the state beyond deep sleep, the soul alone exists and *Mūlādhara* (sacrum) becomes the centre of consciousness.

Souls in their essential nature, are of the same category as God. But their powers are concealed by *Ānava Mala*. Their qualities of willing, thinking and acting can only be manifested by the Grace of God. If God does not move them to action by providing the necessary *Tanu*, *Karana*, *Bhuvana* and *Bhōga*, they will not be capable of being active by themselves. The initiative to act, to know and to desire comes from God. God out of his Infinite Mercy moves to help the souls to free themselves from the bonds of *Mala* with which they are in contact from the beginning of their existence. They

have, no doubt, free-will, but it is conditioned by the association they have with God or *Mala* or *Karma*.

At the beginning of creation, the souls are projected into the world by the Power of God (*Sakti*), and they go round the circle of births and deaths till they exhaust their *Karma* and become fit to receive the Divine Grace of God (*Arul*). The period of time to be spent in births and deaths depends on the quantity of *Karma* each soul has to exhaust. Some reach God early and some take time. However gracious and merciful God may be, He cannot quicken the process, because His Power is limited by the condition and progress of the souls. The mercy of God will have to act, taking into consideration the stage of the soul's progress.

PĀSAM: Ānava Mala and Māyā

The principle of ignorance which is associated with the soul from the very beginning is called *Ānava Mala*. The principle of matter, out of which the material universe is evolved, is called *Māyā*. The *Māyā* spoken of in *Saiva Siddhānta* is different from what it is in *Sankara's Advaita* and in *Sri Ramānuja's Visistādvaita* which considers *Māyā* as an attribute or aspect of God. *Māyā* in *Saiva Siddhānta* is an eternal entity, not connected with God. It is because of the contact of *Ānava Mala* that the pervasive and intelligent soul cognises itself as finite, ignorant and atomic. God's *Sakti* acting on *Māyā*, produces the material universe of *Tanu*, *Karana*, *Bhuvana* and *Bhōga*.

Karma Mala

The term *Karma* is used in Hinduism to denote

1. The activities of individuals in their embodied state;

2. The accumulated tendencies (*Samskāras*) of past actions which influence future actions; and
3. The law which regulates the experience of pleasure and pain.

The *Karma Mala* spoken of in *Saiva Siddhānta* refers to the accumulated tendencies, and these tendencies are governed by the law of *Karma*. Every action of the soul, whether good or bad, leaves behind a tendency (*Samskāra*) which is potentially embedded in *Karma Mala* and can only be exhausted by actions which result in pleasure and pain. *Karmic* tendencies are of three kinds *Sanchita*, *Prārabdha* and *Āgāmya*. *Sanchita* are the accumulated tendencies which are stored up and are awaiting to be exhausted. The *Prārabdha* is a portion of the *Sanchita*, to exhaust which, the Soul has taken the human body. *Āgāmya* are the new tendencies which are created by the Soul as a result of its free-will. Unlike *Anava Mala* and *Māyā Mala*, the *Karma Mala* can be destroyed.

Doctrine of Grace (Arul)

The love of God manifests as *Arul* or Grace. God out of his Infinite Love, desires to lift the souls from their bondage. For their redemption, He has created a world-process so that they may acquire the necessary knowledge and be fit to reach Him. Therefore, *Mukti* or liberation is God's Will and not man-created ambition. It is the Will of God that man should free himself from bondage and reach Him in order to live in eternal peace and bliss. The world process has taken shape because of the Love God has towards man, so that he may exhaust his *Karma* and attain the final Beatitude which is assured to him. All souls will ultimately reach God. It is only a matter of time.

The world-process originated for the benefit and redemption of souls and it will not pass away until that purpose is realized. There is hope for the worst of criminals and the most depraved of sinners. That the Grace of God will finally lead all to the haven of eternal peace and bliss is the assurance of *Saiva Siddhānta* to humanity. No soul will be lost and no one need despair. God is love, and God's Love will ultimately triumph. *Saiva Siddhānta*, as a religion, is based on the doctrine of Divine Love and Grace (*Arul*), and preaches redemption through the Divine Grace of God.

The ignorant say, Love and God are different
None know that Love and God are the same
When they know that Love and God are the same
They rest in God as Love.

St. Tirumūlar.

அன்பும் சிவமும் இரண்டென்பர் அறிவிலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாரும் அறிகிலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாரும் அறிந்தபின்
அன்பே சிவமாய் அமர்ந்திருந் தாரே.

Oneness or Advaita in Saiva Siddhānta

The interpretation which *Saiva Siddhānta* gives to the word *Advaita* is different from that of other schools of thought. To understand the *Saiva Siddhānta* conception of *Mukti*, one should know the meaning of *Advaita* union as expounded in the *Siddhānta Shāstras*. The soul, while in bondage, is said to be in *Advaita* union with *Mala*, and in *Mukti*, in *Advaita* union with *Siva*.

Oh! for the day when I will be in *Advaita*
union with God,

As I am now in *Advaita* relation with *Ānava*.

ஆணவத்தோ டத்துவித மானபடி மெய்ஞ்ஞானத்
தாணுவினோ டத்துவிதஞ் சாருநா னெந்நாளோ.

yearns, *St. Tāyumanavar.*

The interpretation which *Meykandar* gives to *Advaita* union is peculiar to *Saiva Siddhānta*, and is based on the nature of the soul to become identified with the object with which it comes in contact. *Advaita* in the monistic system of thought means "One". But, in *Saiva Siddhānta*, it means not One but "two things appear as one by complete indentification." Although, soul and God are separate entities of a similar nature, in *Mukti*, they are so united that they appear as One. This apparent one-ness is solely due to the *Svarūpa Lakshanam* or pure spiritual nature of the soul to become one with whatever object it dwells in.

Eclecticism of Saiva Siddhānta

Saiva Siddhānta is catholic in outlook and tolerant to all forms and grades of religious worship. From the lowest animism to the highest flights of religious absorption, all have a place in it. It believes in graded forms of worship to suit the cultural and religious level of the various groups of individuals that form the community. The catholicity of *Saiva Siddhānta* is very beautifully expressed in the following verses: *St. Arulnandhy Sivāchariar* in *Siddhyār* says:

Whatever God you worship, even as Him, the Consort of *Uma* (*Siva*) will appear there.⁶

யாதொரு தெய்வங் கொண்ட ரத்தெய்வ மாகி யாங்கே
மாதொரு பாக னுந்தாம் வருவர். சி. சி. 2-3-25

St. Sivajnāna Swāmiḡal writes:

As different religions lead us ultimately to the same true path.⁷

பலமதமும் ஈற்றில் ஒருவழிப்படலும் போலும்

St. Thāyumānavar says:

The path proclaimed by all saints who have had the True Vision, is the same everywhere.

கங்குல்பக லற்றதிருக் காட்சியர்கள் கண்டவழி
எங்கு மொருவழியே யெந்தாய் பராபரமே.

St. Sundarar says:

I am the servant of those devotees, even of other lands, who have reached the Feet of God.

அப்பாலு மடிசார்ந்த அடியார்க்கு மடியேன்.

St. Appar says:

விரிவிலா அறிவினர்கள் வேறொரு சமயஞ்செய்தே
எரிவினற் சொன்னாரேனும் எம்பிராற்கு ஏற்றதாகும்.

The three schools of *Saivism*—*Virasaivism*, *Kashmir Saivism* and *Saiva Siddhānta*, from the religious point of view, have very many things in common. All the schools believe in *Siva* as the Supreme Reality; in *Sri Panchākshara* as the highest sacred *mantra*; in *Rudraksha* and *Vibhūti* as the sacred symbols of *Saivism*. They believe in *Guru*, *Linga* and *Jangama* as indispensable aids to the practice of religion. Hindu sects emphasize the necessity of a spiritual teacher—*Guru*, to guide the aspirant towards realization. *Linga* represents the symbol which is used as an object of meditation and worship. *Jangama* means the company of holy men.

In the ceremonial and ritual part of religion, it is extremely difficult to distinguish one school of *Saivites* from another. The saints of *Saiva Siddhānta* are also considered as saints by the *Virasaivas*. The *Āgamas* of the respective schools are in the Sanskrit language, but the devotional literature is in the language of the people of the areas in which the different sects exist.

Saiva Siddhānta as a religious system occupies a very important place in the history of religious thought in the world. All students of Comparative Religion will certainly be benefitted by a study of it. Rev. G. U. Pope, M. A. D. D., the great Tamil Scholar and translator of '*Tiruvāchakam*' into Eng-

lish, remarks: "It is the choicest product of the Dravidian intellect. The *Saiva Siddhānta* is the most elaborate, influential and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all religions of India." Rev. F. Goodwill, comments on the statement of Dr. Pope, as follows: "Those who have studied the system unanimously agree that this eulogy is not a whit too enthusiastic or free-worded. That the system is eclectic is at once apparent."

Rev. W. F. Goudie writes: "There is no school of thought and no system of faith or worship that comes to us with anything like the claims of *Saiva Siddhānta*. This system possesses the merits of a great antiquity. In the religious world, the *Saiva* system is heir to all that is most ancient in South India, it is the religion of the Tamil people by the side of which every other form is of comparatively foreign origin. As a system of religious thought, as an expression of faith and life, the *Saiva Siddhānta* is by far the best that South India possesses. Indeed it would not be rash to include the whole of India, and to maintain that judged by its intrinsic merits, the *Saiva Siddhānta* represents the high water mark of Indian thought and Indian life."

Dr. Nicol Macnicol, M. A., D. Lit., writes: "The most courageous attempt to transcend this bondage is that of the *Saiva Siddhānta* system, a system which for that reason we may pronounce the noblest among Indian Theisms. It passes beyond the view that God is merely the One who presides indifferently over the embodiments of souls and even beyond the more theistic doctrine that 'the whole universe must be for ever inert, unintelligent and lifeless without the operations of *Pati* and his manifested energy.' ...It comprehends within the sweep of its doctrine of grace the whole of the world-

process, teaching that the purpose of the Lord from first to last is gracious, and that the end in view throughout is the soul's emancipation, and his entrance into blissful union with his Lord."⁸

Dr. J. N. Farquhar writes: "Of the many systems into which *Saivites* stream of *Vedānta* teaching has spread out, the *Saiva Siddhānta* possesses by far the richest literature and holds the greatest place in the life of South India."⁹

Dr. L. D. Barnett writes: "No cult in the world has produced a richer devotional literature or one more instinct with brilliancy of imagination fervour of feeling and grace of expression."¹⁰

Sir Charles Eliot writes: "The remarkable feature of this religion (*Saiva Siddhānta*), best seen in the '*Tiruvāchagam*,' is the personal tie which connects the soul with God. In no literature with which I am acquainted has the individual religious life—its struggles and dejection, its hopes and fears, its confidence and its triumph—received a delineation more frank and more profound. ...Not only its outline but its details strikingly resemble the records of devout Christian lives in Europe. *Siva* is addressed not only as Lord but as Father."¹¹

Saiva Siddhānta is a unique gift of Tamil culture to the world and every Tamil should be proud of this heritage.

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Chapter Three

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Chapter Four

SAIVA SIDDHĀNTA: PATH OF GOD REALIZATION

Saiva Siddhānta, as I have said earlier, is more a religious system than a philosophical one. It is concerned more with the life that one should lead to realize God in this life than with the speculations regarding the ultimate Reality and its relation to the world of everyday experience. According to *Saiva Siddhānta* the world process exists solely for the purpose of the souls to free themselves from the bonds of *Ānava Mala*. God has an aim in creating the world process and it serves only His purpose. The world and its manifold activities are there to provide man with the necessary opportunity to gain true knowledge and experience, so that he may free himself from *Mala*. Until this aim is realized, he must continue to be born in order to make himself fit for the descent of Divine Grace.

The Divine *Sakti* of God, first in the form of *Tirothana*, binds the soul to the things of the world to enable it to gain experience and knowledge, and later, in the form of *Arul Sakti* or Divine Grace, takes it to the Sacred Feet of God. When you completely reach *Siva*, you transcend the influence of *Arul* and become conscious of His Ineffable and Transcendental Nature. The Grace of God, is behind every being and is directing it towards spiritual perfection. Therefore, even an unbeliever in God is unconsciously being guided by the Grace of God towards the goal. The sun shines

irrespective of the nature of the trees on which its rays fall, but the trees grow, blossom and bear fruits according to their maturity by the help of the rays—some early and some late. *Siva* like the sun is beyond the reach of man, but the *Sakti* or Grace like the rays, is in contact with the world every minute of its existence. Redemptive Love is behind the world-process and the destiny of man is to reach the Divine Feet of God. This is assured to one and all irrespective of caste, race and creed.

Saiva Siddhānta divides religious practices into two kinds. One is socio-religious (உபாச), and the other is purely spiritual (உண்மை). Rituals and ceremonies performed with a view to gaining prosperity and happiness in the worldly life of an individual is socio-religious. By the practice of such rituals man's attachment to the enjoyment of happiness of a sensuous nature increases. Until an individual attains an attitude of non-attachment to the things of the world he cannot be said to be fit for a really spiritual life. The true value of a spiritual life can only dawn on an individual when he realizes the transitory nature of sensuous pleasures. Man cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. When we run after wordly things for the satisfaction of sensuous desires, we cannot consider ourselves to be leading a life of spiritual values. You may attend temples everyday, or go on pilgrimages as frequently as you can, yet, if these things are done merely for the purpose of obtaining wordly enjoyments, then they can only be classified as materialistic pursuits which have nothing in common with spiritual life. Spiritual life requires a dedicated attitude of self-surrender to God. One should walk towards God and not away from Him. This is called in *Saiva Siddhānta*, *Suddhavasthai* or

the *Nivrtti Mārga*. Activities towards worldly enjoyments are called the *Pravrtti Mārga*.

Malaparipākam and Iruvinaioppu

Malaparipākam is the ripe state of *Ānava Mala*. At this stage the *Mala* loses its power over the soul and the individual begins to feel the emptiness of life and considers both good and evil as bondages. This attitude towards good and evil is called *Iruvinaioppu*. Some critics of *Saiva Siddhānta* mistake *Iruvinaioppu* for indifference to good and evil. *Iruvinaioppu* is neither a state of mental callousness nor an attitude adopted to indulge in evil. It is a state of transcendence. When one attains *Iruvinaioppu*, one struggles or thirsts to hold on to something which transcends the world of finite existence. This thirst for something which is beyond good and evil, gives him an inner satisfaction and a joy of a spiritual nature. This stage is followed by the state of *Saktinipatham* or the descent of Divine Grace.

Saktinipatham

The process by which a man attains final beatitude is very graphically described by *St. Pattinattar* in the following stanza;

After renouncing all things born of *Māyā* and all Relationships based on *Ānava Mala*, follow the Divine Mother (*Arul*) and with Her aid join the Father, the Supreme *Siva*, and then abandoning the Mother, identify thyself completely with *Siva*. This is the path to the Highest Beatitude.

மாயநட் போரையு மாயா மலமெனும்
மாதரையும்
வியவிட் டோட்டி வெளியே புறப்பட்டு
மெய்யருளாந்

தாயுடன் சென்றுபின் ருதையைக் கூடிப்பின்
 ருயைமறந்
 தேயும தேநிட்டை யென்ரு நெழிற்கச்சி
 யேகம்பனே.

The coming in contact with the Divine Mother is the descent of Grace on the Devotee which is known as *Saktinipatham*. Until and unless a man completely gives up mentally all attachment to the things of the world, he cannot hope to turn his attention towards God. In all religions this attitude is emphasized as a pre-requisite for the dawn of a religious consciousness. The soul has to get ready for the beginnings of the relationship that results in ultimate union. This readiness comes to it when it cuts off all attachment to the world and attempts to cling to the Real. At this moment the soul is vouchsafed a vision which is not intellectual but emotional and full of feeling, transforming the entire Personality. The soul in this experience sees its unworthiness and sees the grandeur and beauty of the Supreme. From now onwards the devotee struggles physically and mentally to transform himself in such a way by a life of intense religious practices as to make himself progressively fit to attain the likeness of God.

The Descent of Grace or *Saktinipatham*, is called 'Awakening of the Self' in Western Mysticism. "It is a disturbance of the equilibrium of the self, which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from lower to higher levels, with a consequent removal of the centre of interest from the subject to an object now brought into view; the necessary beginning of any process of transcendence. It must not, however, be confused or identified with religious conversion as ordinarily understood." In this experience the person emerges from a smaller world of existence into a larger

world of being. His life is swallowed up by a fullness which breaks all the limitations of his little self.

The awakening of the mystical consciousness is generally accompanied by a crisis in life. To some it comes gradually as a matter of course. After this change or awakening, the Grace of God gently and surely binds the soul to God and it is awakened to a sense of the Divine Presence. Thenceforward, the awakened soul, sanctified in spirit, steadily strives with the help of *Arul* (Grace), to identify itself exclusively with the Divine, through religious practices. When the Divine Grace descends on the soul, it is said to have attained the age of maturity for the consummation of spiritual marriage and it longs, night and day, for the coming of the Lord, and prepares for the event by intense religious *sadhanas* or practices.

The descent of Divine Grace takes place by gradual stages. The stages are said to be four. They are: *Manthatara Saktinipatham*, *Mantha Saktinipatham*, *Teevira Saktinipatham* and *Teeviratara Saktinipatham*. The state of becoming aware of the Divine with the help of Grace is described in *Saiva Siddhānta* as "*Avan arulal avan thal vananghi*" (Worshipping His Feet by His Grace only). "*Avan arule kannāka kanin allal*", —(We can with Grace alone as our eye, perceive Him). By the religious practices, performed after the awakening, the self becomes completely detached from the sense pleasures of the body and acquires the spiritual qualities known in mystic phraseology as the "ornaments of the spiritual marriage."

Four Steps (Nātpatham)

The religious life of a devotee is divided into four stages according to the intensity of *Saktini-*

patham. Religious life according to *Saiva Siddhānta* is not a mere performance of religious ceremonies and rituals for the attainment of a happy and prosperous worldly life. It does not mean the regular attendance at temples or religious festivals. Performance of religious *sādhanas*, after complete self-surrender to God, is considered as true religious life. The aim of this is the attainment of union with the Divine and the enjoyment of Supreme Beatitude while living in the world. *Mōksha* or liberation is not a thing to be attained only after death. It should be attained while the soul exists in the physical body. If it dies before the attainment, it must be born again in the world to realize it. Therefore, *Mōksha*, in *Saiva Siddhānta*, is not an after-death event. In keeping with this ideal, the *sādhanas* or religious practices are so arranged as to take the individual, step by step, to the final beatitude.

The acquiring of mere intellectual knowledge of the problems of philosophy or theology or the ability to explain the subtle differences of the various religious doctrines and dogmas is not a sufficient qualification for the true religious experience. The scriptures definitely insist on absolute practice for spiritual advancement. All scriptures are provided with a section wherein the *Adhikari Lakshanam*—qualifications of the devout—are treated. One who is not hungry cannot enjoy a meal. If he eats for the mere purpose of satisfying his palate, he will only fall a victim to indigestion. Similarly, one who is not earnest about religious realization, if taught the path, will only misuse it for worldly advantages and deceive people. Hindu scriptures forbid spiritual practices for the attainment of worldly happiness.

Devotees in the stage of *Manthatara Saktinipatham* engage themselves in the practice of *Charyā*; in the stage of *Mantha Saktinipatham*, practise *Kriyā*; in the stage of *Teevira Saktinipatham* practise *Yōga*; in the stage of *Teeviratara Saktinipatham* practise *Jnāna*. The purpose of all religious practices are meant to purify the physical and mental natures of the devotee so that his real spiritual nature may manifest. Whatever activity a devotee undertakes, is only a means to purify himself. Services rendered to individuals or to society are means by which one develops the quality of unselfish love so that the Divine Love may manifest in him fully. Some people are under the illusion that service to others is the sole aim of religion. One Christian writer says: "The isolation of the *Siddhānta* mystics is impossible to one to whom Christ is the ideal and the rule. The Christian mystic dare not seek great things for himself. He lives for others. It is what he has striven to achieve for the saving and well-being of others that becomes the standard by which he will be judged at the last." How can the blind lead the blind? How can one who has not attained the spiritual peace impart it to another. If the blind attempts to lead the blind, both will fall into the pit. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and everything else will be added unto you", is the truth proclaimed by Jesus. One should save himself before he could save others. Whatever service, Christian mystics rendered to society were done after their attainment of Spiritual Blessedness. Attainment of Union with God is the primary purpose of spiritual life. All other activities are subservient to it. If service to fellowmen is taken as the primary purpose of life, it will lead the aspirant astray and get him involved in the problems of social life. Institutions founded by mystics

and saints have, today, degenerated into centres of intrigue and discord, because of this wrong attitude regarding social service and religion.

Charyā

Charyā is the first step or stage of religious *sādhana* and it includes all types of activities performed by the physical body to bring it under complete control. Temple worship and service to saints and other activities of social service performed solely for the purpose of developing mental purity come under *Charyā*.

The easy duties—lighting lamps in the temple, culling flowers for *pūja* in the temple, sweeping and washing the temple, praising God by singing devotional hymns and assisting in the service of *abhiseka*, cooking *prasada*—constitute *Dāsa Mārga* or *Charyā*.

எளியனல் தீப மிடல்மலர் கொய்தல்
 அளிதின் மெழுகு லதுதூர்த்தல் வாழ்த்தல்
 பளிமணி பற்றல் பன்மஞ் சனமாதி
 தளிதொழில் செய்வது தான்ருச மார்க்கமே.¹

The relationship that exists between God and the devotee in this stage is that of a master and servant. That is why it is called *Dāsa Mārga*. Fasting is an indispensable activity.

Kriyā

The second stage is known as *Kriyā* which consists of psycho-physical practices. They are learning the scriptures—*Jnāna Shastras* and performing religious *sādhana*s more by the mind than by the body. In *Kriyā*, the emphasis is both external and internal in form and method. The following are the duties enjoined on a *sadhaka* who is on the path of *Kriyā*:

Pūja (*Siva Pūja* at home), reading the scriptures reciting prayers, *japa* (repetition of the Sacred *Mantra*), meditation, austerities for the attainment of self-control, truthfulness, purity of thought and action, Love (*karunai*), offering of food.

பூசித்தல் வாசித்தல் போற்றல் செபித்திடல்
ஆசற்ற நற்றவம் வாய்மை அழுக்கினமை
நேசித்திட டன்னமு நீசுத்தி செய்தல்மற்று
ஆசற்ற சற்புத் திரமார்க்க மாகுமே.²

Kriyā is known as *Satputra Mārga*, because the relationship which exists between God and the devotee is that of a father and son.

Yōga

The third stage is *Yōga* which is mainly psychological. The control of the organs of action (*karmendriyas*) and instruments of knowledge (*jnānendriyas*), performance of *pranayama* (control of breathing), contemplation and meditation on God and His Attributes, are the important elements that constitute the activities of a person in the path of *Yōga*. This *Yōga* path should not be confused with the *Yōga* practices of *Patanjali* found in his *Yōga Sūtras*. *Patanjali's Yōga* philosophy is one of the six *Darsanas* and is quite different from the *Yōga* spoken of in *Saiva Siddhānta*.

Some of the *Yōga* practices spoken of in *Patanjali's Yōga* is incorporated into the *Yōga* of *Saiva Siddhānta*. It is not the aim of *Yōga* philosophy to unite the soul with God. But, the aim of *Yōga* in *Saiva Siddhānta* is to make the soul fit to attain union with *Siva*. The *Yōga* stage is known as *Sakha Mārga*—the relationship is that of a friend to another friend.

The four paths of religious practices enunciated in *Saiva Siddhānta* Mysticism, may be compared with the ascetical and mystical theology of Christian

Mysticism. *Charyā* and *Kriyā* are the same as the Purgative Way or the beginner's path of purification; *Yōga* is contemplation and quiet. *Jnāna* is the Unitive Way or spiritual marriage, which culminates in complete union.

According to *Saiva Siddhānta* those who die after attaining perfection in *Charyā* attain *Salōka Mukti*, those after *Kriyā* attain *Samīpya Mukti*, those after *Yōga*, *Sarūpya* and those after *Jnāna*, *Sayujya*. *Sri Madhva* the *Vaisnava Ācharya* and exponent of the *Dvaita* school of *Vedānta*, also speaks of four types of liberation similar to the above.

Bhakti or Devotion

Some may wonder, why nothing has been said about *Bhakti* or Devotion as a path to union. The four paths spoken of so far deal with the physical and mental activities of a devotee who has dedicated his life for the realization of union with God or *Mōksha* or final Beatitude. *Bhakti* is the fundamental background on which all the activities are based and it is necessary to vivify all acts of worship and devotion. It is because of intense *bhakti* or devotion that an individual undergoes all hardships to attain Union. Love is the sustaining factor for the ordeals which lovers undergo to get united. Similarly *bhakti* is the inspiring motive which drives the devotee towards Union with God. *Bhakti* is the end and aim of all religious pursuits. What all *Saiva* Mystics have yearned for is uninterrupted Love (*idaiyara anbu*) to the Sacred Feet of *Siva*.

St. Appar sings:

Even though in million waters he bathe,
If for the Lord he bears no Love,
He appears the fool who water pours

Within a pot with holes, and shuts
The lid and thinks the water safe.

கோடி தீர்த்தங் கலந்து குளித்தவை
ஆடி னாலும் அ ரனுக்கன் பில்லையேல்
ஓடு நீரினை யோட்டைக் குடத்தட்டி
முடி வைத்திட்ட மூர்க்கனோ டொககுமே.

As fire in wood, as ghee in milk,
The Luminous One lies hid within,
First fix the churning stick of Love,
Pass round the chord, Intelligence,
Then twirl, and God will bless thy sight.

விறகிற் றீயினன் பாலிற்ப டுநெய்ப்போல்
மறைய நின்றுளன் மாமணிச் சோதியான்
உறவு கோல்நட் டுணர்வு கயிற்றினால்
முறுக வாங்கிக்க டையமுன் னிற்குமே.³

St. Thirumūlar says:

Even though, with bones for firewood, the
Flesh is torn to lines and burnt, like gold in fire,
Except to those who internally melt themselves
God is not accessible. [into Love,

என்பே விறகா யிறைச்சி யறுத்திட்டுப்
பொன்போற் கனலிற் பொரிய வறுப்பினும்
அன்போ டுருகி யகங்குழை வார்க்கன்றி
என்போன் மணியினை எய்தவொண் னாதே.⁴

The sole aim of true religion is to reach God through Love. God is Love and the soul has to transform itself into Love for complete Union. Ceremonies, rituals, temples, scriptures, theological studies, philosophical speculations and austerities are but means to establish man in the love of God.

Jnāna

When the devotee is well established in *Charyā*, *Kriyā* and *Yōga*, *Teeviratara Saktinipatham* sets in. The yearning for Union increases and makes the devotee sleepless and miserable. Then God appears

in the form of a *Guru* to direct him and guide him into the mysteries of the Unitive Way called *Jnāna* or *Sanmārga*. The conception of incarnation is foreign to *Saiva Siddhānta*. According to it God or *Siva* is birthless and deathless. The qualityless Supreme Being cannot be said to appear within the limits of matter. He is beyond time and space and causal relationships. He can only manifest himself in the purified soul of a *Siva Jnāni*. *Ennuvār ullaththil nannuvān Īsan*. (He will be present in the hearts of those who intensely seek Him.) Therefore, when we say, that God will appear as a *Guru* what is meant is that *Siva*, using a saint of attainment (*thidditu*), will guide the devotee towards the final beatitude. He may also appear to a fit devotee, sufficiently developed in spiritual practices in visions and give the necessary guidance. Guidance is an absolute necessity and it may come to an individual in any form.

Dasa Karya

The practice of spiritual discipline based on pure knowledge is known as *Jnāna Mārga* or *Sanmārga*, the pure path. This is divided into three stages which are again subdivided into ten states called *Dasa Karyam*. They are: *Tattvā Rūpam*, *Tattva Darsanam*, *Tattva Suddhi*; *Ātma Rūpam*, *Ātma Darsanam*, *Ātma Suddhi*; *Siva Rūpam*, *Siva Darsanam*, *Siva Yōgam* and *Siva Bhōgam*.

First Stage in Jnāna Mārga

Tattvā Rūpam is a clear understanding of the order of evolution of the categories of the physical universe both objective and subjective. The *Tattvas* are thirtysix in number. *Siva Tattva* or *Nādam* is the first evolute of *Suddha Māyā* and *Prthvi Tattva* or Earth is the last evolute of *Prakṛti Māyā*.

A correct understanding that all the *Tattvas* are products of *Māyā* or the principle of matter and that they are devoid of intelligence, is called *Tattva Darsanam* or perception of the nature of the categories.

The act of separating oneself from the control of the categories of nature (*Tattvas*) and establishing oneself as a separate entity from them, is known as *Tattva Suddhi*.

The experiences and understanding gained in the first stage, confer on the devotee the strength to cut asunder the ties that bind the soul to the physical universe of desires and aversions.

Second Stage in Jnāna Mārga

Freeing itself from the control of the *Tattvas*, the soul gets isolated and begins to feel itself as a separate entity with an intelligence of its own and considers the *Tattvas* as foreign to itself. This state is known as *Ātma Rūpam*, the awareness of one's own spiritual form.

The knowledge that all pain and pleasure are the result of contact with the *Tattvas* and that the *Ātman* is by nature pure and free from the pairs of opposites, is said to be *Ātma Darsanam*. *Ātma Darsanam* is the clear knowledge of the intrinsic nature of the Soul's *Svarūpalakshanam*.

The soul which was all the time identifying itself with the *Tattvas*, now begins to abandon them and attempt to identify itself with the Divine Grace which it has experienced. This state is called *Ātma Suddhi*.

These three states are the process of attaining Self-knowledge, according to *Saiva Siddhānta*. This knowledge is essential for the attainment of Union

with *Siva*. *St. Tāyumanavar* very beautifully describes the importance of this state as follows:

The way to realize Thee Oh: Supreme, is to realize ones own true nature and be centred in Grace (*Arul*)

தன்னை அறிந்தருளே தாரகமா நிற்பதுவே
உன்னை அறிதற்கு உபாயம் பராபரமே.

When one realizes one's own true nature, how can there be attachment to anything except to the Lord of his being, say, Oh: Supreme.

தன்னை அறிந்தால் தலைவன்மேற் பற்றலது
பின்னையொரு பற்றுமுண்டோ பேசாய் பராபரமே.

Third Stage in Jnāna Mārga

Siva Rūpam is the attainment of the knowledge that the Supreme *Siva* with the help of *Parā Sakti*, is omnipresent and performs the Five Acts—Creation, Preservation, Concealment, Destruction and Bestowal of Grace, for the sole purpose of liberating the souls from the bonds of *Anava Mala*, and the realization of the Presence of *Siva* in one's own soul.

When the purified soul, free from 'I-Ness' and 'My-Ness' perceives God in all things and enjoys Bliss Un-speakable—*Paramānantham*, then, it is said to have attained *Siva Darsanam*. Here also the experience is objective.

The state of Union where the soul identifies itself with *Siva* by the practice of '*Sivōham Bhāvana*' and realizes that all his acts, good or bad, flow from Him, is called *Siva Yōgam*. Not only his individual actions but all the activities in the world are seen as His Act of Grace.

When the soul is completely immersed in *Siva* without a sense of separateness, it dwells in *Siva* and *Siva* dwells in it. This is the One-ness spoken in *Saiva Siddhānta* as *Advaita Mukti*. Iron when heated

in the fire gradually loses its colour and in the end assumes the redness of the flame and in appearance looks a burning piece of charcoal. Similarly, the *Ātman* completely assumes the appearance of the Infinite Being. In this state, the soul enjoys the Bliss Supreme—*Sivānandam*, without an object—subject relationship. This is the final state of spiritual perfection that an individual can attain while living on earth. This state is known as *Jīvanmukti*—liberation while living in the body. It is also known as *Siva-Bhōgam*. In *Mukti* there is an identity of essence in spite of differences in existence. The individuality of the soul is not annihilated, but it completely identifies itself with God or *Siva* and appears as One with Him.

The whole method of God-Realization, according to *Saiva Siddhānta*, is very beautifully summarized by *St. Appar* in the following *Tevaram*:

முன்னம் அவனுடைய நாமங் கேட்டாள்
 மூர்த்தி யவனிருக்கும் வண்ணம் கேட்டாள்
 பின்னை யவனுடைய ஆரூர் கேட்டாள்
 பெயர்த்தும் அவனுக்கே பிச்சி யானாள்
 அன்னையையும் அத்தனையும் அன்றே நீத்தாள்
 அகன்றாள் அகலிடத்தார் ஆசா ரத்தைத்
 தன்னை மறந்தாள் தன்னொங்க் கேட்டாள்
 தலைப்பட்டாள் நங்கை தலைவன் தாளே.⁵

First she heard His name and obtained information as to His nature and Person; then she inquired about His native land. Immediately becoming passionately attached to Him, she abandoned her mother and father. Renouncing all wordly convention, losing herself and her name, she started a life of dedicated service to His Feet.

This path is called the *Nayaka-Nayaki Bhāva* in Hindu Mysticism. *Siva* is the Lord and the Soul is the spouse or bride. In Western Mysticism it is

known as Bridal Mysticism or Erotic Mysticism. We find this type of mysticism, not only in *Saiva Siddhānta*, but also in *Vaisnavism*. *St. Āndal* and *St. Mirābhai* are examples for such a mystical path.

Jīvan Muktas or Siva-Jnānis

Mystics who have attained liberation from the bonds of *Ānava Mala* while in the body and have identified themselves with *Siva* are *Jīvan Muktas* or *Siva Jnānis*. They have no 'I-ness' and 'My-ness.' No taint can attach to them. Their mind and body become media for the action of *Siva*. They are fully absorbed in the Transcendental Peace and Bliss known as *Sivānandam* or Delight Supernal. They are the living embodiments of spiritual wisdom and the radiant beacons which guide us towards *Siva*. Their experiences and teachings form the sacred scriptures of religion. *Jīvan Muktas* do exist even now in India and Ceylon and will continue to exist always.

Absolute Experience

Though *Saiva Siddhānta* theologians speak about the God of religion and the attaining of union with Him, the *Saiva* mystics have gone beyond this qualified state of union and have described the Absolute Experience as one which transcends all attributes and conditions. Unlike the Christian Church of the Middle Ages, *Saiva* Religion never persecuted the mystics who proclaimed the grandeur of Absolute Experience. They were respected and revered.

From what has so far been said, it is evident, that *Saiva Siddhānta* is a way of life for realizing Supreme Beatitude. The author of *Sivajnāna Siddhi-ar*, *St. Arulnandhy Sivachāriar*, says in the first stanza of his book that he had written the book

only for those *Sakthinipathas* who are yearning for God realization and not for those who are in search of wordly enjoyments (*Prakrthar*). "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" is the ideal of *Saiva Siddhānta*.

St. Tāyumānavar says:

காக முறவு கலந்துண்ணக் கண்ட ரகண்டா காரசிவ
போக மெனும்பே ரின்பவெள்ளம் பொங்கித் ததும்பிப் பூரணமாய்
ஏக வருவாய்க் கிடக்குதையோ வின்புற் றிடநா மினியெடுத்த
தேகம் விழுமுன் புசிப்பதற்குச் சேர வாருஞ் செகத்தீரே.

"Oh! people of the world, the Infinite Ocean of *Siva Bhogam* is everflowing, everywhere, come one and all, before our mortal frames vanish, to taste it."

Saiva Siddhānta is a path of Mysticism or God-Realization and it is meant to make us all saints. What we do after attaining Beatitude is His Will and not ours.

References :

Chapter Four

1. *Tirumandiram*, 1502
2. *ibid* 1496
3. *Tevāram : Tirunāvukarasar*.
4. *Tirumandiram*, 272
5. *Tevāram : Tirunāvukarasar*.

Chapter Five

THEORY OF KARMA AND REINCARNATION

The chief religions of the world may be divided into two groups: Semitic and Indian. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are Semitic in origin. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are Indian in origin. All religions except *Hināyana* Buddhism believe in a God and a soul. Although the various religions of the world, have more or less the same spiritual principles as their basis for conduct, the Semitic and Indian religions differ in one respect. The Semitic religions do not accept the theory of Reincarnation and *Karma*, while, the Indian religions base their conduct of life on the theory of reincarnation and the Law of *Karma*. It is my purpose, to discuss in as brief a form as possible, the Law of *Karma* and Reincarnation as understood by the Hindus.

The real meaning of the word *Karma* is work but in ordinary parlance it denotes destiny. Christianity, the only Semitic religion well known to us teaches that man lives only once on this earth and that he should make the best use of it and try to attain heaven after death by a belief in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. Man, according to Christianity, is not destined to attain perfection ultimately. He may be placed in heaven or hell according to the life he leads on earth. But, the teaching of Hinduism is different. It teaches that each soul is destined to attain perfection after a series of births in various forms of existence. The

human soul by its repeated births gradually frees itself from imperfection and realizes God. This is known as *Mukti*, where it becomes one with the Divine Essence. According to the religion of the Hindus man is the maker of his own destiny.

Reincarnation and Other Religions

The religion of the ancient Egyptians was built upon a belief in the doctrine of rebirth. Herodotus says: "The Egyptians propounded the theory that the human soul is imperishable, and that where the body of any one dies it enters into some other creature that may be ready to receive it." Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Virgil and Ovid accepted the theory of rebirth. Plotinus says: "The soul leaving the body becomes that power it has most developed. Let us fly then from here below and rise to the intellectual world, that we may not fall into a purely sensible life by allowing ourselves to follow sensible images." A belief in reincarnation formed a part of the religion of the Persians. The Jews adopted it after the Babylonian captivity. Phile says: "The company of disembodied souls is distributed in various orders. The law of some of them is to enter mortal bodies, and after certain prescribed periods be again set free." Solomon says in his 'Book of Wisdom': "I was a child of good nature and a good soul came to me, or rather because I was good I came into an undefiled body."² In the Talmud it is said that Abel's soul passed into the body of Seth, and then into that of Moses. Jesus was believed by his generation to be the reappearance of John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets (St. Mathew, XVI, 14).²

Some of the Sufi mystics seem to have entertained a belief in transmigration. Jelaluddin Rumi describes in the following verse the various lives

he had passed through and utters a heartfelt prayer for self-annihilation in the ocean of the Godhead:

I died as mineral and became a plant,
 I died as plant and rose to animal,
 I died as animal and I was man.
 Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
 Yet once more I shall die as man, to soar
 With angels blest; but even from angelhood
 I must pass on; all except God doth perish.
 When I have sacrificed my angel soul,
 I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
 Oh, let me not exist: for Non existence
 Proclaims in organ tones, 'To Him we shall return.'

Early Christianity did not exclude the idea of reincarnation. Origen and other Church Fathers believed in it. "By putting men's fall before the beginning of their earthly life Origen explained both the universality of human sin and the inequalities in men's fortunes and opportunities without casting suspicion upon the justice of God. All men are sinners, not because Adam fell (his fall Origen regards as symbolic only) but because they themselves sinned in their pre-existent state. And some are born in happier circumstances than others because their characters are better." Origen concludes an extended account of the matter with the following words: "On which account neither will the Creator seem unjust when for the reasons already mentioned he distributes to each one according to his merits, nor will the happiness or unhappiness of anyone's birth, or whatever the condition that falls to his lot, be deemed fortuitous, nor will different creators or souls of different natures be assumed to exist." Salvation according to Origen means the restoration of fallen spirits to their original oneness with God. This is accomplished by the Logos or Wisdom and by the Holy Spirit, the former instruct-

ing men, the latter sanctifying them. This last idea very nearly resembles the process of attaining *Mukti* in *Saivā Siddhāntā*. It is said that the idea of reincarnation spread so fast amongst the early Christians that Justinian was obliged to suppress it by passing a law in the Council of Constantinople in 538 A. D. The Law was this: "Whoever shall support the mythical presentation of the pre-existence of the soul, and the consequently wonderful opinion of its return, let him be Anathema." Dr. D. R. Inge, D. D., writes: "It is implied in St. John's Gospel, where the disciples ask whether the blind man is punished for his sins in a former life. The belief was widely held among the Jews."*

Reincarnation and Modern Western Thought

"Some of the theological leaders have preached it. The eminent German theologian Dr. Julius Muller supports this theory in his work on *The*

* From the New Testament it cannot be deduced that reincarnation is taught. I feel that the conclusion must be that reincarnation is seen to be a current idea and nowhere in the New Testament is it denied or criticized. The early Church accepted it until the Council of Constantinople, A. D. 533, and then only discarded it by a vote in the proportion of 3 to 2. Even then Origen (in *De Principiis and Contra Celsus*), St. Augustine (in his *Confessions* 1⁶), and St. Francis of Assisi accepted it.

The Albigenses, a so-called heretical sect of Christianity which produced many martyrs, taught reincarnation. It seems to have persisted in Christendom. St. Jerome supported in his '*Letter to Avitus*.' In the seventeenth century the chaplain to Charles II supported it in *Lux Orientalis* and a famous Bishop of Durham (Dr. Butler) wrote that he himself accepted it. The various texts I have quoted from the Gospels can be taken in other senses, but no unbiased person can deny that it is equally legitimate to interpret them in a reincarnatory sense.

—*The Case for Reincarnation*, pp. 4 & 5

Christian Doctrine of Sin. Prominent theologians such as Dr. Dorner, Ernesti, Rickert, Edward Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, preached many a time touching the question of the pre-existence and rebirth of the individual soul. Swedenborg and Emerson maintained it.”

William Wordsworth says in: ‘*Intimations of Immortality*’

The soul that rises with us, our life’s star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.”

Alfred Tennyson writes in the ‘*Two Voices*’:

Or, if through lower lives I came-
Tho’ all experience past became,
Consolidate in mind and frame -
I might forget my weaker lot:
For is not our first year forgot?
The haunts of memory echo not.”

Walt Whitman says in ‘*Leaves of Grass*’:

“As to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings
of many deaths,
No doubt I have died myself ten thousand
times before.”

John Masefield, poet laureate of England, wrote:

“I hold that when a person dies
His soul returns again to earth;
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise
Another mother gives him birth.
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain
The old soul takes the roads again.”

Dr. C. O. Southard writes: “I have not always accepted the idea of rebirth in a new body. In fact, like a great many other people, I was very strongly opposed to the theory at one time, and only within the last few years have I come to

believe in it. My acceptance of the idea of re-incarnation has been a slow, gradual development, based upon my observation of certain facts both of religion and of science.”⁵

Very Rev. H. Rashdall, M. A., D. Litt., D. C. L., in his *‘The Theory of Good and Evil,’* writes: “The desire to avoid the admission that God originates souls with evil potentialities which must necessarily develop into evil actuality is the inspiring motive of those theories of Pre-existence which, from the days of Plato and of Origen to those of modern ‘Pluralism,’ seem always to have sprung up wherever men have grappled in earnest with the problem of evil. *According to such theories souls are uncreated; while the world-process is one by which a good but omnipotent God is getting rid of the evil in those souls, and bringing them to the highest perfection of which they are capable.*”⁶

This is what Hinduism teaches and reincarnation is a logical necessity for a world-process with such an aim. Very Rev. Dr. W. R. Inge, writes: “Has an ex-dignitary of the Anglican Church any business to dabble in these heathen beliefs? Well they are not so alien as we think. Rebirth is plainly asserted in the Wisdom of Solomon (VIII, 19, 20.), which the Roman Church rightly accepts as canonical. I believe there is an element of truth in this belief about our personality which is common to India and all the mystics.”

Sir William Barret, F. R. S., writes: “There are many who believe with the devout and learned Henry More and other Platonists, together with several eminent thinkers of the present day, such as Dr. J. Ellis McTaggart that the survival of the soul after death involves the assumption of its pre-natal existence.” He quotes the following from Mr. C. C. Massey: “We may find the ground of rein-

carnation in an attraction to this world or principle of life. Whatever has brought us here once will presumably bring us here again and again till the motive power changes. Regeneration (a new nature) alone exempts from re-incarnation; the bonds of desire to the external nature being thus severed, all the tendrils of attachment to it are thus eradicated.”⁷

Dr. Alexander Cannon, M. D., the eminent British psychiatrist and neurologist, writes: “For years the theory of reincarnation was a nightmare to me and I did my best to disprove it and even argued with my trance subjects to the effect that they were talking nonsense, and yet as the years went by one subject after another told me the same story in spite of different and varied conscious beliefs, in effect until now, well over a thousand cases have been so investigated and I have to admit that there is such a thing as reincarnation. It is therefore only right and proper that I should include this study as a branch of psychology, as my text bears witness to the great benefit many have received psychologically from discovering hidden complexes and fears which undoubtedly have been brought over by the astral body from past lives.”⁸

Students of Modern Thought are aware that the thinkers of the world today do not accept the Biblical theory of special creation. The theory of Evolution has revolutionized the thought of the West and has set at naught many theories of religion and philosophy. Scientists maintain that the world and its manifold things are not the result of the will of a personality whose abode is somewhere up in the clouds or on the top of the Himalayas, but they are the result of a gradual evolution of matter which must have taken millions of years to attain the present shape and condition. The biologists

trace the origin of life back to millions of years. All that we see around us, according to modern science, are the result of gradual evolution from simpler to more complex forms. The beginning of things is shrouded in mystery not solved either by empirical science or intuitive experience.

Psychologists by an analytical study of the mind of man maintain that his conduct and behaviour in everyday life are regulated and guided by hereditary factors. No child, according to them, is born empty into this world of ours. As they do not accept the principle of a soul separate from the body, they interpret the facts of human conduct from a materialistic point of view and uphold the theory of physical inheritance only.

On the contrary, the study of the phenomena of death and survival of the human personality after death, has brought into the realm of knowledge a new field known as Psychic Science or Spiritualism. Eminent Scientists like Sir Oliver Lodge, F. R. S., Sir William Barret, F. R. S., Sir William Crookes, F. R. S., and thinkers like Prof. Frederic Myers, Prof. Bergson, Prof. William James, Prof. Flammarian and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and others, after extensive research, have contradicted the materialistic theory of human personality. The idea that man is a mere physical automaton which comes into being at the time of conception and vanishes out of existence at the time of death has lost ground. In its place, people now believe that man in addition to having a body, is a spirit endowed with memory which survives all bodily changes and continues to live even after death. "Today, moreover, both psychical researchers and para-psychologists have amassed thousands of well-authenticated instances of human experience testifying not only to the essential spirituality of man,

but to the survival of human personality after bodily death. We have, indeed, witnessed the accession of many an eminent man of science to the steadily increasing number of workers in psychical research.”⁹ The acceptance of the theory of survival after death compels all thinking men seriously to consider the doctrine of the Pre-existence of Human Personality with memory.

The theory of psycho-analysis discovered and perfected by Freud and his followers, has brought into psychology a new approach to the study of the human mind. This new technique is still in its infancy and there are possibilities of it being used more and more to unravel the working of the human subconscious. Dr. Jung writes in his book on ‘*Modern Man in Search of a Soul*,’ thus: “We may compare the present situation with the state of medicine in the sixteenth century, when people began to study anatomy but had not as yet even the faintest idea of physiology. The spiritual aspect of the psyche is at present known to us only in a fragmentary way. We have learned that there are spiritually conditioned processes of transformation in the psyche which underlie, for example, the well-known initiation rites of primitive peoples and the states induced by the practice of Hindu *Yōga*. But we have not yet succeeded in determining their particular uniformities or laws. ...Psychological research has not as yet drawn aside all the many veils from the picture of the human psyche; it remains as unapproachable and obscure as all the deep secrets of life.”¹⁰ Analytical psychology stands here. Dalbiez in his ‘*Psycho-Analytical Method and the Doctrine of Freud*’ writes: “Psycho-analytical investigation does not explain the philosophical aspect of philosophy, the artistic aspect of art, the scientific aspect of science, the moral aspect of morality and

the religious aspect of religion. The specific nature of the spiritual values eludes the instrument of investigation which Freud's genius has created. Psycho-analysis leaves the fundamental problems of the human soul where it found them."¹¹

The introduction of hypnotism as an aid to the study of the human subconscious by psychologists like Dr. Alexander Cannon and others is creating a wide spread interest in the study of *Yōga* in the West. A comparative study of the works of the modern psychologists and the Hindu *Yōga* Literature, will convince any inquirer that the Western psychologists of today are only reiterating what has been already said by the *Yōgis* of ancient India. A critical study of the books of Dr. Alexander Cannon, Dr. Kenneth Walker, Dr. Coster and Sir John Woodroffe will convince anyone of the truth of what I say.

Theory of Evolution and Reincarnation

Though the conception of a universal process of rational and purposive development was fundamental to Hegelian Idealism, yet the modern materialistic theory of evolution was first propounded by Charles Darwin and later developed on a philosophical basis by Herbert Spēncer and others. The philosophy of evolution produced two outstanding thinkers in the persons of Samuel Alexander (1859—1939) of England and Henri Bergson (1859—1941) of France. Their theories took a non-mechanistic direction.

Samuel Alexander: 'Emergent Evolution'

Alexander's '*Emergent Evolution*' conceived of the emergence of new and as yet un-realized qualities. According to him the primordial reality from which all things have evolved and of which they still consist is Space-Time. The first evolute of space-time is motion and the next is either

matter or some forerunner of matter with its primary qualities. From the primary qualities emerge the secondary ones and later comes life and still later mind which in its higher developments becomes moral personality ending as Deity. The apparent goal of evolution to him is the emergence of the highest personality which is God. Though Alexander starts with a non-physical basis, yet, as the process of evolution advances under physical conditions until the level of mind is reached, it changes into psychical and becomes rational and teleological.

According to Alexander, evolution proceeds in six stages or levels. The first, which is the lowest level, is space-time. Second is the level of matter with primary qualities. The third level is that of the secondary qualities—colour, sound, odour, temperature etc. The fourth level is that of life. The fifth level is mind. The sixth level, not yet reached upon the earth, is that of Deity. What this level will consist of, we can form no idea, except that it will be an advance upon previous levels. The world process has reached the human level and the next stage is the evolution of the Divine nature in man. Religion is the means towards it and mystics and saints play a great part in guiding humanity towards this consummation.

Henri Bergson: 'Creative Evolution'

Bergson questions the mechanical process of evolution and gives a list of phenomena taken from nature which are inexplicable on mechanistic principles. According to him there is an impulse behind the process driving it to take greater and greater risks towards its goal of higher efficiency. This impulse or urge he calls as *Elan Vital*. This vital impulse is God in the sense Bergson believes

in God.* This force is behind the process of evolution and without it, it is impossible to explain how and why the movement of evolution occurs. Bergson separates brain and mental activity. Brain is not consciousness nor does it contain the cause of conscious process. It is the organ of consciousness, the point at which consciousness comes into contact with matter. Consciousness is the Elan Vital itself. According to him we are beings who endure not through change but by change. Our life as the inmost reality of which we are sure is change itself. The Universe also is the same stream of continual change or a 'becoming' as we experience in ourselves. The Universe is conceived as one continuous flow.

The process of evolution is visualized as though there is some-where a centre from which world and life and matter were thrown off like fireworks in a vast illumination. But this centre is not a concrete thing but a continuity of outflow. It has neither beginning nor end. According to Bergson, the world is the embodiment of an immanent principle which, as it comes into existence, progressively created the evolving Universe.

We arrive at the knowledge of this vital urge or Reality not through the exercise of our intellect but by the faculty of intuition. It is through intuition and through intuition alone that we realize our participation in the Vital Urge. Mystics appre-

* Bergson is not prepared to own that his system is atheistic. He feels that his system establishes a free and creative God. ...Bergson sometimes suggests that his free and creative God is the author of both life and matter. His logic requires him to make it an impersonal principle from which both matter and life spring. It is not to be identified with the life current, as it is the spring of both life and matter.

—*The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, pp. 210 & 213

hend the Reality through intuition only. When intellect functions it cuts across the living flow of reality and carves out solid objects which we call material things. Intellect and matter are, to Bergson, relative to each other. They were cut simultaneously by an identical process from the *Elan Vital* which contained and contains them both.

The one weak spot in this scheme of philosophy is the presence of Matter. Matter is not fitted into the scheme fully and rationally. Bergson feels that Reality has two aspects—pure movement and reverse movement. Originally Reality is pure flow, but it never continues so for ever. A time comes when its flow is reversed. That is the moment at which Matter appears. Matter, therefore, is a derivative of Reality. We experience Reality by intuition and understand Matter through intellect.

These two thinkers, though they went beyond the biological theory of evolution and attempted to transcend the mechanistic process by positing a non-physical urge behind evolution and a non-physical goal—Deity, they never outlined a satisfactory metaphysical theory supported by religious practices to aid the realization of the goal of evolution. They were only interested in pure intellectual speculation regarding the aim and purpose of evolution and were not concerned with any scheme for the realization of the aim of life.

In the theory of reincarnation of the Hindus, we find a full explanation and working of the process of evolution towards perfection. Hindu evolutionists not only formulated a physical theory of evolution but also by the theory of reincarnation, have given ample scope for the soul to attain divine status by gradual progress. Sir Monier Williams writes: "The Hindus were Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and evolutionists many cen-

turies before the doctrine of evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time, and before any word like 'evolution' existed in any language of the world."

Perfection is a spiritual state and can only be achieved through spiritual means. If the world process has a divine purpose, the purpose of attaining spiritual perfection, then the human being must continue his endeavour till he realizes that state. If this is granted, reincarnation is the only process for attaining it.

The theory of reincarnation when properly understood, will appear as a corollary to the theory of evolution. Evolution explains the process through which the physical body of man developed. Reincarnation explains the process through which the soul attains Beatitude or Spiritual Felicity. "The mystic act of union," writes Evelyn Underhill, "that joyous loss of the transfigured self in God, which is the crown of man's conscious ascent towards the Absolute, is the contribution of the individual to this, the destiny of the Cosmos. ...It is also the crown of human evolution; the fulfilment of life, the liberation of personality from the world of appearance, its entrance into the creative life of the Real."† James Freeman Clarke says: "That man has come up to his present state of development by passing through lower forms, is the popular

† The purpose and final object of evolution is not merely the achievement of a complicated organism to the end that the fittest community may survive by strife in an otherwise pointless and finite world. By the rise to perfection of individual Man in his spiritual nature there will be achieved the perfecting of the whole, and the progress of evolution by means of war and strife between communities will be finally superseded. It is the material outlook of Man that keeps this alive; it is the realization of Man's spiritual and immortal nature that will overcome it.

—*Eternal Quest: The Growth of Mind*, p. 40

doctrine of science today. What is called evolution teaches that we have reached our present state by a very long and gradual ascent from the lowest animal organism. It is true that Darwinian theory takes no notice of the evolution of the soul, but only of the body. But it appears to me that combination of the two views would remove many difficulties which still attach to the theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. If we are to believe in Evolution let us have the assistance of the soul itself in this development of new species. Thus science and philosophy will co-operate, nor will poetry hesitate to lend her aid."¹² Professor Huxley writes: "None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality."¹³

Hindu View

I have so far traced very briefly the idea of transmigration or reincarnation in non-Hindu or non-Indian thought and have also attempted to show how the trend of scientific thought in the West is moving towards the same conclusions as those of the East. Westerners believe more in the analytical method of inquiry. They attempt to arrive at fundamental truths of religion and science by analysing objective phenomena. This method may also ultimately lead them to the same conclusions arrived at by the sages and thinkers of India. The seers of ancient India by the power of *Yōga*—the method of intuitive perception—have evolved a philosophy of life conducive to spiritual perfection. There are signs in Western thought today which tend in the same direction.*

* It is only within the last few recent years that the whole structure of materialistic thought, built up through

According to the Hindus, the human body is divided into five *kōsas* or sheaths. They are *Anna-Maya*, *Prana-Maya*, *Mano-Maya*, *Vijnāna-Maya*, and *Ānanda-Maya*. The material body which is nourished by food is called *Anna-Maya*. The body of vital energy, *Prana*, is *Prana-Maya*. The plane of mind-*Antah-karana*, constitute *Mano-Maya* and the sheath of intelligence is *Vijnana-Maya*. The *Antah-Karanas* are four: *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahankara*. The English word mind corresponds to the *Antah-karana* of Hindu psychology. *Ānanda-Maya* is the last sheath in which the soul rests by itself. It is a blissful state.

It is also the practice to divide the body into three parts as *Sthūla Sarīra*, *Sūkshma Sarīra*, and *Kāraṇa Sarīra*. *Sthūla Sarīra* is the gross physical body of flesh and bones. *Sūkshma Sarīra* consists of the *Prana-maya kōsa*, *Mano-maya kōsa* and *Vijnāna-maya kōsa*. *Sūkshma* means subtle. *Kāraṇa Sarīra* or causal body is the *Ānanda-maya kōsa*.

Pranamaya kosa is the connecting link between the *Annamaya kosa* and the other three sheaths or *kosas*. When the time of death comes, the *Prana-maya kosa* separates from the *Annamaya kōsa*, leaving the latter inert and helpless, fit only for the burning ghat. The *Kausītakī Upanishad* describes a dying man, and tells how all the powers of the waking consciousness are gathered up in *Prana*, so that when *Prana* goes out all these accompany it,

centuries, has been proved to be a false conception by science's discovery of the inner nature of the atom and by the gradual rediscovery of the philosophy of ancient India, which serves to conform this reversal of knowledge into more spiritual channels. The new discoveries of science and the teaching of this new—old philosophy agree far too well along their different lines of thought for the way that they both point out to be the road to enduring truth.

—*Eternal Quest: Reincarnation*, p. 205

and the man, the self, going out, all these powers go with him. He is then in the *Karana* and *Sūkshma Sarīras*. After a short duration, the *Prana-maya kosa* drops away, and the man enters the *Preta Loka*, the world of the departed. I shall not proceed further on this point as it is a separate subject by itself. If any body is interested in pursuing the study of this branch of Hindu knowledge, I shall refer him to the writings of *Swami Abhē-dhānanda*, a direct disciple of *Sri Ramakrishna*.

The Soul of man according to the Hindus continues to take births till it attains *Mukti*. To attain perfection, it has to pass through innumerable rounds of birth and death. *St. Mānīckavāchakar*, author of '*Tiruvāchakam*' narrates in a beautiful stanza, how he reached the feet of God, after passing through different forms of existence:

Grass was I, shrub was I, worm, tree
Full many a kind of beasts, birds, snake
Stone, man, and demon, midst thy hosts I served
The form of the mighty Asuras, Ascetics, Gods I bore,
Within these immobile and mobile forms of life,
In every species born. Weary I have grown,
[Great Lord.¹⁴

(Compare the statement of Jalalauddin Rumi on page 2)

புல்லாகிப் பூடாய்ப் புழுவாய் மரமாகிப்
பல்விருக மாகிப் பறவையாய்ப் பாம்பாகிக்
கல்லாய் மனிதராய்ப் பேயாய்க் கணங்களாய்
வல்லகர ராகி முனிவராய்த் தேவராய்ச்
செல்லாஅ நின்றவித் தாவர சங்கமத்து
ளெல்லாப் பிறப்பும் பிறந்தினைத்தே னெம்பெருமான்.

Man in his progress towards perfection functions within the limits of the law of cause and effect which is known as *Karma* in Hinduism. The law of cause and effect reigns supreme within the realm of space and time. The veil of ignorance which hides man's innate spiritual nature is gradually re-

moved in the cycle of births and deaths. What he sows in one life he reaps in the other. All things in this world both animate and inanimate move in accordance with this one great law. It is no respecter of persons. God the Transcendental Being rules the world by *Dharma*—Law, Man in his weakness fails to grasp this great fundamental fact and curses his surroundings and circumstances whenever they react on him in a way contrary to his cherished desires. It is not God who has thrown the human soul into states of misery and pain. We are the makers of our own destiny.

People who have not understood the principle of the Law of *Karma* call it a theory of fatalism. Fatalism has no place in the scheme of things according to Hindu philosophy. No man is suffering because he is pre-ordained by God to suffer. It is not the omnipotent will of an extra-cosmic God that has put misery into the life of man. The sufferings of men are their own seeking. They suffer as a result of their own actions done in previous lives. The day of judgement is not in some remote future, but here and now, and none can escape it. We carry with us the whole of our past.

Some again repeat that in the theory of *Karma*, there is no place for free-will. The Law of *Karma* is based on free-will. Although man suffers for his past, he has the complete freedom to shape his future. The spirit in him can triumph over the material forces which try to overpower it. The unswerving faith of the Hindus in the Law of *Karma* and their beliefs in the ultimate victory of the spirit over matter gives them a strength of mind which is not found among other religionists. A Hindu is not in a hurry to finish up everything before death overtakes him unawares. He is a child of eternity. He is a pilgrim in search of Eternal

Happiness. Freedom and all life's activities are to him but acts of worship towards perfection, the ultimate goal of existence.

What Western philosophy calls subconscious impressions, Indian psychology calls *Samskāras*. Each soul is born with a set of *Samskāras* according to which it reacts to the external world and shapes its future. In addition to the *Samskāras* with which a soul is born it also acquires fresh *Samskāras* in its new life as a result of his free will. The new *Samskāras* need not be, and are not, of the same type as those of the past. Because the soul has the freedom of action, it acquires new *Samskāras* which subdue the intensity of the reactions of the past *Samskāras* and place the soul in the correct path of realization.*

The *Samskāras* are divided into three groups: *Sanchita*, *Āgāmiā* and *Prārabdha*. *Sanchita* is the accumulated *Samskāras* of all the past lives of the individual which are in store and which wait for their time to become *Prārabdha*. *Prārabdha Samskāras* are those which determine the present life of an individual. The physical body and its environ-

* Within the subconscious mind lies the sum total of the experiences, impressions, and tendencies of an individual; and the quality of its influence upon the conscious state, as well as upon the minds of others, will be determined by the quality of these impressions, according to whether or not they are good, bad or indifferent. But a man need not be a mere creature of his past. The contents of the subconscious mind created by his own past thoughts and actions, as well as by the influence of others, can be changed or transformed by the creating of new *Samskāras*, or impressions. By changing the quality of his mental habits in the present, a man can himself direct and determine what his future mental state shall be. By regulating his thoughts and emotions, a man can make for himself new hope and new possibilities.

—*Hindu Psychology*, p. 76

ments such as parents, wife, children, country, employment and other factors of life depend on one's own *Prārabdha*. Those *Samskāras* which have contributed towards the formation of the physical body are *Prārabdha*. No person, however exalted he may be in spiritual experience, can escape the vigorous law of *Prārabdha* immediately connected with certain factors of the physical body. History is full of the lives of saints who, in spite of their spiritual illumination, have undergone untold suffering and hardship in their physical body. The hardship and misery they underwent in their pursuit of their ideal might have been the chastening factors which shaped them and strengthened them towards their goal. But, the fact of their having suffered a certain amount of physical pain cannot be denied. This suffering and misery is always determined by one's own *Prārabdha*.

Āgāmia are the *Samskāras* which one accumulates in this birth as a result of his actions based on free-will. Although, a man suffers as a result of his *Prārabdha*, he has also the freedom to shape his future. This inherent freedom of an individual gives him the power to accumulate new *Karmas* whether good or bad and such *Karmas* are called *Āgāmia*. Very many *Āgāmia Karmas* produce their reactions in this birth itself. This depends on the intensity of *Karma* performed. Whatever remains without producing reactions in this birth, is added on to the already existing stock of *Sanchita* and waits for the right time to be shaped as *Prārabdha* in accordance with the Law of *Karma*.

Persons who attain the highest spiritual illumination, destroy their *Sanchita* and transcend *Āgāmia*, but retain the *Prārabdha Samskāras* and continue to live in the physical body till they are exhausted. Such persons are called *Jīvan Muktas*. Although they

live in the world after realization, they don't get entangled in the snares of the world. They may live a life of intense activity or prefer to lead a life of complete absorption and quiet. It all depends on the nature of their *Prārabdha*.

Metempsychosis and Reincarnation

Metempsychosis is the migration of the soul after death into a new body of the same type or another species. In the ancient religious books of the Greeks and the Hindus this doctrine finds a place. This is different from reincarnation which means the birth after death in the same type of body. Metempsychosis seems to be more primitive and reincarnation more rational. All cases reported by modern investigators support the theory of reincarnation. This is a question in which we are not in a position to give any definite answer. Hindu Epics and *Purānas* contain many stories supporting metempsychosis. Commenting on Metempsychosis, Mr. John E. East, writes: "Metempsychosis or transmigration, however, is not a tenable hypothesis. From everything that we know of evolution in our phenomenal world, development travels one way, forward not backward. Some of Nature's experiments may be side-tracked, but the main stream of development of that which we can only term mind, to whose growth all else is subject, is ever towards a higher state. Science teaches us in the law of entropy that development in all things is a one-way street, and we should be wrong to suppose that at the very root of our being there could be any difference. Once the fundamental consciousness, that force which is life, has attained to that state in our world which we call human there can be no going back to a lower condition. Such a supposition would be a denial of all purpose in the

scheme of things and contrary to everything of which we are aware, philosophically, scientifically and mystically, for the experiences of mysticism cannot be denied their place in the field of acquired knowledge. Assuming for the moment that rebirth is a fact, it is definitely not possible to accept on any grounds that the part of our being, call it what you will, which is reborn should assume a lower form in the evolutionary scale."¹⁵

I have with the support of modern Western thought, so far touched on the most salient points, in the philosophy of the Law of *Karma* as expounded in the Hindu *Shāstras*. Any one interested in a detailed study of the subject should refer to the various scriptures of the Hindus and the commentaries on them.

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Chapter Five

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10. *Does Man Survive Death?* p. 48
11. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 225
12. *Meaning and Purpose*, p. 95
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15. *Eternal Quest*, pp. 194, 195

Chapter Six

SYMBOLS AND RITUALS IN HINDUISM

“The word ‘symbol’ in its most general sense can be applied to every formal expression of a doctrine, whether verbal, visual or otherwise; a word can have no other function or justification but that of symbolizing an idea, which amounts to saying that it gives, as far as such a thing is possible, a sensible and moreover purely analogical representation of the idea. Taken in this sense, symbolism, which is but the employing of forms or images as signs of ideas or of suprasensible things, is evidently natural to the human mind, and therefore necessary and spontaneous,”¹ writes, Rene Guenon. Everyone who has studied the development of symbols and rituals in the various religions of the world will testify to the correctness of the above statement. Symbolism is the natural language of metaphysics. The incomprehensible can only be explained in terms of symbols.

Non-Hindu View

Christian scholars maintain that the Church of the first three centuries was against any veneration of images and pictures altogether.* There was no

* But in regard to the early centuries there is today considerable controversy. According to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox view, the practice of the eighth century in this respect was right and agreeable to the fundamental principles of Christianity: according to Protestants, it was a lapse from the original Christianity into pagan superstition.

Christian representation of Christ upon the Cross till after Constantine. It seems to have been Constantine himself who caused the Cross to come into general use as a Christian symbol. Whatever might have been the attitude of the early Christians, today, Christianity has rituals and symbols as aids to devotion.

The Buddha preached against all forms of rituals and symbols. But Buddhism today is full of temples with images and ceremonies. It is only Islam, true to the teachings of the founder, that has steered clear of idols and rituals. But, yet, there is a certain amount of mental symbolism in their mode of worship. Turning towards Mecca during prayers is a form of mental recognition of the sanctity of the place associated with Mohammed. The kissing of the black stone inlaid at the Eastern end of the Southern wall of the great Mosque is a sacred act to every Muslim who visits Mecca. Every Muslim wherever he may be, endeavours to visit at least once in his life-time the sacred Mosque and to perform the prescribed ceremony in accordance with the laws of the Prophet.

Images and rituals played a great part in the religion of the Greeks. Plotinus, the Greek philosopher-mystic, of the third century A. D., made the following observation on images: "The purpose of an image is to enable the worshipper to come into real contact with the World Soul. Of course, the World Soul cannot be supposed to come down itself into the bit of matter constituting the image. Yet, Catholic and Orthodox scholars are thus disposed to carry back the use of pictures and images to the first generations of Christians; Protestant scholars to maintain that the Church of the first three centuries at any rate was, as a whole, staunch against any veneration of images and shy of images and pictures altogether.

—*Holy Image*, pp. 95, 96

particular material things have a quality which attracts the World Soul by a kind of sympathy. And one thing which gives a material thing such a quality is its being a likeness or 'in some way an imitation' of the Soul. It is then analogous to a mirror which captures the form of a visible object, although the visible object does not itself enter into the mirror. Thus the image can receive a certain part or apportionment of the World Soul. A man by means of the image can come into communion with the Higher Soul.'²

The Catholic point of view of images is very clearly enunciated by St. Thomas Aquinas thus: "As the philosopher (Aristotle) says, the movement of soul towards the image is of a double character. It implies, for one thing, a movement towards the image, in so far as the image is a thing (a particular object) itself; it implies also a movement towards the image in so far as it is representative of a reality other than itself. Between these two movements there is this difference: the first kind of movement directed to the image as a particular thing, is distinct from the movement towards the reality represented, whereas the second movement, directed to the image as the representation of a reality not itself, is identical with the movement directed to the reality. Thus one must say that to an image of Christ, in so far as it is itself a particular thing (let us say, a carved bit of wood or a painted board), no veneration at all is offered, because veneration is owed to a rational being alone. It remains that veneration is exhibited towards the image, only in so far as it is an image (of something else); and thus it follows that the veneration exhibited to an image of Christ and the veneration exhibited to Christ Himself is one and the same. Since, therefore, Christ is adored with the worship

of Latria, it follows that the adoration directed to His image is an act of Latria.”³ Mr. Bevan explains the above doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas by the following illustration: “All this is quite simple if one thinks of the acts of reverence we direct towards the cenotaph. There is a movement of my mind towards the cenotaph itself in so far as my senses show it to me as a stone object and I take notice of it. But when I take off my hat, the movement of my mind is not to the cenotaph, but to the multitude of dead men to whom I feel a special sense of obligation. That desire to honour them is something distinct from my taking notice of the stone cenotaph; but the thought behind the gesture of reverence directed externally to the cenotaph is not distinct from the thought I direct to the dead; it is one and the same thought and feeling. Externally indeed, my actions in regard to the cenotaph are not unlike some of the actions of a Catholic Christian in regard to an image. The gesture of un-covering the head, the gesture of bowing the head are pretty well equivalent, and just as the image may be garlanded with flowers, so wreaths of flowers are laid upon the cenotaph. But the homage is not addressed to the pillar of stone. Whatever character my feeling towards the dead may have, whether it is proper or improper, whether it is strong or weak, that is the character of my act of reverence. The stone cenotaph counts for no more than a means by which I declare my feeling towards the dead: my homage passes through the material symbol to the multitude of persons for whom the symbol stands.”⁴

Another question which naturally suggests itself to any one thinking of images and objects of adoration is, whether such objects are charged with supernatural power. According to the Old and New

Testaments, objects possessed some supernatural power. Mr. Bevan makes the following observation on this point: "There was Elisha's staff, which if it did not actually succeed in recalling the dead boy to life when laid upon him, was certainly expected by the prophet to convey miraculous power. Another story tells how contact with the dead bones of Elisha did restore a dead man to life. But there were also cases mentioned in the New Testament in which material things, from their association with a holy person conveyed supernatural power. The shadow of Peter, it is stated in Acts, was believed to heal sick persons upon whom it fell; the handkerchiefs and aprons brought from the body of St. Paul are stated in another passage of Acts to have really effected cures (Acts, XIX, 12)." According to St. John of Damascus, a material thing might in certain cases from its association with the person of a saint, convey supernatural virtues. Summing up his discussion on the use of images in the Christian worship, Mr. Bevan writes: "If it is right for any one to address to Christ a desire for help or an inner act of devotion, it would not seem to call for censure, if he finds that he, for his part can do this more intently when he has before him a picture of Christ or a crucifix—it being, of course, always understood that he does not regard the image as having any divine virtue residing in it or expect any help from it. So long as he regards the image as a mere material object which serves to call up certain thoughts and feelings in his mind when he looks at it, there can hardly be any ground for a charge of idolatry."⁶

I have so far, very briefly stated, the Greek and Catholic points of view of images and symbols. I shall now quote what one of the outstanding thinkers of modern times, says about 'Ritual, Sym-

bol and Sacrament.' Mr. Aldous Huxley, in his book on '*Perennial Philosophy*,' writes: "If sacramental rites are constantly repeated in a spirit of faith and devotion, a more or less enduring effect is produced in the *psychic medium*, in which individual minds bathe and from which they have, so to speak, been crystallized out into personalities more or less fully developed, according to the more or less perfect development of the bodies with which they are associated." For the statement about the *psychic medium*, Mr. Huxley quotes the authority of the eminent contemporary philosopher, Dr. C. D. Broad. ... "Within this *psychic medium* or non-personal substratum of individual minds, something which we may think of metaphorically as a vortex persists as an independent existence, possessing its own derived and secondary objectivity, so that, wherever the rites are performed, those whose faith and devotion are sufficiently intense, actually discover something 'out there' as distinct from the subjective something in their own imaginations. And so long as this projected psychic entity is nourished by the faith and love of its worshippers, it will possess not merely objectivity, but power to get people's prayers answered. Ultimately, of course, 'I alone am the giver,' in the sense that all this happens in accordance with the divine laws governing the universe in its psychic and spiritual, no less than in its material, aspects. Nevertheless, the *devas* (those imperfect forms under which, because of their own voluntary ignorance, men worship the divine Ground) may be thought of as relatively independent powers. ... When their worship falls off, when faith and devotion lose their intensity, the *devas* sicken and finally die. Europe is full of old shrines, whose saints and Virgins and relics have lost the power and the secondhand psychic objectivity which they once possessed. Thus, when Chaucer

lived and wrote, the *deva* called Thomas Becket was giving to any Canterbury pilgrim, who had sufficient faith, all the boons he could ask for. This once-powerful deity is now stone-dead, but there are still certain churches in the West, certain mosques and temples in the East, where even the most irreligious and un-psychic tourist cannot fail to be aware of some intensely 'numinous' presence. It would, of course, be a mistake to imagine that this presence is the presence of that God who is a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit; it is rather the psychic presence of men's thoughts and feelings about the particular, limited form of God, to which they have resorted 'according to the impulse of their inborn nature'—thoughts and feelings projected into objectivity and haunting the sacred place in the same way as thoughts and feelings of another kind, but of equal intensity, haunt the scenes of some past suffering or crime. The presence in these consecrated buildings, the presence evoked by the performance of traditional rites, the presence inherent in a sacramental object, name or formula—all these are real presences, but real presences not of God or the *Avatar*, but of something which, though it may reflect the Divine Reality, is yet less and other than it. ...We see then that intense faith and devotion, coupled with perseverance by many persons in the same forms of worship or spiritual exercise, have a tendency to objectify the idea or memory which is their content and so to create, in some sort, a numinous real presence, which worshippers actually find 'out there' no less, and quite another way, than 'in here.' ...A great deal of ritualistic religion is not spirituality, but occultism, a refined and well-meaning kind of white magic. Now, just as there is no harm in art, say, or science, but a great deal of good, provided

always that these activities are not regarded as ends, but simply as means to the final end of all life, so too there is no harm in white magic, but the possibilities of much good, so long as it is treated, not as true religion, but as one of the roads to true religion—an effective way of reminding people with a certain kind of psycho-physical make up that there is a God, 'in knowledge of whom standeth their eternal life.' If ritualistic white magic is regarded as being in itself true religion; if the real presences it evokes are taken to be God in Himself and not the projections of human thoughts and feelings about God or even about something less than God; and if the sacramental rites are performed and attended for the sake of the 'spiritual sweetness' experience and the powers and advantages conferred—then there is idolatry. This idolatry is, at its best, a very lofty and, in many ways, beneficent kind of religion. But the consequences of worshipping God as anything but Spirit and in any way except in spirit and in truth are necessarily undesirable in this sense—that they lead, only to a partial salvation and delay the soul's ultimate re-union with the eternal Ground." The observations of Aldous Huxley, explain the principle behind the ceremonies and ritualism connected with the consecration of temples and images in Hinduism.

The main reason for the elaborate development and persistence of ritualism in religion is that most people do not want spirituality or deliverance from bondage, but rather a religion that gives them emotional satisfaction, answers to prayers, supernatural powers and partial salvation in some sort of posthumous heaven. Ritualistic and ceremonial religion can lead one to deliverance. But, when it loses its main object and becomes a channel through which power flows out of the fascinating psychic

universe into the universe of embodied selves, it leads man away from deliverance. Giving the reason for the downfall of sacramental religion, Mr. Huxley observes thus: "What happens when ministers of religion are led into these temptations is clearly illustrated by the history of the Roman Church. Because Catholic Christianity taught a version of the Perennial Philosophy, it produced a succession of great saints. But because the Perennial Philosophy was overlaid with an excessive amount of sacramentalism and with an idolatrous preoccupation with things, in time, the less saintly members of its hierarchy were exposed to enormous and quite unnecessary temptations and, duly succumbing to them, launched out into persecution, simony, power politics, secret diplomacy, high finance and collaboration with despots."⁸ What he says of the Roman Church, applies equally to temple ritualism and other organized ritualism and ceremonialism in other religions.

Construction of A Hindu Temple

Hindu religious ritualism is very closely connected with temples. A Hindu is expected to start his religious life with the help of a temple, but he is not compelled to stick to it right through his life. Models and aids which are found indispensable in the kindergarten stage of education become burdens and unnecessary encumbrances in the advanced classes. Similar is the case with temple ritualism and ceremonials to one who is advanced in formless contemplation of God. Yet, men of spiritual illumination do not look down upon ritualism nor do they despise those who observe it. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:⁹

Whatsoever the superior person does, that is followed by others. What he demonstrates by action, that, people follow.

One should not unsettle the understanding of the ignorant, attached to action; the wise (himself) steadily acting, should engage the ignorant in all work.

True to this injunction the mystics of Hinduism, though they transcended all forms of temple ritualism, yet, lived their lives in the temple surroundings and helped to create piety and devotion in the hearts of the people for religious ritualism.

The Hindu temple is so constructed as to resemble the structure of the human body. It resembles the body of a man lying on his back with the head on the west and the feet towards the east.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| No. 1. Head | — <i>Garba Grham</i> . Holy of Holies |
| 2. Neck | — <i>Artha Mandapam</i> . |
| 3. Chest | — <i>Mahā Mandapam</i> . |
| 4. Stomach | — <i>Sthapana Mandapam</i> . |
| 5. Section below
the intestines | — <i>Stampa Mandapam</i> . |
| 6. Thighs | — <i>Sabhā Mandapam</i> . |
| 7. Knees | — <i>First Entrance</i> . |
| 8. Lower Legs | — <i>Kalyāna Mandapam</i> or
<i>Utsava Mandapam</i> . |
| 9. Feet | — Main Entrance with <i>Gōpuram</i> . |

The main image or the *Mūla Mūrthy* is installed in the *Garba Grham*. The priest stands and performs *pūja* in the *Artha Mandapam*. The *Utsava Mūrthies* (functional images) are placed in the *Maha Mandapam*. In the human body the functional organs are in the chest, above the stomach. The Sacrificial pit is constructed in the *Sthapana Mandapam* into which the offerings of rice, ghee etc. are put during Homa. The flag staff—*Kodi Stampam* and *Pali-peatam* are in the *Stampa Mandapam*. Music and

dances are performed in the *Sabha Mandapam* which is also known as *Nritta Mandapam*. The *Utsava Mūrthy* is decorated and placed in the *Kalyāna Mandapam* during festival days. The first entrance with a small *gōpuram* represents the knees. The big *gōpuram* on the main entrance represents the feet with the toes up.

There are two court-yards round the main shrines. The first one starts from the *Sabhā Mandapam* and goes round the main shrine. This is the inner *prakāram* (corridor). The second one starts from the *Kalyana Mandapam* and goes round the inner *prakāram*. Devotees are expected to go round the *prakārams* and offer worship at the main shrine first and again at the minor shrines. In the inner *prakāram* there are smaller shrines for the different aspects of the *Mūla Mūrthy* or for others connected with it.

The shrine for the Sakti aspect of the *Mūla Mūrthy* (Chief Deity) is placed on the northern side of the *Mahā Mandapam* facing the south. The temple tank is constructed outside the second *Prakāram*, on the southern side, facing the shrine of Sakti. The tall tower over the *Garba Grham* is called *Vimānam* and towers at the entrances of the temple are called *gōpurams*. The temples in Ceylon are all built according to the Dravidian style of architecture.

Temple Images

Temple images are of two types. They are called *Mūla Mūrthies* and *Utsava Mūrthies*. *Mūla Mūrthies* are those which are permanently installed in the *Garba Grham* and are not meant to be taken out in procession during festival days. *Mūla Mūrthies* are made of granite. *Utsava Mūrthies* are

images made of metals and are meant to be taken in procession.

Images are made according to the *Āgamic* rules which are collected and codified in books known as *Silpa Shāstras*. The person who is engaged in making images is known as *sthapathi* or *silpi*. He is expected to lead a life of devotion and be proficient in *Dhyana Yōga*. There are definite *dhyana slokas* for the deities which give detailed description of the image and a *silpi* is expected to contemplate on this description and obtain a mental vision of the figure before he begins the work. *Sukrācharya* says: "Let the image-maker establish images in temples by meditation on the deities who are the objects of his devotion. In no other way, not even by direct and immediate vision of an actual object, is it possible to be so absorbed in contemplation as thus in the making of images." If an object of devotion can be expressed in material form, it must be in a beautiful form, since that is the one thing, in the material world of which the soul never gets tired. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." In aesthetic pleasure the soul realizes its own inherent blissful nature—*Ātmānandam*. "In India, the ultimate aim of life is Release (*Mōksha*) and art is one means of attaining this aim." writes, Stella Kramrishch.

"In Hindu religion symbolism and metaphysics go together. Metaphysical ideas are made more vivid and real through art. Though, the real nature of the Absolute is beyond human understanding, yet, through art, religion tries to bridge the gulf between the Infinite and the finite. This is the reason why Hindu Metaphysicians brought art into religious practices. Modern Hindus who are heirs to the religious traditions of Hinduism, are attempting to ignore this fundamental truth and are endea-

vouring to separate art from religion following the example of the industrial-minded West.*

It is the clear injunction of the *Silpa Shāstras* that artistic excellence should not be sacrificed for the purpose of mechanical accuracy regarding anatomy and measurements. South Indian Hindu images have received the encomiums of great art critics of the West because of their aesthetic value. Prof: William Rothenstein says: "No Chinese artist has reached greater perfection of poise and form than the *Natarāja* bronzes or the ecstatic figures of *Sundaramoorthi Swami* achieve." Augustin Rodin, the famous sculptor says: "The Indian *Natarāja* can well contest for superiority in gracefulness with the gesture of the *Venus de Medici's* which defends its charms by the arm, while *Siva* does the same by an ingenious gesture." One art critic writes: "In the absorbing serenity of expression, in the rhythmic sways and the dynamic symmetry of the poses, above all in the moving and generalized forms of an original yet artistic anatomy, the bronzes of this school (South India) translate the abstruse conceptions of Brahminic philosophy, into which the artists have skilfully mingled their own meditation, their prayers, and all the hopes of their lives. To know them and to appreciate them is to receive an initiation into a new world of plastic

* The beauty of the buildings with their repose and mystery, the dim lights with the suggestion of aloofness and awe, the song and the music, the image and the worship, all have suggestive power. All arts, architecture, music, dance, poetry, painting and sculpture, are used to make in fact the indefinable power of religion, for which no art is an adequate vehicle. Those who participate in the worship are united with historic Hindu experience, and with profound spiritual forces which have moulded what is best in our heritage.

—*Religion and Society*, p. 125

dreams not revealed in any of the masterpieces of Greek or Renaissance bronzes."¹⁰

Images in the temples are not mere realistic representations of any human figure. They are idealized symbolic representations of the various aspects of the Divine as conceived and experienced by the devotees right through the history of Hinduism. To understand and appreciate Hindu images one should have a complete knowledge of Hindu mythology, tradition and the Hindu spiritual culture. They are the embodiments of the ideals and religious aspirations of a people who have lived through thousands of years of religious endeavour. To appreciate and understand a Hindu image one should possess a pair of mystical eyes and a spiritual insight rather than a tourist outlook that seeks novelty to satisfy the instinct of curiosity.

Consecration of Images

The procedure adopted in consecrating images is very elaborate and goes on for more than 45 days. It is known as *Mūrthy Sthāpanam* or *Prathistai*. The whole ceremony is done in more than thirty-two stages with *pūjas* and rituals. The rituals are so planned and carried out in such a way as to create a psychological effect on the minds of the people so that they may get spiritual solace from it. As has been pointed out by Aldous Huxley, temples and images are not religion by themselves, but are only means to create the necessary religious experience. The history of Hinduism bears ample testimony to the fact that Hindu temples and images have achieved this aim in a very great measure.

It is the unshakable belief of the Hindus of all sects that the Supreme Being who is immanent in the world, can be made to manifest to his devotees through sacred images. This belief has

helped them to come in contact with the Divine in their lives. A tree is known by its fruits. A doctrine or a belief should be judged by the great benefit it has bestowed on the devotees for ages. All the saints and mystics of Hinduism have shared the same feeling and attitude towards the sacred images of their particular *upāsana* or worship. Dr. G. U. Pope, the translator of *Tiruvāchakam*, writes: "If it be remembered that some of these images have been actually worshipped, tended, garlanded, and treated as human beings, for a thousand years; that each generation has done them service and lavished gifts upon them; that they are connected by association with long lines of saints and sages; and that it is earnestly believed that Civa's method of gracious manifestation is by, and through, and in these,—as what we should call sacraments of his perpetual presence,—we shall understand with what profound awe and enthusiastic affection even images, to us most unsightly, can be beheld by multitudes of good and excellent people."¹¹

Sri Vaisnavas believe that the Supreme Being manifests himself in an image for the benefit of his devotees. This is known as *Archa Avatāra*—one of the five manifestations of God. They believe in the Transcendental nature of God as well as in his immanent aspect—*Antaryāmin*. *Pillai Lōkācharya*, one of the *Vaisnava Ācharyas* and a follower of *Ramānuja* writes: "This is the peculiar privilege of the devotee when he can, as if, force the Lord of the universe to dwell in a particular image of gold, silver or stone. This is the greatest grace of the Lord, that being free He becomes bound, being independent He becomes dependent for all His service on His devotee. ...In other forms the man belonged to God but behold the supreme sacrifice of *Isvara*, here the Almighty becomes the property

of the devotee. ...He carries him about, fans Him, feeds Him, plays with Him—yea, the Infinite has become finite, that the child soul may grasp, understand and Love Him.”¹² If anybody is earnest to know how a metal image can react to a saint saturated with intense devotion, I shall refer him to the anecdotes connected with *Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahansa* and the image of *Ramlala*. Commenting on this episode, the author of ‘*Sri Rāmakrishna’s Life*’ writes: “Thousands of men and women have seen Ramlala, but to every one of them he is nothing but the little metal image; if they are told of this episode in *Sri Rāmakrishna’s* life, they would consider it a poetical fancy. But an ocean of difference lies between the ordinary mentality and that of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. Which of us can say that he has pined sincerely for God and had no response; Which of us can satisfy himself that he has searched for God with all his heart and soul, and yet did not feel Him speaking to him as did Ramlal to *Sri Rāmakrishna*? The world is full of much talk with no practice. But God exists for all that.”¹³

Mantras and Yantras

One of the ceremonies connected with the consecration of an image is *Yantra Sthāpanam*. The *Yantram* is a diagrammatical representation of the vibratory movements of *Sakti*. *Yantras* are very closely connected with *Mantras*. Movement or vibration is the essential quality or background of all things in the universe, and therefore, all things may be rendered in terms of vibration. Television is an illustration of this truth. *Bija Mantras* are the sounds of particular fundamental movements. Modern educated Hindus who are strangers to their own culture and tradition consider the *Mantras* and

their applications as mere meaningless superstition. This is the argument of the ignorant man who says "What I cannot understand can have no sense at all." Sir John Woodroffe, the greatest authority on *Mantra Shāstras*, writes: "The *Mantra Shāstra*, so far from being rightly described as 'meaningless superstition' or 'jabber,' is worthy of a close study which, when undertaken, will disclose elements of value to minds free from superstition, of metaphysical bent and subtle-seeing."¹⁴

Mantra Yōga is one of the great systems of *Yōga*. This is the path of union with the Ultimate Reality by *Nathōpasana* or *Pranava Upāsana*. The primal creative sound of everything, according to Hindu metaphysics, is the *Pranava* or *Om*. The most spiritual and as yet inaudible sound which, preparatory to evolution, arose in the Being of God, not as a note or a succession of notes, but as an overspreading power. This sound was known in Sanskrit as *Vāk*, in English as Word and in Greek as Logos. The *Yōgis* who adopt the practice of *Mantra Yōga* as the path of realization, know in full all the intricacies connected with the various *Mantras* and the mode of their applications to spiritual illumination and physical and mental purity. The use of *Mantras* constitute a very definite department of occult practices, known in India among the Hindus from the oldest times. "Mantras are formularies which are meant to produce an effect on people and sometimes on things which will be so affected that they would then affect people,"¹⁵ writes, Prof: Earnest Wood in his book on '*Great Systems of Yōga*'. He further says, "Mantras are useful for consecrating shrines, instruments, vestments and other things."¹⁶ Writing about *Mantras* and images, Prof: Dr. Heinrich Zimmer says: "Divine forces are known to exist not only in visible forms

—such as can be visualized in concentrated meditation (*dhyana*)—but also in oral and written forms; specifically, in the magic formulae that evoke and conjure the superhuman beings into manifestation. The muttering of such a formula in a silent continuous repetition of its powerful syllables (*japa*), with or without the help of a rosary, steadies the mind bent on visualizing a divinity and summons up the manifestation. The formula (*mantra*) constitutes the spiritual body, as known to the ear and mind. Whereas the visible, tangible image is the manifestation for sight and touch. The two supplement and complete each other; they are parallel revelations of the self-same divine essence, respectively its 'name' (*nāma*) and its 'form' (*rupa*). For, whereas the deity itself is beyond both spheres fundamentally, it can be approached only through conceivable, audible, visible, and tangible means."¹⁷

The *Yantram* embodying the *Mantras* connected with the particular deity consecrated, is placed on the pedestal immediately below the image. This *Yantram* should be first meditated upon for 10 days by a qualified priest, well versed in *Dhyāna Yōga*, before it is placed on the pedestal. Meditation (*Japa*) on the *Yantra* should be performed with intense devotion and penance so that it may be converted into a centre of radiating power.

The first cosmic ideation of God is the Divine 'Word'. The *Mantra Shāstras*, discuss in detail the various manifestations of this Divine 'Word' both in the universe and in the human body. According to the *Mantra Shāstras*, the power that an image wields is derived from the *Mantras* inscribed on the *Yantra* and made vibrant by the thought power of the person who meditates on it. In ritualism, *Mantras* and *Yantras* play a greater part than images. Anybody who is interested in the science

of *Mantras* can with benefit read the writings of Sir Joh Woodroffe. I will refer them especially to his book '*Garland of Letters*'.

Kumbams

In Hindu ritualism *Kumbams* occupy an important place. *Kumbams* are expected to symbolize the physical forms of the deities. The pot represents the physical body. The coconut placed on it is the head. The thread layers round the pot are the nerves; the mango leaves the five senses. The *thetpai* grass tied in a bunch represents the hair—*Jadai*. The cloth tied round the pot is the skin. The deity is invoked in the *Kumbam* and worship is offered according to prescribed method. Wherever it is not possible to have an image made of stone or metal, a *Kumbam* can take its place as symbolized above. In the consecration of images *Kumbams* occupy a very important and indispensable place.

Temple Rituals

The rituals performed in a temple are of two kinds. They are known as *Nitya Karmas* and *Naimittika Karmas*. *Nitya Karmas* are obligatory; *Naimittika Karmas* optional. The daily *pūjas* are *Nitya Karmas* and should be performed daily without a break. The *pūjas* are done seven times daily. The first starts at 5 a. m., the second is placed at 6 a. m., the third at 9 a. m., the fourth at 12 noon. In the evening the first one is at 6 p. m., the second at 8 p. m., and the third at 10 p. m.. For all beginners in spiritual life daily worship at temples is prescribed as an essential routine. This is the first stage in the path of realization and is called *Dāsa Mārga* or *Charyā*.

Rituals and *pūjas* performed on special occasions for a day or for a number of days continuously

are *Naimittika Karmas*. On these days special ceremonies are performed in the temple for the benefit of those who do not find the necessity to attend temples as a daily religious duty. No one is expected to attend a temple without a bath or after a non-vegetarian meal. Modern Hindus who have lost their traditional sense of cleanliness, violate these rules in an attitude of indifference unbecoming of a Hindu.

Pūja and Archanai

The *pūjas* performed in the temple are of two kinds. One is invocatory and the other is a prayer for boons and blessings. The *Archanai* should be done only after the *Pūja*. *Pūja* is performed without any motive, purely for the purpose of invoking (*āvāhana*) the presence of the deity in the symbol or image. After the priest completes the ceremonies connected with the invocations, he ends the *pūja* with the following benediction:

சுவஸ்தி ப்ர ஜாப்ய: பரிபாலயந்தாம்
ந்யாயேன மார்க்கேன மகீம் மகீஷா:
கோப்ராமணேப்ய: சுபம் பவது நித்யம்
லோகா: சமஸ்தா: சுகிளே பவந்து.

May the king rule the subjects according to Dharma,
and let people enjoy propitiousness;

May the cows and men of wisdom be happy always,
and let all beings in all the world be cheerful.

After the *pūja*, the *archanai* is performed at the request of the devotees for granting them boons etc. *Archanai* is a prayerful request to the deity for the granting of boons, by the priest, on behalf of the devotees. After *pūja* and *archanai* the sacramental elements [or *prasādams*—*Vibhūti*, *Sandanam*, *Theertham* and *Flowers*—are distributed.

All persons who visit the temple for worship are expected to sit down in a quiet place after

worship, and meditate on the attributes of God for a short time at least.

Multiplicity of Gods

One of the accusations against Hinduism is that there are innumerable gods and goddesses to worship. This is not a problem to the Hindus. To the Non-Hindu it may be bewildering to look at or think of. Why is there this multiplicity? What is the reason for it? It is due to the social and historical factors which have influenced the evolution of Hindu society and to the metaphysical attitude of Hinduism. This state is the inevitable condition of the cultural synthesis that has taken place in Hindu society.

India, from time immemorial, has been a land of many tribes, cults, languages and dialects. The various culture groups with different backgrounds of traditions and religious institution were knit together as a complete whole by the metaphysical universality of the *Upanishads*. The religion of the *Upanishads*, as it spread through the ages, absorbed the various cults and their institutions and integrated them into a single system of religion. When a community or a tribe was absorbed into the *Dharma*, it took the cult of that particular tribe also and found a place for it in the general theology. Special *Purānas* were written to stabilize the unity behind the multiplicity. Because of the metaphysical attitude of the Hindus this synthesis was achieved without persecution and hatred. Hinduism never destroyed any faith with which it came into contact. Instead of destroying it, it sublimated the cult and made it a part and parcel of the great *Dharma* which is Eternal and Universal. Prof: Dr. Arnold Toynbee, commenting on this attitude says: "More tolerant intellectually, it may not be in

social things, like caste, but I would have thought it was more tolerant in accepting the idea that there are more roads to the truth than a single one. I should have thought Hinduism has a good deal to teach the world at present." ¹⁷ Dr. S. Radhakrishnan writing on Hinduism observes: "Hinduism developed an attitude of comprehensive charity instead of a fanatic faith in an inflexible creed. It accepted the multiplicity of aboriginal gods and others which originated, most of them, outside the Aryan tradition, and justified them all. It brought together into one whole all believers in God. Many sects professing many different beliefs live within the Hindu fold. Heresy hunting, the favourite game of many religions, is singularly absent from Hinduism." ^{*18}

The fundamental principle on which the multiplicity is based is the recognition of the metaphysical ideal of *Istam*. Every person can take any aspect or ideal which suits his historical evolution, temperament and culture, environment and tradition and above all his religious up-bringing, as an aid to God-Realization. What is essential is that one should be attached to his *Istam* without showing any discourtesy or hatred towards the *Istam* of others. This is a necessary condition for true spiritual advancement.

The objects selected for meditation and contemplation may be any *Istam*, but what is essential is the earnestness to live up to the ideals of a true spiritual life. Sri Krishna says in the '*Bhagavad Gītā*':-

* The apparent multiplication of gods is bewildering at the first glance, but you soon discover that they are all the same God. There is always one uttermost God, who defies personification. This makes Hinduism the most tolerant religion in the world, because its one transcendent God includes all possible Gods.

—Bernad Shaw wrote in 1944

In whatever way men worship me, in the same way do I fulfil their desires: it is My path, O son of Pritha, that men tread, in all ways.

Ch. IV. 11

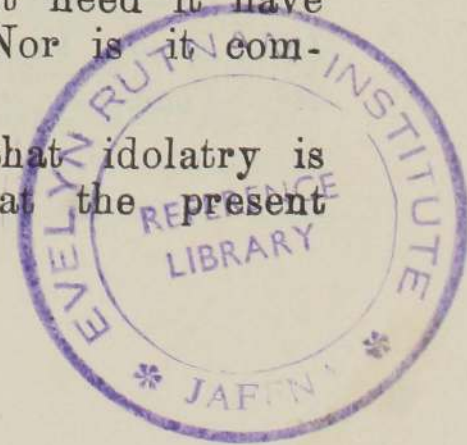
Even those devotees, who endued with Shraddha, worship other gods, they too worship Me alone, O son of Kunti, but by the wrong method.

Ch. IX. 23

The aim of man's life is to become divine by realizing the Divine. Idols, temples, churches, or books are only supports for his spiritual childhood, but he must progress onwards, transcending these. If religion is viewed from this angle, there will not be much talk about the number of gods and the nature of rituals performed as aids. If God can be worshipped in three aspects, then He can also be worshipped in three hundred aspects. Numbers do not count, only the right attitude and devotion matter. Let me conclude with a quotation from *Vivekānandā*:

"Unity in variety is the plan of nature and the Hindu has recognized it. Every other religion lays down certain fixed dogmas, and tries to force society to adopt them. It places before society only one coat which must fit John, Jack and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover his body. The Hindus have discovered that the absolute can only be realized, or thought of, or stated, through the relative, and the images, crosses and crescents are simply so many symbols—so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on. It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but those that do not need it have no right to say that it is wrong. Nor is it compulsory in Hinduism.

"It has been a trite saying that idolatry is wrong, and every man swallows it at the present



time without questioning. I once thought so, and to pay the penalty of that I had to learn my lesson sitting at the feet of a man who realized everything through idols; I allude to *Rāmakrishna Paramahansa*. Take a thousand idols more, if you can produce *Rāmakrishna Paramahansas* through idol worship, and may God speed you."²⁰

References :

Chapter Six

1. *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*, p. 130
2. *Holy Images*, p. 76
3. *ibid* p. 150
4. *ibid* pp. 151, 152
5. *ibid* p. 143
6. *ibid* p. 162
7. *The Perennial Philosophy*, pp. 304, 307, 308
8. *ibid* p. 310
9. *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter III, 21, 26
10. *South Indian Bronzes*, p. 23
11. *Tiruvāchakam*, Translation: Dr. G. U. Pope,
[p. XXXV]
12. *The Hindu Conception of Deity*, pp. 316, 317
13. *Life of Sri Rāmakrishna*, pp. 193, 194
14. *Garland of Letters*, p. VI
15. *Great Yōga Systems*, p. 116
16. *ibid* p. 116.
17. *The Art of Indian Asia*, Vol: I. p. 112
18. *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Feb: 21st. 1960.
19. *Hindu View of Life*, p. 37
20. *Teachings of Swami Vivekānanda*, pp. 121, 122

Chapter Seven

HINDU MYSTICISM

Part I

UPANISHADIC MYSTICISM

The tendency to apply the methods of experimental research employed in the physical sciences to other fields of knowledge has induced scholars to direct their attention to the study of the fundamentals of religious experience and religious institutions through these methods. Anthropologists have endeavoured to study religions as a social institution and have traced the development of religious doctrines and dogmas from the very earliest times to the modern period with the aid of History, Archaeology, Ethnology and Psychology. The study of comparative religion and the psychology of religious experience has brought into prominence an aspect of religion—Mysticism—which is ignored by the anthropologist and the scientist. The practical value of religion in the life of an individual lies in the personal transformation it brings about in his life. If saintliness exhibits characteristics which are worthy of respect and emulation, then the factor which contributes towards such a transformation is worth the serious study and understanding of all interested in religion. This factor is known as mystic experience and the persons who possess this quality are known as 'saints' or 'mystics.' The institutional aspect of religions is more a social and economic one and therefore, temporal and changing. The

differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian Mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates languages, and they do not grow old."²

The mystical aspect of religion is not confined to any one particular religion, nor is it restricted to any particular racial group, or to a particular caste. It belongs to all forms and types of religion of all countries and of all ages. "Mysticism", writes Rudolf Otto, "is the same in all ages and in all places, that timeless and independent of history, it has always been identical. East and West and other differences vanish here. Whether the flower of mysticism blooms in India or China, in Persia or on the Rhine and in Erfurt its fruit is one. Whether it clothes itself in the delicate Persian verse of a Jelaladdin Rumi or in the beautiful middle German of a Meister Eckhart; in the scholarly Sanskrit of the Indian Sankara, or in the laconic riddles of the Sino-Japanese Zen School, these forms could always be exchanged one for the other. For one and the same experience speaks here, only by chance in varying dialects. East is West and West is East."³ Kabir the great mystic and saint of India says:

It is needless to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs;

For the priest, the warrior, the tradesman, and all the thirty-six castes, alike are seeking for God.

It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint
may be ?

The barber has sought God, the washerwoman,
and the carpenter—

Even Raidas was a seeker after God.

The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.

Hindu and Moslems alike have achieved that End,
where remains no mark of distinction.⁴

Kabir was a weaver, Paul was a tent-maker,
Boehme was a cobbler, Bunyan a tinker and Spi-
noza a lens maker. *Thiruneelakandar* was a potter,
Nandan and *Petānsamban* were *pariahs*.

Religion and Magic

Man from very primitive times till today has
been endeavouring to understand the unseen power
or powers behind nature or to establish a connec-
tion with them. The evolution of religion as we
find it today is the result of this attempt. There
is an unconscious urge in man to transcend his
finite existence. The operation of this urge towards
external nature has resulted in the various dis-
coveries of modern science. Introspective analysis
and the psychological approach to the problems of
Reality behind nature have resulted in the appear-
ance of religious and philosophical doctrines, dogmas
and ritualism.

Religion and magic have very close connections.
In external appearance both look alike. Both seek
the aid of the unseen power to realize their aims.
Their external ritualism and the psychological
approach are similar. Religion when practised for
selfish ends degenerates into magic. If we attempt
to trace the development of religious ritualism found
in the different religions today, we invariably find
that they all originated in activities of a purely

magical nature by primitive man to control the powers of nature for his own well-being. The aim of magic is to obtain benefits. But, on the contrary, the aim of religion is to transcend the finite condition and realize the Absolute. In magic, all activities are centred round the individual self of man, whereas religion aims at the abolition of individuality, that feeling of "I", "Me", "Mine" which makes man a finite isolated thing. Magic is ego-centric. Religion is a process of killing the ego and becoming one with the Supreme. It attempts to transcend the sense-world and reach a state of spiritual bliss and peace. When religion deviates from this ideal it becomes pure magic. Self-seeking, in whatever form, is non-religious or non-mystical, whether it applies to the individual or to a group. Institutional religion today has degenerated into activities for the purpose of self-satisfaction rather than for spiritual perfection. It is more magical than mystical. Commenting on religion and magic Miss Evelyn Underhill observes: "It matters little whether the apparatus which they use be the incantations of the old magicians, the congregational prayer for rain of orthodox Churchmen, or the consciously self-hypnotizing devices of 'New Thought'; whether the end proposed be the evocation of an angel, the power of transcending circumstance, or the healing of disease. The object is always the same; the deliberate exaltation of the will, till it transcends its usual limitations and obtains for the self or group of selves something which it or they did not previously possess. It is an individualistic and acquisitive science: in all its forms an activity of the intellect, seeking Reality for its own purpose, for those of humanity at large."⁵ Again speaking of religion or mysticism she writes: "It is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend

the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys, but purely from an instinct of Love.”⁶ ...“The Mystic is ‘in love with the Absolute’ not in any idle or sentimental manner, but in that vital sense which presses at all costs and through all dangers towards union with the object beloved.”⁷ The followers or devotees of institutional religion want to possess all things for the well-being of their finite existence. What the truly religious person or the mystic desires is a conscious union with the Absolute. This is the difference between the mystic and the others, however brilliant and accomplished they may be.

Value of Mysticism

The economic degeneration resulting from political subjection to foreign rule for more than four hundred and fifty years, has brought about an attitude of mind in the educated section of our people which regards material prosperity and the satisfaction of physical needs as the first things in life. This may be a necessary transition under the circumstances in which we are living today; but it cannot be considered as the absolute ideal towards which all our national endeavour should be directed.

If life has a meaning and aim, then it is our duty to discover it and live up to it. “If the world has a purpose” writes C. E. M. Joad, “it is reasonable to suppose that we may catch a glimpse of it not in the origins and beginnings of things but in their fullest development. We must therefore, adopt what I have called above teleological modes of explanation, interpreting in terms of aims rather than of origins, and judging life by its fruits rather than by its roots. From this standpoint we may

see opening before us roads for the understanding of reality other than those which lie through the microscope and the test tube.”⁸ *Swami Vivekānanda* says: “There are people in the world who are convinced that only that is of use and utility which brings to man creature-comforts. Even religion, God, Eternity, Soul, none of these is of any use to them, as they do not bring them money or physical comfort. To such, all those things which do not go to gratify the senses and appease the appetites, are of no utility. In every mind, utility, however, is conditioned by its own peculiar wants. To men, therefore, who never rise higher than eating, drinking, begetting progeny and dying, the only gain is in sense enjoyments. But those to whom the eternal interests of the soul are of much higher value than the fleeting interests of this mundane life, to whom the gratification of the senses is but like the thoughtless play of the baby, to them, God and Love of God form the highest and the only utility in this world of too much worldliness.”⁹ Mystics belong to the latter class and the materialists to the former. In “an age governed by the stomach—and pocket view of life” it is refreshing to note that there are mystics and men of light and learning interested in the mystic way of life. Although, the materialistic minded individual may not find anything of utility in mysticism, yet, the man of mystic tendencies will find in it the goal of his soul’s yearning. If Beauty and Goodness, Poetry, Music and Art have a place and value in life, then mysticism has a place and value for the man of aspirations and ideals.

The truth and validity of the experience of the mystics rest solely on the miraculous change it brings about in the life of the mystics and their devoted disciples. The un-selfish love, sympathy and

kindness, and the spirit of self-sacrifice and humility, seen in them are never met in the lives of others. The beauty and serenity of their lives, the love and peace they radiate around them, are the only true testimony of the grandeur and the transforming character of mystic experience. It is their lives that speak more than their words. William James, writing about saintliness observes: "Our question is as to whether religion stands approved by its fruits, as these are exhibited in the saintly type of character. Single attributes of saintliness may, it is true, be temperamental endowments, found in non-religious individuals. But, the whole group of them forms a combination which, as such, is religious, for it seems to flow from the sense of the divine as from its psychological centre. Whoever possesses strongly this sense comes naturally to think that the smallest details of this world, derive infinite significance from their relation to an unseen divine order. The thought of this order yields him a superior denomination of happiness, and a steadfastness of soul with which no other can compare. ...Finally, his humble-mindedness and his ascetic tendencies save him from the petty personal pretensions which so obstruct our ordinary social intercourse, and his purity gives us in him a clean man for a companion. Felicity, Purity, Charity, Patience, Selfseverity—these are splendid excellences, and the saint, of all men, shows them in the completest possible measure."¹⁰

If saintliness exhibits all the excellences of human nature and transforms man into a semi-divine, if not divine, being, then the factor which contributes towards such a wonderful consummation is worthy of careful study and understanding. This factor is known as mystic experience and the persons who have had it are saints. "Great saints",

writes William James, "are immediate successes; the smaller ones are at least heralds and harbingers, and they may be leavens also, of a better mundane order. Let us be saints, then, if we can whether or not we succeed visibly and temporally."¹¹

The question may be asked whether the mystical life is within the reach of all, whether the call comes to all who desire it, or the call is a limited one affecting only a relatively small number? It is said in the Bible that many are called but few are chosen. St. John of the Cross says: "God does not raise to contemplation everyone that is tried in the way of the spirit, nor even the half of them, and He knows the reason."¹² *Sri Krishna* in the '*Gītā*' says: "One, perchance, in thousands of men, strives for perfection; and one perchance, among the blessed ones, striving thus, knows Me in reality." In the *Upanishads* it is said: "This *Ātman* cannot be attained by the study of the *Vedas*, nor by intellect, nor even by much learning; by him it is attained whom it chooses."¹³ When this verse is interpreted in a theistic sense, it means, "It is attained by him alone whosoever God chooses." This verse is the basis for the Doctrine of Grace found in *Saivism* and *Vaisnavism*. It is said in the '*Tiruvāchakam*', "*Avan arulal avan thal vanangki*" (His Foot is worshipped by His Grace only). Therefore, the path of contemplation and meditation on the eternal verities of life are for the few who feel the urge and are prepared to pay the price such a life demands. "Spiritual things", writes, Dr. Dean Inge, "as St. Paul says, are spiritually discerned; the carnival mind, however quick in apprehending the appearances of the world of senses, cannot know the things of the spirit. We can only judge of what is akin to ourselves."¹⁴ People completely immers-

ed in the enjoyment of sense pleasures can neither understand nor appreciate the contemplative life.*

The man who desires to live in the world and enjoy all its comforts and pleasures, will undoubtedly find in the discoveries of modern science and its materialistic culture a source of immense help to realize his ambition. But the man who seeks to inherit the Kingdom of God and live a life of inward peace and joy will find the mystic way of immense value and help. The man of the world and the seeker after the Reality, both because of their different aims, travel in opposite directions and can never hope to meet. In Hinduism the mystic way is known as *Nivrtti Mārga* and the worldly life as *Pravrtti Mārga*.

Transcendental Mysticism of the Upanishads

Hindu mysticism is as old as the *Upanishads*. It is only in the *Upanishads*† that one finds the earliest references to an earnest quest after Reality. This quest proceeded from the spiritual needs of the soul which could be satisfied only by attaining the

*There is no special organs for the reception of Divine or spiritual truth, which is simply the knowledge of the world as it really is. Some are better endowed with spiritual gifts than others, and are called to ascend greater heights; but the power which leads us up the pathway to reality and blessedness is, as Plotinus says, one which all possess, though few use it.

—*Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vol. I. p. 5

†The *Upanishads* are supposed to have been the work of anonymous forest seers in India who lived between three thousand and twentyfive hundred years ago. They are among the oldest records of mysticism in the world. But they are of an unsurpassable depth of spirituality. For long ages and for countless millions of men in the East they have been, and they remain, the supreme source of the spiritual life.

—*The Teachings of the Mystics*, p. 20

highest aim. All that is worldly, transient and evanescent such as wealth, worldly knowledge and fame are but pleasures which please only so long as men are swayed by the demands of their senses. The unreal nature of worldly enjoyments are well explained by the following story found in the *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad*. The story is introduced with a view to enjoin renunciation of the world as the means to self-knowledge. I shall quote the story as narrated in the *Upanishad*:

“The Sage *Yajnavalkya* said to his wife *Maitreyi* ‘My dear, I intend to renounce this householder’s life in order to take up the life of renunciation. Permit me, therefore, to divide my property, between you and *Katyāyani*, and make an end of my relationship with you both.’ Thus addressed *Maitreyi* asked—‘shall the rites such as *Agnihotra* performed with the entire wealth of the earth make me immortal?’ *Yajnavalkya* replied in the negative and added: ‘Your life will be like the life of people having plenty but even in thought there is no hope of immortality by rites performed with wealth.’

“Thus addressed *Maitreyi* replied—‘What shall I do with that wealth by which I shall not be immortal? Tell me, Revered Sir, of that alone which you know to be the only means of immortality.’ *Yajnavalkya* was highly pleased with *Maitreyi* and said to her: ‘You have been dear to me even before and now you say what is very dear to my heart. Therefore come and be seated near me. I will describe to you the knowledge of self which confers immortality. But while I describe it, reflect steadfastly on it.’¹⁵

This spiritual craving for immortality or the realization of One-ness with the Absolute is the one only aim which runs through the whole *Upanishadic* teachings. This is the greatest truth which Hinduism

proclaims as the goal of human existence. Hindu mystics and saints throughout the ages have borne ample testimony to this great ideal. This desire for immortality is no mere craving for a personal survival to continue the enjoyment of pleasures under newer conditions in a different plane of existence. It is a thirst to transcend all finiteness which is the cause of pain and evil and to experience the unspeakable and ineffable bliss where there is no trace of the personality of the individual self existing. It is a quest for that experience where all duality or qualitative attributes vanish. When we are in touch with it, our so-called individuality or personality gets merged into it, and there ensues that infinitude of blissful experience in which all distinctions of sects, castes, race and other multiplicity with all attendant evils are lost.

The chief features of the *Upanishadic* mysticism are the quest for a spiritual illumination and the rapturous delights which are inexpressible. This transcendental quest is not the same as that of the theist. According to the *Upanishads* the Reality is no individual person separate from the *Ātman* or the true self of man. But, however, in some *Upanishads* we find a current of thought in which the Reality is conceived and described as God similar to the conception of theism. Historically, the theistic conception seems to be a later addition into the mysticism of the *Upanishads*. However, in Hinduism both streams of thoughts have run parallel throughout the ages down to date. The transcendental mysticism of *Sankara* is the natural and rational outcome of the conception of Reality as the Absolute. The devotional mysticism of *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* mystics and saints, both of the North and of the South, is the result of the theistic aspect of Hindu religious thought. *Sri Ramānuja* is the greatest

exponent of the philosophy of Hindu devotional mysticism.

The devotional aspect of religion is fully explained in the '*Bhagavad Gītā*'. The mysticism of the '*Gītā*' consists in the performance of action without personal attachment or self-seeking, surrendering all fruits to God. In devotional mysticism emotion plays a great part and knowledge has a place as a means to enable one fully to surrender oneself to God. A man of self-surrender has nothing else but God as his possession. He is supremely self-controlled and the enjoyment he has by his constant association with God keeps him absolutely happy and contented. Such a man does not aspire to any heavenly happiness or even to liberation. If we refer to the utterances of the *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* mystics, we shall find this sentiment reiterated in more than one place.

Tondaradipodi Ālvar exclaims:¹⁶

பச்சைமா மலைபோல் மேனி பவளவாய் கமலச் செங்கண்
அச்சுதா அமர ரேறே ஆயர்தம் கொழுந்தே யென்னும்
இச்சுவை தவிர யான்போ யிந்திர லோக மாளும்
அச்சுவை பெறிலும் வேண்டே னரங்கமா நகரு ளானே.

Seek I only, Oh, Lord of *Arangam*, the joy of contemplating Thy green-hued form with red mouth and lotus eyes, and the pleasure of repeating Thy name as *Atchuta*, Leader of the *Devas*, Beloved of the Shepherds, and crave not even the lordship over *Indra Lōka*.

(This psalm describes the beautiful image of *Sri Ranganatha* at Sri Ranganam, South India, and the bliss that one gets by contemplating on it.)

St. Appar sings:¹⁷

குனித்த புருவமுங் கொவ்வைச்செவ் வாயிற் குமிண்சிரிப்பும்
பனித்த சடையும் பவளம்போல் மேனியிற் பால்வேண்ணீரும்
இனித்த முடைய எடுத்தபொற் பாதமும் காணப்பெற்றால்
மனிததப் பிறவியும் வேண்டுவ தேஇந்த மானிலத்தே.

If I am to be blessed with the vision of the form with curved eye-brows, smile in the pouted red lips, *Ganga* on the matted hair, ashes—milk like—on the red body, and the raised Foot, I welcome birth again, as a man, in this world.

(This psalm describes the joy that the devotee gets by contemplating on the Image of *Nataraja* at Chidambaram, South India.)

Absolute and Relative Knowledge

As I have said earlier, the aim of human existence according to the *Upanishads*, is the realization of the identity of Self or *Ātman* with *Brahman*. Therefore, the purpose of knowledge should be the attainment of this end. A knowledge that fails to provide man with the means to attain this end is not true knowledge. The *Upanishads*, therefore, divide knowledge into two kinds—*Parā-Vidyā* and *Aparā-Vidyā*. *Parā-Vidyā* or absolute knowledge is that which helps the direct realization of *Brahman* or the Absolute. *Aparā-Vidyā* or relative knowledge is that which helps one to live in this world of relative values with success. It is said in the *Mundaka Upanishad*:¹⁸

There are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired, as indeed the knowers of the *Vedas* have said, —one a lower and the other a higher.

Of these, the lower consists of the study of *Rig-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, *Sāma-veda*, *Atharva-veda*, phonetics, the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, metrics and astronomy. Now the higher Knowledge is that by which the Imperishable is attained.

(Lower knowledge includes everything that is not directly connected with the attainment of Self-realization.)

It is only through *Parā-Vidyā* that one can attain *Mōksha* or Liberation. "Liberation can be through (an intuitive) knowledge alone about the ultimate Truth, and not by any other means, just as one's dream is never sublated except by one's own awakening."¹⁹ No one can attain true knowledge without the help of a competent teacher.

Kathōpanishad says:²⁰

Even to hear of it is not available to many; many even having heard of it, cannot comprehend. Wonderful is its teacher, and (equally) clever the pupil. Wonderful indeed is he who comprehends it when taught by an able preceptor.

The *Ātman* can never be well comprehended, if taught by an inferior person, even though often pondered upon. Unless it is taught by a superior teacher, there is no other way to it. Subtler than the subtlest, it is unarguable.

Thus, only persons who are wise, who are learned in the scripture, and who dwell steadfastly in *Brahman* can be the true teacher of *Parā-vidyā* or *Ātma-Jnāna*.

Qualification for a Mystical Life

The path of realization or the mystical life, according to Hinduism, is only for those who have turned their backs on the pleasures of life and thirst for a life of spiritual peace and calmness. Formal religion which aims at obtaining rewards in this life and in the life to follow is absolutely different from the real religion. Formal religion is a social institution but real religion or the path of mysticism is a spiritual discipline based on self-sacrifice, self-control, renunciation and universal love. All the religious scriptures of the Hindus emphasize

certain fundamental qualifications for those who aspire to tread the path of realization. Apart from the study of the sacred scriptures and devotion to God (*Bhakti*), there are four fundamental requisites that are absolutely essential. They are:

1. Discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal—*Nityānitya vastu viveka*.
2. Renunciation of the desire for rewards in this and in the next world—*Ihamuthratha pala bhōga viraka*.
3. Six fold discipline—calmness, self-restraint, abstemiousness, patience, self-settledness and unflinching faith based on clear and rational thinking.
4. Longing for Emancipation (*Mumukshutva*).

Persons who possess the above qualifications should approach a competent teacher and surrender themselves to him and pray to be initiated into the mystic way. Speaking of the student and the *Guru* the *Mundaka Upanishad* says: ²¹

“Having scrutinized the worlds gained by deeds, a man of spiritual inclination should become indifferent to them; for deeds, which are originated, cannot win the Supreme, who is unoriginated. Therefore to know That, let him become a pupil under a preceptor who is both learned in the scriptures and established in the Spirit.”

“To such a seeker, whose mind is tranquil and senses are controlled, and who approaches him in proper form, let the wise teacher impart the science of *Brahman* in its, very essence—science by which one knows the true imperishable Being.”

Individuals irrespective of age and social status, even illegitimate children and *Sūdras*, were admitted into the path of *Ātma-Jnāna*. There are stories

in the *Upanishads* which show that the emphasis was on discipline and character and not upon any external circumstances of life, such as social rank, caste or sex. There was no bar to anyone being accepted as a pupil except the bar of one's personal character.*

Steps to Realization

The spiritual aspirant who has acquired the necessary qualification for the contemplative life will be deemed fit to be initiated by the *Guru*. The *Guru* will teach him the meaning and significance of the *Mahāvākya—Tat-Twam-Asi*, (Thou Art That) and set him on the path of contemplation which will ultimately lead him to the Unitive experience of Supreme Identity. The contemplative life is divided into four stages; *Sravanam* (hearing), *Mananam* (reflection), *Nidhi dhiyāsanam* (meditation) and *Samādhi* (absorption or identity).

The first step or stage in the contemplative life is *Sravanam*, the act of hearing the sacred formula of Supreme Identity. The *Srutis* declare that the

* The sages of India side with the second of these two points of view. They have never intended their teachings to be popular. Indeed, it is only in recent years that their words have become generally accessible through printed texts and translations into popular tongues. They insist on first determining whether a candidate applying for admission to the sanctum of their philosophy is endowed with the necessary spiritual qualifications. Had he fulfilled the preliminary disciplines? Is he ripe to benefit from a contact with the *Guru*? Does he deserve to take a place at the *Guru's* feet? For the solutions of the Indian sages to enigmas of life and other approaches to the mystery of the universe are worked out along lines completely different from those being followed by the leaders of modern research and education. They neither deny nor apologise for the fact that their teachings are hard to grasp and therefore—necessarily esoteric.

—*Philosophies of India*, p. 17

Reality behind the phenomenal universe and the subjective ego are identical. The Reality behind the cosmos is *Brahman*: the Reality behind the subjective ego is *Ātman*. The mystic ideal of the *Upanishads* is not the delight of absorption in God which has an appearance of an identity, but the attainment of that Supreme Silence and Peace which passeth all understanding.

Chāndōgya Upanishad says: ²²

“In which one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the Infinite. But that in which one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, is the finite. That which is Infinite, is alone, immortal, and that which is finite, is mortal.

Tat-Tvam-Asi indicates the transcendental experience spoken of in the *Upanishads*. This experience is not a new revelation for the Self, or a new psychic expanse or a joy of God-Consciousness in some form of fellowship. It is the Delight Supernal which is the true essence and nature of the Self which it becomes conscious of or aware of in the state of Supreme Identity.

The disciple should reverently take to heart the full meaning, significance and implication of the *Mahāvākya* and begin to think over it in constant reflection.

The second step in the contemplative life is the act of reflection on the truth of *Tat-Tvam-Asi*. The disciple should constantly visualize the state of identity and direct all his activities in such a way as not to have a negative effect on his practice. The mind should always dwell on *Brahman*, the One without a second. All ideas and aspirations which are foreign to the promotion of Supreme Identity

should be negated. When reflection on the nature of *Brahman*, *Ātman* and the Supreme Identity becomes a settled habit, then, meditation becomes easier and natural.

Meditation is the third step. It is the centre and heart of spiritual life. An intuitive insight into the real nature of the Self is only possible by the aid of *Dhyana* or meditation. Concentration should not be confused with meditation. It is a mental act performed with effort. It is the process by which the mind attempts to stick to one idea or object. But meditation is that process of introversion by which the mind tries to transcend itself. Concentration is called *Dhāraṇa* in *Yōga* and meditation is known as *Dhyāna*. What actually happens in the state of meditation is that the mind visualizes the ideas or the object of contemplation and tries to get absorbed in it. In deep meditation, the self gently slips into a dreamy consciousness of the Infinite. When one attains proficiency in meditation, he gradually slides into the next stage of absorption.

The fourth stage is *Samādhi* which is complete absorption or union with *Brahman*. *Advaita Vedānta* Texts speak of two types of *Samādhi*: *Savikalpa* and *Nirvikalpa*. In *Savikalpa Samādhi*, the mind takes the form of the object of contemplation and rests on it. In this type of merging or absorption, the subject-object relationship continues to exist. The Reality is experienced in its relative aspect and the spiritual experience is still determinate. *Brahman* is experienced as the Cosmic Self which vibrates through all beings. The Reality is felt and experienced in its immanent aspect. In *Savikalpa*, the soul feels the identity but never loses its individuality. The soul sees the beatific vision, feels the ineffable joy (*Ānanda*) of it and blissfully reposes

in it but never transcends it. Theism considers this state as the highest form of mystical union and is satisfied with it. The union is so complete that it gives the feeling of a perfect oneness, of a fusion or transformation. The *Upanishadic* mysticism transcends the immanental experience and plunges into the Infinite Calm known as *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* or *Nirvāna*.

In *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*, the experience transcends all forms, names and characteristics and the Self plunges into the Ocean of Supreme Peace and Bliss. The wise one who has attained this Supreme State is called A *Jīvan-Mukta*—one who has attained freedom from all *upadhis* though living in the world. *Sankara* in the '*Vivekachūdamani*' describes the state as follows:

“The wise one realizes in his heart, through *Samādhi* the Infinite *Brahman* which is undecaying and immortal, the positive Entity which precludes all negations, which resembles the placid ocean and is without a name, where there are neither merits nor demerits,—which is eternal, pacified and One.”²³ (410).

Jīvan-Mukti

The *Jīvan-mukta* enjoys eternal Bliss and Peace internally and externally. Though the world with its manifold activities continue to exist for him, he is not perturbed by it. A person who knows what a mirage is, never gets deceived by its appearance, because, he is fully aware of its unreal nature. Similarly a *Jīvan-mukta*, though he lives in the world with his senses active, he never gets attracted by its enticing appearances. In spite of his inner harmony and freedom, he may engage himself in the pursuit of unselfish service to humanity as long as his body lasts. The inner experience of a *Jīvan-*

mukta is not discernible through any bodily signs, nor can it be measured through his psychical attainments. It is an experience that can only be felt by those who are awakened in spirit. The transforming power of his presence and the unselfish life that he leads are the only factors by which we could judge to a certain extent his exalted experience.

References :

Chapter Seven

1. *Mysticism*, p. 81
2. *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 419
3. *Mysticism: East and West*, pp. XV, XVI
4. *Poems of Kabir*, p. 1
5. *Mysticism*, p. 71
6. *ibid* p. 71
7. *ibid* p. 72
8. *Philosophy for our Times*, p. 153
9. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekānanda*.
10. *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 369, 370
11. *ibid* p. 377
12. *Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross*, p. V
13. *Kathōpanishad*, 11, 23
14. *Philosophy of Plotinūs*, Vol: I. p. 7
15. *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad*, 2, 4
16. *Nalāyira Pirapantham*,
17. *Tevāram*, *Tirunavukarasar*.
18. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1. 4 & 5
19. *Panchadasai*, V. 210
20. *Kathōpanishad*, 2, 8
21. *Mundaka Upanishad*, Chap: 2. Sec: 12 & 13
22. *Chāndōgya Upanishad*, Chap: 7, 24
23. *Vivekachūdamani*, Verse. 410.

Chapter Eight

HINDU MYSTICISM

Part II

YŌGA MYSTICISM

The interaction of very many cultural and religious elements in Hinduism brought into existence three distinct types of Mysticism with their appropriate theological backgrounds. They are the transcendental mysticism of the *Advaitins*, the devotional mysticism of the *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* sects and the *Yōga* mysticism of *Patanjali* and the *Siddhars*. *Sri Sankara* provided the philosophical background for those who followed the *Upanishadic* ideals of Self-Realization. *Sri Madhava* and *Sri Meihanda* provided the philosophical background for the devotional mysticism of the dualists. *Sri Ramānuja* and *Sri Kāntha* formulated the metaphysical basis for the devotional mysticism of those who stood midway between absolute monism and absolute dualism.

Yōga Mysticism

We have in the previous chapter outlined very briefly the characteristics of the transcendental mysticism of the *Upanishads*. In the *Upanishads* we also find references to *Yōgic* discipline as an aid to the control of mind. In the *Katha*, *Svetāsvatara* and *Maitri Upanishads*, *Yōga* is fully developed and discussed. *Yōga* as a means of union of the *Ātman* or Self with *Brahman* was fully familiar to the

sages of the *Upanishads*. Though *Yōga* as a separate religious cult is now not in existence, yet, *Yōgic* practices find a place in all the sects of modern Hinduism. Those who renounce worldly life and take up *Sannyasa* practise *Yōga* as an aid to realization whatever their cult may be. Today, there is a craze for *Yōga* in the West and in the East among a few English educated Hindus because of its benefits for physical well-being. This opportunity is availed of by some to acquire proficiency in *Āsana* and *Prānāyāma* and advertise themselves as *Yōgis* and tour the country with a smattering knowledge of religious doctrines and assume the role of spiritual *gurus* offering to guide the others towards *Kaivalyam* or *Mōksha*.*

The attainment of *Kaivalyam* or Self-Realization is the only end and aim of *Yōga*. *Yōga* is a psycho-physical discipline by means of which the *Yōgi* frees himself from the control of *Prakṛti* or Matter. The *Yōga* path, as said earlier, is based on the *Sankhyan* metaphysics according to which *Kaivalyam* is the complete isolation of the *Ātman* or *Purusha* from the fetters of *Prakṛti*. As long as the *Ātman* identifies itself with the *Tattvas* evolved out of *Prakṛti*, there is bound to be misery and sorrow in life. Through *Yōga* practices, the Self succeeds in isolating itself, and this state of complete isolation or freedom is called *Kaivalyam* in *Yōga* and *Sankhya*. This condition or state is the same as the attain-

* On the other hand, it need hardly be pointed out that the gymnastic classes, in themselves meritorious, which are supplied by some *Yogis* who eke out with them a living in some Western capitals, have nothing to do even with *Hatha Yoga* under which name they are usually advertised. For although as a system of physical culture it may be very sound, true *Hatha Yoga* cares for the body only in so far as it is instrumental for spiritual progress.

—*Western Psychotherapy and Hindu Sādhana*, p. 106

ment of *Nirvāna* or Absolute Peace spoken of in the *Upanishads*. Whether we call the Self as *Purusha* or *Ātman* or the Absolute *Nirguna* or qualityless *Brahman* makes no difference.

According to the *Sāṅkhya-Yōga* the *Purusha* or the Spirit is other than the body which is a product of Matter or *Prakṛti*. The eternal destiny of man is to realize his true nature as Spirit. True to its metaphysical foundations, in *Yōga*, there is no vision of the unity of spirit with Nature as you find in devotional mysticism. Nature, the everchanging and impermanent thing, is rejected by the spirit as a fetter. In devotional mysticism, the soul is expected to cut off all attachment and binding to the world and exclusively surrender to God, the Lord of its being. But in *Yōga*, one is expected to cut off connections with matter and establish himself as the pure *Purusha* or *Ātman*.

The religious sects of Hinduism consider *Kaivalyam* of the *Yōga* as a lower state and maintain that the highest mystical experience is the attainment of complete union with God. To the theist, knowledge of the Self is only the first step towards complete union with God. According to him, the soul may fall from this stage of self-knowledge, if it fails to win the Grace of God and become completely united to Him. This conception, the monist would say, is more theological and religious rather than mystical or metaphysical. I do not propose to go into this aspect in detail as it has been argued very minutely by all philosophers and theologians belonging to both the schools of thought in the East and in the West. However, I shall say a word or two about it to clarify *Kaivalyam* and theistic union.

In the state of *Kaivalyam* the ego dies and what remains is beyond mental comprehension. If

we say that the pure Spirit minus ego remains united to God in *Kaivalyam*, then we posit two entities—God and *Ātman*. The idea of union always presupposes the existence of two entities. You must have two distinct things for a union. In the Absolute Experience of the *Upanishads* there is no trace of duality. According to the transcendental mystics of all countries, the final experience is beyond expression and not an arithmetical addition.* We can only speak about a union between two things which are separate and different. For instance, there can only be a union of milk with water or salt with water, but there cannot be a union of milk with milk or water with water. If milk found in two vessels is mixed together, there occurs no union of two different things. What actually happens is the disappearance of the dual appearance of milk which is due to the different vessels. They do not assume a new state when mixed, nor does a new characteristic emerge out of it.

The *Yōgic Sādhanas* for the attainment of *Kaivalyam* or *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* are eight. They are *Yama*, moral virtues such as non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-receiving;

*By its very nature mysticism seeks to go beyond all dualism and to rest only in an absolute unity. To the mystic it appears that there is within his mystical consciousness no division whatsoever. We can see this plainly enough in Hindu mysticism and in Plotinus. In the unitary consciousness, says the *Mandukya Upanishad*, all multiplicity has been completely obliterated. But a duality between the individual self and the One is a multiplicity. According to Plotinus, "seer and seen are one" and there is no division between the One and the soul of the mystic. There is no doubt that this is the essential declaration of the developed mystical consciousness as such everywhere, whether in the East or the West.

—*The Teachings of the Mystics*, p. 128

Niyama, internal and external purification, contentment, mortification, study and worship of God; *Āsana*, physical posture; *Prānāyāma*, controlling the vital forces of the body; *Pratyāhāra*, removing of the mind from the sense objects; *Dhāraṇa*, concentration; *Dhyāna*, meditation and *Samādhi*, absorption in God or *Ātman*. *Samādhi* in theism is to get united to God. But in *Yōga*, it is to get completely isolated from *Prakṛti* and to rest in one's own Spiritual Being. By the practice of the different parts of *Yōga*, the impurities attached to the soul get destroyed and the *Yōgi*, attains peace and beatitude never to be deluded again. He will realize that he is ever blessed and ever perfect.

Occultism and Yōga

Occultism and the performance of miracles are very often mixed with *Yōga* mysticism. Students of mysticism should not confuse these two. The purpose of *Yōga* is to attain *Kaivalyam* or spiritual enlightenment and not to acquire *siddhis* or psychic powers which are undoubtedly worldly and not spiritual. The occultists are more interested in controlling nature to derive material benefits and adopt *Yōgic* methods or *sādhana*s to acquire psychic powers. Such men never advance spiritually nor are they interested in spiritual transcendence. Pseudo-*Yōga* is one way of earning a livelihood, and all spiritual aspirants should be careful to avoid such a way of life. Telepathy, clairvoyance, mentalhealing, spiritism, thought-reading, display of *āsana*s, fire-walking, astrology and similar feats are the stock-in-trade of professional occultists. *Siddhis* are by-products of true *Yōgic* *sādhana*s and one who is intent on Self-Realization should reject them as dirt. All books on *Yōga* warn the spiritual aspirant not to stray into the realms of psychic powers.

Siddhars

In India during the middle ages, there were a class of *Yōgis* called *Siddhars* who were adepts in the various arts of occultism and had at the same time attained *Kaivalyam*. They were proficient in *Hatha Yōga* and *Rāja Yōga* and practised *Yōga* for the sole purpose of union with God. They were, unlike the *Yōgis* of the *Upanishads*, believers in a personal God and practised the *Yōga sādhanās* for a union with Him. "The *Siddhars* have always been claimed to be seers and highly evolved and realized souls. They are not, as is commonly and erroneously supposed, atheists or even agnostics. They believed in the omnipotence, the omnipresence and the omniscience of God who is accepted as the Creator, Protector and Destroyer of this Universe. To almost all the Tamil *Siddhars* the Supreme God is Lord *Siva*. In *Vaisnavism* this type of ascetic is rare though *Yatis* and *Sannyāsins* have been common and have been held in great respect."¹ There is a tradition that *Nāthamuni*, the great *Vaisnava Ācharya* was a *Yōgi* and *Siddhar*.

The prominent *siddhars* of the Tamil country were *Tirumūlar*, *Sivavākkīar*, *Pattinattār*, *Pāmbātti*, *Ahappe* and *Kuthambai*. *Tirumūlar* is undoubtedly the greatest *Siva Yōgi* of Tamil *Nād*. *St. Tāyumānavar* (18th century A. D.) is said to have received his *Jnāna Dīksha* from one *Mowna Guru* who belonged to the *Guruparamparai* of *Tirumūlar*. Tamil tradition mentions 18 *siddhars*. We are not yet certain as to the exact dates of their existence. Not that they are mystical personages but that their life histories are shrouded in mystery and conflicting anecdotes. They have left some poems which are in colloquial Tamil but full of sublime and subtle thoughts and experiences in the realm of *Yōga*. They ignored external religious symbols and

rituals and led a wandering life without staying at one place permanently. Some were alchemists and expert physicians. The *Siddha* medical system owes its origin to the *siddhars*, and it is a speciality of the Tamil country. In Ceylon, Jaffna is the home of the *siddha* system of medicine.

The *siddhars* of Tamil *Nād* had faith in the divine nature of man and his capacity to attain miraculous powers. They claimed to have realized God and lived a very simple and unconventional life. To them religious institutions, rituals and ceremonies were not very important and they never observed caste distinctions. Though they were iconoclastic in their attitude, their religious experience was universal, non-sectarian and transcendental.

Sivavākkīar says:

அரியுமல்ல வரனுமல்ல வப்புறத்தி லப்புறம்
கருமைசேம்மை வெண்மையைக் கடந்துநின்ற காரணம்
பெரியதல்ல சிறியதல்ல பற்றுமின்கள் பற்றுமின்
துரியமுங் கடந்துநின்ற தூரதூர தூரமே.

தில்லைநா யகன்னவன் திருவரங் கனும்மவன்
எல்லையான புவனமு மேகமுத்தி யானவன்
பல்லுநாவு முள்ளபேர் பகுந்துகூறி மகிழுவார்
வல்லபங்கள் பேசுவார் வாய்புழுத்து மாய்வரே.²

“The *siddhars* have made a permanent and varied contribution to Tamil Literature and have enriched it. They introduced into Tamil poetry not only the common speech but also an easy and flexible style woven out of it. Not all the cold scorn and power of religion and social orthodoxy could drive their poetry out of the popular mind in the past and even today one can hear them sung often by the better class of nomadic religious mendicants who have deliberately turned away from life and live only on alms, not thinking of the morrow. In spite of their personal eccentricities and a streak

of unsocial nature in them, the *siddhars* were votaries of true religion and noble philosophy. Being men given to *Yōga* and meditation they underwent long spells of contemplative silence and moods. ...Their teaching about the existence of the one supreme God and the need for a feeling of identity with and faith in Him, the absolute equality of all irrespective of caste or creed and the need for each individual to develop his inner life by spiritual effort to know and realize God have great value. ... A knowledge of the works of the *siddhars* is necessary to have a correct perspective of the religious, social and literary history of the Tamils, for they voiced the feelings and convictions of a cross-section of the community that believed in religion, as mainly pertaining to the spirit of man.' (80, 82) *St. Pattinattār*, *St. Tāyumānavar*, and *St Rāmalinga Swāmigal* may be said to be the outstanding representatives of the *siddhar* traditions of Tamil *Nād* who kept up the tradition very closely allied to the *Saiva Āgamic* cult. There is a belief among scholars who have done research in *Siddha* literature, that the esoteric teaching of the *Āgamas* have very close connection with the *Yōga* doctrines and experiences of the *siddhars*. This is a vast field which is yet to be explored and I am not competent to go into it at present.

St. Tirumūlar

St. Tirumūlar may be said to be the father of *Āgamic Saivism* in South India. He is said to have lived in the 5th century A. D. His work the '*Tirumandiram*' which is one of the sacred anthologies of *Saiva Siddhānta* is a compendium of *Āgamic* religion, psychology and philosophy. There are sections in it dealing with *Yōga*, devotion and the true significance of *Saiva* symbols and ritualism.

One sub-section deals very elaborately with the metaphysical meaning of the 'Sacred Dance of *Siva*'. According to tradition *Tirumūlar* is said to have brought the *Āgamic Saiva* tradition from *Kailai*, North India. He says in the book that he came to popularize the *Āgamic* tradition in Tamil.

Though his *Yōga* is completely based on *Patanjali's Astānga Yōga*, he goes further and formulates *sādhanās* for the union of the devotee with God. The *Yōga* path of realization given by *Tirumūlar* is based on the *Saiva Āgamas* and is called *Siva Yōga*. *Patanjali's* path of *Yōga* is based on the *Upanishadic* ideal of Self Realization. *Tirumūlar's* religion is pure *Saivism* and he defines God as Pure Love.

The ignorant say, Love and God are different
None knows that Love and God are the same
When they know that Love and God are the same
They rest in God as Love.⁴

அன்பும் சிவமும் இரண்டென்பர் அறிவிலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாரும் அறிகிலார்
அன்பே சிவமாவ தாரும் அறிந்தபின்
அன்பே சிவமாய் அமர்ந்திருந் தாரே.

He maintains that God can only be realized by pure devotion and not through physical and mental mortifications :

Even though, with bones for firewood, the
Flesh is torn to shreds and burnt, like gold
In fire, except to those who internally melt
Themselves into Love, God is not accessible.

என்பே விறகா யிறைச்சி யறுத்திட்டு
பொன்போற் கனலிற் பொரிய வறுப்பினும்.
அன்போ டுருகி யகங்குழை வார்க்கன்றி
என்போல் மணியினை எய்தவொண் னாதே.

According to him the final beatitude is inexpressible transcendental peace :

Ye fools: that speak of the unspeakable
Can you find the limits of the limitless one?

When as the waveless sea one clearness,
To him, will appear the Lord with braided hair.

உரையற்ற தொன்றை யுரைசெயு மூமர்காள்
கரையற்ற தொன்றைக் கரைகாண லாகுமோ
திரையற்ற நீர்போல் சிந்தை தெளிவார்க்குப்
புரையற் றிருந்தான் புரிசடை யோனே.

Tirumūlar was a great *Siva Yōgi* and his *Yōga*-Mysticism was built on the firm foundations of *Saiva* devotion. To him God, *Siva*, is not a mere object of perception, but the Supreme Being, both immanent and transcendental, who can be realized through His Grace only. His doctrine of Grace pervades the whole philosophy of *Saiva Siddhānta*.

The *Siddhars* though theists by religion, were not in any sense bigoted sectarians. Their mode of life, in spite of their sects, was uniform and their outlook universal. The credit for having applied *Yōga* successfully as means of union with God belongs to the *Siddhars*. There are modern scholars who maintain that *Yōga* is a pre-*Āryan* path of religion prevalent among the Dravidians and the *Āryans* incorporated its tenets into their religious practices.

Types of Yōga Mysticism

The *Yōga* technique was not only used for Self-Realization but also to unravel the mysterious working of nature both in man and in the objective universe. Such investigations brought into existence different schools of *Yōga* which also had God realization as their aim. *Yōgis* of India, like the modern scientists and psychologists, have carried on extensive researches into the human psyche and the psychical world. Though their investigations belong to the super-physical or super-natural planes, yet, they are all within the realm of the mind. They are bound by the laws of time, space and causation. The *Yōga*-Mysticism of *Patanjali*, because

of new developments and the needs of the various sects, gave place to different types of practice. They are *Hatha Yōga*, *Laya Yōga* and *Mantra Yōga*. *Patanjali's Yōga* is known as *Rāja-Yōga*.

Hatha Yōga

The system of *Yōgic* discipline by which the body and the vital energies are brought under control for the purpose of Self-Realization is known as *Hatha Yōga*. "The science of *Hatha Yōga* is the ladder up which those climb who wish to reach the higher regions of the Royal Path (*Rāja-Yōga*)."⁵ Though the ultimate aim of *Hatha Yōga*, like all *Yōgas*, is Self-Realization, yet there are people who adopt it solely for the purpose of obtaining physical and psychic powers under the garb of religion. "Many people have brought upon themselves incurable illness and even madness by practising them without providing the proper conditions of body and mind."⁶ It is the strict injunction of *Yōga* texts that *Yōgic* practices should not be undertaken by any one without the proper guidance of an experienced *Yōgi*. They also reiterate that *Yōgic* practices are meant only for those who are prepared to devote their whole lives for God-Realization.*

Laya Yōga

Laya Yōga is also known as *Kundalini Yōga*. By the practice of *Laya Yōga*, the power which is

* It is with *Hatha Yōga* or the *Yōga* of body control, that the Western World is best acquainted. This is due to the fact that the outward manifestations of *Hatha Yōga* are obvious whereas changes in consciousness are not. For this reason popular writers have tended to create the impression that *Yōga* is little else than a method of acquiring bodily tricks. It must be remembered, however, that the attainment of control over the body is only a means to an end, and not an end in itself.

—*Diagnosis of Man*, pp. 136, 137

dormant or lies coiled up in the *Mūlādhāra* is made to rise up and travel through the six centres or *chakras* which are located in the spinal column and reach the crown of the head called *Sahasrara*, thousand petalled centre, where the Supreme *Siva* functions in the human body. The union of *Sakti*—*Kundalini*—with *Siva* is the aim of *Laya Yoga*.

The six *chakras* are centres of power and each is said to vibrate differently. The *chakras* are: *Mūlādhāra*, above the anus, *Svadhīstana*, above the sex organs, *Manipūraha*, near the navel, *Anāhata*, middle of the chest near the heart, *Viśuddhi*, in the throat, *Ājñā*, between the eye-brows. The vibration of each centre is represented by a *Bija Mantra*. People who practise *Laya Yōga* or *Kundalini Yōga* and become proficient in it are said to attain great *siddhis* or psychic powers. In *Laya Yōga* or *Kundalini Yōga*, *Pūja*, *mantra*, *dhyana*, use of *yantras*, *upāsana* or devotion to a particular aspect of God, and *Yōga* practices occupy a very important place. They are indispensable forms of *sadhana* for the attainment of union spoken of in *Laya Yōga*. Any body interested in the scientific study of this aspect of *Yōga* may refer to the translation of *Sad-Chakra-Nirūpanam* (Serpent Power) with introduction and comments by Sir John Woodroffe, the greatest authority in this *Yōga* in modern times.

Mantra Yōga

According to Hinduism, the Supreme is motionless and changeless. When manifestation takes place, there is movement or change. This aspect of change which takes place in the changeless is called *Parā-Sakti* or in the words of St. John, 'The Word'. *Mantra Shāstras* deal with the science of 'Sound' or '*Shabda*'. *Mantra Yōga* is the path of realization through *Mantra Dhyana*. Writing about *Mantra* and

Mantra Devata, Sir John Woodroffe says: "The *Mantra* of a *Devata* is that letter or combination of letters which reveals the *Devata* to the consciousness of the *Sadhaka*, who has evoked it by *Sādhanā-sakti*. The form of a particular *Devata* therefore appears out of the particular *Mantra* of which that *Devata* is the *Adhishthātri Devata*. This *Mantra* is intoned in the proper way according to letter (*varna*) and rhythm (*Swara*). For these reasons a *Mantra*, when translated ceases to be a *Mantra*, that is the sounds heard and uttered in the translation are not the body of, and do not evoke, the *Devata*. We are then not dealing with the same sound, but with a translation in another language, with other sounds giving the meaning to the intellect of the *Sanskrit Mantra*. This shows that *Mantra* is not mere individual thinking but a particular sound-body of consciousness." (255-256). The principle underlying the science of music applies to *Mantras*. No person can study and practise music in translation. The *Sabdha Swaras* of Indian music are fundamental and unchangeable. All feelings and emotions are created in the singer and in the hearers by the manipulation of the *Swaras* according to set rules of rhythm or *tālam*. Nobody can deny the great fact that music produces effects on the body and mind of people. Similar is the case of *Mantra* recital and *Mantra Dhyana*.

Mantra Yōga is the path by which a *sādhaka* attains liberation through meditation on 'Om', the *Mahā-Mantra* and other *Mantras* or verbal formulas. The *Āgamas* divide the world of experience into two parts—*Sol Prapancham* (world of thoughts and ideas) and *Porul Prapancham* (world of material objects). *Sol Prapancham* is again subdivided into *Varnam* (letters), *Padam* (syllables) and *Mantra* (combination of syllables). The objective physical universe is subdivided into *Kulai* (five), *Tattva* (36), and *Bhuvanam* (224).

In *Mantra Yōga* word formulas or sound symbols play a very important part. *Mantra* is the form of sound or vibration. There cannot be any movement without vibration. There is no vibration without the accompaniment of sound or *shabda*. This is an intricate subject and if any one is interested in this aspect of study, he must study the process of cosmic evolution as explained in *Saiva* and *Sākta Āgamas*.

Siddhis

Siddhis or psychic powers are by-products of the *Yōga* path of realization. *Patanjali's 'Yōga Sūtra'* Chapter III deals with psychic powers which a *Yōgi* gets in the course of his *Yōga* practice. He states in *Sūtra* 38; "These are obstacles to *Samādhi* but they are powers in the worldly state." *Swāmi Vivekānanda* commenting on this *Sūtra* writes: "These powers, however, are obstructions to the attainment of the highest goal, the knowledge of the pure Self, and freedom. These are, as it were, to be met in the way, and if the *Yōgi* rejects them, he attains the highest. If he is tempted to acquire these, his further progress is barred." (212).

Any one who practises the above mentioned *Yōgas* in a systematic manner under the guidance of a qualified *guru* will attain proficiency in *siddhis*. Some, as we have said earlier, practise *Yōga* solely to attain *siddhis*. But, there are also others who take to *Yōga* for spiritual realization ignoring *siddhis* and pursue their path till they attain complete union with God or attain *Kaivalyam*.

There are eight main psychical powers (*siddhis*) gained through the systematic practice of *Yōga*. They are:

1. *Anima*, to become small as an atom,
2. *Lagima*, to have no weight,

3. *Mahima*, to be immensely large,
4. *Garima*, to be very heavy,
5. *Prapti*, to be transported anywhere,
6. *Prakāmya*, to see one's wishes fulfilled,
7. *Vashitva*, to control all creatures and
[elements,
8. *Īshitva*, Lordship over all things.

In addition to the above eight there are thirty subsidiary attainments some of which are: The knowledge of the previous births, thought-reading, invisibility, knowledge of death, knowledge of the heavenly world, freedom from hunger and thirst, vision of super-natural beings, divination, leaving and re-entering the body, levitation etc..

Pāmpātti Siddhar in his work describes the powers which *Yōgis* or *siddhars* are capable of performing. I give below one out of the ten stanzas in which he narrates the *siddhis* of *Yōgis* :

வேதன்செய்த சிருஷ்டிகள்போல் வேறு செய்குவோம்
 வேதனையு மெங்கள்கீழே மேவச் செய்குவோம்
 நாதனுடன் சமமாக நாங்களும் வாழ்வோம்
 நாங்கள்செய்கை யாமிதுவென் றூடு பாம்பே.

We are capable of creating new worlds and
 make *Brahma* to serve under us.

We will live as equals of *Isvara* :

Oh: Snake, dance, proclaiming our deeds.

Commenting on the powers of *Yōgis*, Dr. Evans-Wentz writes in his introduction to '*Tibetan Yōga and Secret Doctrines*': "The great *Yōgin* (or *Yōgi*), possessed of clairvoyant vision, is said to be able to observe the life of micro-organisms in a way impossible for a scientist with a microscope; or to study the nature of suns or planets or nebulae the most distant, which no telescope could ever reveal. Being empowered likewise to observe the physio-

gical processes of his own body, he needs no corpse to dissect in order to study physiology. Nor does he practise vivisection in order to test the effects of poisons or drugs or disease germs. Knowing that mind is the creator and controller of the body and of material substances in every combination, medicines and serums are for him unnecessary. He requires no mechanical devices in order to traverse air or water or land, for he tells us that he can quit his gross physical body and visit any part of the Earth or pass beyond the stratosphere to other worlds with a speed greater than that of light. Milarepa is credited with having been able to travel through the air in his fleshly form with the speed of an arrow."¹⁰

Attaining super-natural powers is not the aim of *Yōga*. The aim of *Yōga* Mysticism is the attainment of *Kaivalya*. Dr. W. R. Inge, writing on mysticism and mystical phenomena observes: "There are some who connect the word mysticism with what the older Catholic writers call mystical phenomena or supernatural favours—mysterious sights, sounds and smells, boisterous fits of weeping, cataleptic trances, stigmata, apparitions and the like. These results of unrestrained emotionalism belong rather to psychology and psychopathy than to religion. The best mystics do not encourage those who expect and value them. ...They belong to what St. Paul calls psychical, not the spiritual, level of reality, and give no confirmation to the intuitions of spiritual religion. The vision of God is the culminating point of our whole nature."¹¹ (1)

Hindu scriptures of all sects uniformly maintain that psychic powers are barriers to spiritual perfection and the possession of them is no sign of spiritual realization. Spiritual realization is an experience which is beyond man's psychic plane.

*References :**Chapter Eight*

1. *The Poetry and the Philosophy of the
Tamil Siddhars*, p. 2
2. *Sivavākkīar Pādal : Jnāna Kovai.*
3. *The Poetry and the Philosophy of the
Tamil Siddhars*, p. 80-82
4. *Tirumandiram*
5. *Yōga : The Method of Reintegration*, p. 17
6. *Great Systems of Yōga*, pp. 90, 91
7. *Garland of Letters*, pp. 255, 256
8. *Rāja Yōga*, p. 212
9. *Pāmpātti Siddhar Pādal : Jnāna Kovai.*
10. *Tibetan Yōga and Secret Doctrine*, pp. 23, 24
11. *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 13

Chapter Nine

HINDU MYSTICISM

Part III

DEVOTIONAL MYSTICISM

The transcendental and *Yōga* mysticism of the early *Upanishads* as a result of their contact with theistic cults of the non-*Āryan* cultures of India gave place to the development of a type of devotional mysticism which found its expression in the *Bhagavad Gīta* and the *Svetāsvatara Upanishad*. The *Gīta* by-passes monism and introduces a personal and incarnate God on the background of the *Sankhya-Yōga* theory of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Theism is the dominant theme in the *Gīta*.

Hindu devotional mysticism found its fullest expression in South India in the Tamil country in the lives and compositions of the *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* mystics. *Appar*, *Sambandhar*, *Sundarar* and *Mānickavāchakar* and *Tāyumanavar* are the greatest *Saiva* devotional mystics of *Tamil Nad*. The greatest *Vaisnava* devotional mystics of *Tamil Nad* are: *Poigai Ālvār*, *Poothath Ālvār*, *Pei Ālvār*, *Thirupān Ālvār*, *Thondaradipodi Ālvār*, *Kulasegara Ālvār*, *Tirumalaisai Ālvār*, *Periyālvār*, *Āndāl*, *Tirumangai Ālvār*, *Nammālvār* and *Madhurai Kavi Ālvār*. The collection of their psalms is known as '*Nālāyira Pirapantham*'.

Saiva Mystics

The devotional hymns of the *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* mystics exhibit different types of devotional practices.

The emotions that stirred them were of the following types: that of a mother to her son; of friends to friends; of servants to a master; of sons to a father; and of a female lover to her beloved. *Sambandhar* considered God as Father and his way of approach was known as *Satputra Mārgam*. *Appar* considered God as his Lord and Master and his approach was known as *Dāsa Mārga*. *Sundarar's* approach was that of a Friend and it was known as *Sakha Mārga*. *Mānickavāchakar's* approach was through pure *Bhakti* coupled with *Jnāna* and it was known as *Sanmārga*.

The Hindu mystics spent their whole lives in visiting shrines and adoring the manifestations of the Deity in those places. To a casual reader of their lives, this act may appear as if they believed only in a personal God. The truth is otherwise. Their pilgrimage was the method they adopted to carry the message of *Saivism* and of holy living throughout the country. Their psalms clearly proclaim the sublime heights to which they have gone in their conception of God both as Personal and Impersonal. They have very definitely stated that the vision of God is an internal experience and not an objective perception. They have reiterated in more than one place that what is required for the Supreme Vision is a pure heart and an earnest devotion to God rather than external ceremonialism and pilgrimages. *St. Appar says:*¹

Why bathe in Ganga's stream, or Kaviri?

Why go to Comorin in Kongu's land?

Why seek the waters of the sounding sea?

Release is theirs, and theirs alone, who call

In every place upon the Lord of all.

கங்கை யாடினென் காவிரி யாடினென்
கொங்கு தண்கும ரித்துறை யாடினென்

ஓங்கு மாகட லோதநீ ராடிலென்
எங்கு மீசன் எனாதவர்க் கில்லையே.

Why chant the *Vedas*, hear the *Sastras'* Lore?
Why daily teach the books of righteousness?
Why the *Vedāngas* six say o'er and o'er?
Release is theirs and theirs alone, whose heart
From thinking of its Lord shall ne'er depart.

வேத மோதிலென் வேள்விகள் செய்கிலென்
நீதி நூல்பல நித்தல் பயிற்றிலென்
ஓதி யங்கமோ ராறு முணரிலென்
ஈச னையுள்கு வார்க்கன்றி இல்லையே.

Why roam the jungle, wander cities through?
Why plague life with unstinting penance hard?
Why eat no flesh, and gaze into the blue?
Release is theirs, and theirs alone, who cry
Unceasing to the Lord of wisdom high.

கான நாடு கலந்து திரியிலென்
ஈச மின்றி யிருந்தவஞ் செய்யிலென்
ஊகை யுண்ட லொழிந்துவான் நோக்கிலென்
ஞான னென்பவர்க் கன்றிநன் கில்லையே.

Why fast and starve, why suffer pains austere?
Why climb the mountains, doing penance
Why go to bathe in waters far and near? [harsh?
Release is theirs, and theirs alone, who call
At every time upon the Lord of all.

நன்று நோற்கிலென் பட்டினி யாகிலென்
குன்ற மேறி யிருந்தவஞ் செய்யிலென்
சென்று நீரிற் குளித்துத் திரியிலென்
என்று மீசனென் பார்க்கன்றி யில்லையே.

I sought Him and I found;
Brahma sought in vain on high
Visnu delved vainly underground;
Him in my soul found I.²

தேடிக் கண்டுகொண்டேன் - திரு மாலொடு நான்முகனும்
தேடித் தேடொணுத் தேவனை யென்னுளே
— தேடிக் கண்டுகொண்டேன்.

Appar Swāmīgal in a beautiful hymn says that the Supreme Being is beyond all forms and descriptions:

The Lord, with a braided hair, lives in the *Kanchi* burial ground, with His beautiful *Uma* with pencilled eyebrows. He has no sin. He is not one of the mortals, and is not to be compared with any of them. He has no place and is incomparable. We can, with His grace alone as our eye, perceive Him, His form and nature, otherwise none can paint or describe.*

மைப்படிந்த கண்ணாளுந் தானுங் கச்சி
மயானத்தான் வார்சடையான் என்னி னல்லான்
ஒப்புடைய னல்லன் ஒருவ னல்லன்
ஒரு னல்லன் ஒருவம னில்லி
அப்படியும் அந்நிறமும் அவ்வண் ணமும்
அவனருளே கண்ணாகக் காணி னல்லால்
இப்படியன் இந்நிறத்தன் இவ்வண் ணத்தன்
இவனிறைவன் என்றெழுதிக் காட்டொ ணாதே.

The psalms of the *Saiva Nāyanmārs* are full of deep and high sentiments of pure devotion. Their main emphasis is on the sublime grandeur of God. There is a feeling of extreme submission and self surrender in all their utterances. *St. Mānīckavāchakar* says :⁴

That very day my soul, my body, all to me
pertaining, didst Thou not take as Thine own,
Thou like a mountain strong: when me Thou
[mad'st Thy slave?
And this day is there any hindrance found in me?
Our mighty one; Eight-arm'd and Triple-eyed:
Do Thou to me what's good alone, or do Thou ill,
To all resigned, I'm Thine and wholly Thine:

அன்றே யென்ற னாவியு முடலு முடைமை யெல்லாமுங்
குன்றே யனையா யென்னையாட் கொண்ட போதே கொண்டிலையோ?
இன்றே ரிடையு நெனக்குண்டோ வெண்டோள் முக்கண் எம்மானே
நன்றே செய்வாய் பிழைசெய்வாய் நானே விதற்கு நாயகமே.

St. *Tāyumānavar* says:

I have surrendered everything to Thee,
 Actions of mine have I none;
 My body, wealth and soul are all Thine.
 Remove the darkness in my soul;
 My Lord, give of Thy Grace, as Thou Will'st.

எனக்கெ னச்செயல் வேறிலை
 யாவுமிங் கொருநின்
 தனக்கெ னத்தகு முடல்பொரு
 ளாவியுந் தந்தேன்
 மனத்த கத்துள வழக்கெலா
 மாற்றியெம் பிரானீ
 நினைத்த தெப்படி யப்படி
 யருளுத னீதம்.

The *Nāyanmārs* in their ecstatic delight visualize nay perceive everywhere the Supreme in Its Fullness and yearn intensely to get absorbed in It. Though completely devotional, yet at certain levels or moments they get into a state of mind where they become one with the object of their devotion, and exhibit blissful delight. At such moments they appear as transcendental mystics who see and live in the Absolute only. In the '*Tevāram*', '*Tiruvāchakam*' and in the '*Nālāyira Pirapantham*' of the *Vaisnavites*, hymns are found which describe states of complete oneness with the Absolute. But at the next moment, the experience changing into a feeling of dependence and humility, appears as one of complete self-effacement. It is extremely difficult for one who has not experienced such states, to say which phase of the experience is truer and has a greater claim to our acceptance. Religious minded individuals will prefer to hold fast to the devotional aspect of it. Philosophically minded people will stand by the transcendental aspect of it. Because of this apparently conflicting situation, we find differences of interpretation regarding the nature of

the God-head among sects and philosophies. Hindu mystics in their psalms define God as the omnipresent Being and at the same time transcending all forms and names. They are all agreed that He can be intuited as the inner Self of man and also preach the great truth that He assumes the name and form in which the devotees adore Him.

St. Mānickavāchakar

The ecstatic utterances of *St. Mānickavāchakar* are unmatched for their devotional felicity and emotional sublimity. '*Tiruvāchakam*' is the outstanding classic of *Saiva* Mysticism in Tamil. Dr. G. U. Pope, the English translator of '*Tiruvāchakam*,' observes: "These poems, of which the translation is here printed, are daily sung throughout the whole Tamil country with tears of rapture, and committed to memory in every *Saiva* Temple by the people, amongst whom it is a traditional saying, that he whose heart is not melted by the *Tiruvacagam* must have a stone for a heart. ...It is impossible to read the poems without feeling that the sage of *Tiruvāthavūr* was a sincere seeker after God. ...He taught the people that there was one supreme personal God,—no mere metaphysical abstraction, but the Lord of gods and men. He also taught that it was the gracious will of *Cīvan* to assume humanity, to come to earth as a *Guru*, and to make disciples of those who sought Him with adequate preparation. He announced that this way of salvation was open to all classes of the community. He also taught very emphatically the immortality of the released soul its conscious immortality. ...Any one who compares the fervid piety of our sage's very beautiful, and generally very simple, lyrics will feel with what force they must have struck the chord that vibrated then as it vibrates still in millions

of hearts. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,' and no one can read the sage's verses without profound emotion. *Scarcely ever has the longing of the human soul for purity and peace and divine fellowship found worthier expression.*"⁶

The whole of '*Tiruvāchakam*' is a '*Pilgrim's Progress*' from materiality to a transcendental vision of God. In its sacred verses one can see the struggles, aspirations, hardships, disappointments and agonies which *Mānickavāchakar* underwent in his endeavour to realize the Supreme Beatitude. His yearning for the vision of God was acute and intense. He exclaims:⁷

I ask not kin, nor names, nor place,
Nor learned men's society,
Men's lore for me no value has;
Kuttalam's Lord, I come to Thee.
Wilt thou one boon on me bestow,
A heart to melt in longing sweet,
As yearns o'er new-born calf the cow,
In yearning for Thy sacred feet?

உற்றாரை யான்வேண்டேன் ஊர்வேண்டேன் பேர்வேண்டேன்
கற்றாரை யான்வேண்டேன் கற்பனவு மினியமையுங்
குற்றலத் தமர்ந்துறையுங் கூத்தாவுன் குரைகழற்கே
கற்றுவின் மனம்போலக் கசிந்துருக வேண்டுவனே.

Indra or Visnu or Brahma,
Their Divine bliss crave not I;
I seek the love of Thy saints,
Though my house perish thereby.
To the worst hell I will go,
So but Thy grace be with me.
Best of all, how could my heart
Think of a god beside Thee?⁸

கொள்ளேன் புரந்தரன் மால்அயன் வாழ்வு குடிகெடிலும்
நள்ளே னினதடி யாரோடல் லால்நர கம்புகிலும்
எள்ளேன் திருவரு ளாலே இருக்கப் பெறின்இறைவா
உள்ளேன் பிறதெய்வம் உன்னையல் லாதெங்கள் உத்தமனே.

In a rapturous mood of devotion he proclaims that the love of God to his devotees excels that of a mother to her child:

The mother's thoughtful care her infant feeds!
 [Thou deign'st
 with greater love to visit sinful me,—
 Melting my flesh, flooding my soul with inward
 Unfailing raptur's honied sweetness Thou [light,
 Bestowest,—through my every part infusing joy!
 My wealth of bliss: O Civa Peruman!
 Close following Thee—I've seized and hold Thee
 [fast! Henceforth,
 Ah, wither Grace imparting wouldst' Thou rise?'

பானினைந் தூட்டுந் தாயினுஞ் சாலப்
 பரிந்துந் பாவியே னுடைய
 ஊனினை யுருக்கி யுள்ளொளி பெருக்கி
 யுலப்பிலா வானந்த மாய
 தேனினைச் சொரிந்து புறம்புறந் திரிந்த
 செல்வமே சிவபெரு மானே
 யானுனைத் தொடர்ந்து சிக்கெனப் பிடித்தேன்
 எங்கெழுந் தருளுவ தினியே.

To him, God is not only the soul of his soul but also the transcendental Supreme. He sings:

O Supreme Splendour that rises within me
 welling forth as ambrosia,
 Having blocked the ways of the five traitor
 senses that ever delude me.
 Graciously show Thyself to me as Thou art
 Clearest of the clear, Lord Siva, Dweller in
 the great holy shrine,
 O Bliss transcending all states without end,
 O my Love!'¹⁰

மாறிநின் றென்னை மயக்கிடும் வஞ்சப்
 புலனைந்தின் வழியடைத் தமுதே
 யூறிநின் றென்னு ளெழுபரஞ் சேர்தி
 யுள்ளவா காணவந் தருளாய்

தேறலின் நெளிவே சிவபெரு மாளே
 திருப்பெருந் துறையுறை சிவனே
 யீறிலாப் பதங்கள் யாவையுங் கடந்த
 விற்பமே யென்னுடை யன்பே.

To *St. Mānīkavāchakar* God is 'Supreme Bliss and Infinite Love'. He experienced God more as the 'Delight Supernal', the 'Unbounded Joy', (*Ānandam*), an internal 'Ocean of Bliss' and an 'Ambrosian Fount'. He is the 'Unscaled Mount of Ever-Blazing Light' and the 'Great Sea of Rapturous Joy'. He is distilled 'Nectar Sweet' that knows no end. The saint describes with beauty and with blissful delight his experience in the following stanzas :

This day in Thy mercy unto me Thou didst drive
 away the darkness and stand in my heart as
 the rising Sun.

Of this Thy way of rising-there being naught else
 but Thou, I thought without thought.

Nearer and nearer to Thee I drew, wearing away
 atom by atom till I was One with Thee, O Siva,
 Dweller in the great holy shrine!

Thou art not aught in the universe. Naught is
 there save Thou.

Who can know Thee?¹¹

இன்றெனக் கருளி யிருள்கடிந் துள்ளத்
 தெழுகின்ற ஞாயிறே போன்று
 நின்றநின் றன்மை நினைப்பற நினைந்தேன்
 நீயலாற் பிறிதுமற் றின்மை
 சென்றுசென் றணுவாய்த் தேய்ந்துதேய்ந் தொன்றந்
 திருப்பெருந் துறையுறை சிவனே
 யொன்றுநீ யல்லை யன்றியொன் றில்லை
 யாருன்னை யறியகிற் பாரே.

It was Thyself Thou didst give and me Thou
 didst take.

Beneficent Lord, who is the gainer?
 Endless bliss have I gained. What hast Thou
 gained from me?

O Lord that hast made my heart Thy temple,
Siva, Dweller in the great holy shrine,
O Father, Sovereign, Thou has made my body abode
For it I have naught to give in return Thy.¹²

தந்ததுன் றன்னைக் கொண்டதென் றன்னைச்
சங்கரா வர்கொலோ சதுர
ரந்தமொன் றில்லா வானந்தம் பெற்றேன்
யாதுநீ பெற்றதொன் றென்பால்
சிந்தையே கோயில் கொண்டவெம் பெருமான்
திருப்பெருந் துறையுறை சிவனே
யெந்தையே யீசா வுடலிடங் கொண்டாய்
யானிதற் கிலனொர்கைம் மாறே.

To me, who toiled and moil'd 'mid fools, that knew
not way of final peace,
He taught the way of pious love; - and that 'Old
deeds' might cease and flee,
Purging the foulness of my will, made me pure
bliss, took for His own:-
'Twas thus the Father gave me grace; O Rapture!
who so Blest as I?¹³

முத்திநெறி அறியாத மூர்க்கரோடு முயல்வேனைப்
பத்திநெறி அறிவித்துப் பழவினைகள் பாறும்வண்ணம்
சித்தமல மறுவித்துச் சிவமாக்கி யெனையாண்ட
வத்தனைனக் கருளியவா ஞர்பெறுவா ரச்சோவே.

St. Tāyumānavar

St. Tāyumānavar is another great Saiva mystic whose mystic experiences are more of an impersonal character. He belongs to the *Guru Paramparai* of St. Tirumūlar. He refers to his *Guru* as "*Mūlan marapil varu mowna Guruve.*" (He who comes in the line of *Mūlan*). He was fully versed in the *Saiva Siddhānta* literature and practised *Saivism* as adumbrated by the *Meikanda Santana Ācharyas*. Though he started his religious life as a devotee, he ended it as a transcendentalist similar to *Mānickavāchakar*. There are moments when he adores God as a

Person; but he also experiences Him as an Impersonal Power pulsating behind the manifold objects of nature. There are mystical flights in which he identifies the God of religion with the Transcendental Experience which is beyond speech, name and form.

Though the attitude of *Tāyumanavar* towards *Saiva Siddhānta* was one of complete veneration, yet to him creeds and sects meant nothing. He yearned for the Absolute Experience which transcended all creeds. He prays:

Have you not created all the five elements and the manifold objects—movable and immovable?

Have you not created intelligence, the Vedas and other scriptures?

Have you not created the many creeds including Saivam and also the Harmony of Silence which transcends all creeds?

Why hast Thou not blessed me with the Divine Grace to reach Thee?¹⁴

ஐவகை யெனும்பூத மாதியை வகுத்ததனு

ளசரசர பேத மான

யாவையும் வகுத்துநல் லறிவையும் வகுத்துமறை

யாதிநூ லையும் வகுத்துச்

சைவமுத லாமளவில் சமயமும் வகுத்துமேற்

சமயங் கடந்த மோன

சமரசம் வகுத்தநீ யுன்னைநா னணுகவுந்

தண்ணருள் வகுக்க விலையோ?

He perceives the working of the Divine Grace in all the creeds of the world. He exclaims:

The creeds in conflict know in common
one only God, Almighty Thee;

They differ not but as Thou willest;

they roll, all rivers, to the sea,

To Thee. O Vastness of the Silence.¹⁵

வேறுபடுஞ் சமயமெல்லாம் புகுந்து பார்க்கின்
விளங்குபரம் பொருளேநின் விளையாட் டல்லான்
மாறுபடுங் கருத்தில்லை முடிவின் மோன
வாரிதியி னதித்திரள்போல் வயங்கிற் றம்மா.

“Lo, here, Lo, there”, the creeds all clamour,
But Thou above their contests art,
And yet, to each its God, Thou comest
To dwell within the human heart,
By grace the only way of knowing.¹⁶

அன்றோவா மோவெனவுஞ் சமய கோடி
யத்தனையும் வெவ்வேறு யரற்ற நேரே
நின்றாயே நினைப்பெறுமா நெவ்வா ருங்கே
நின்னருள்கொண் டறிவதல்லா னெறிவே றுண்டோ.

Tāyumānavar had a metaphysical acumen coupled with earnest devotion, a characteristic which is rarely found in other mystics. The sweetness and grandeur of *Saiva Bhakti* is fully seen in *St. Mānīkavāchakar*. *Saiva* transcendentalism is at its best in *Tāyumānavar*. *Bhakti*, *Yōga* and *Jnāna*, the three essential limbs of Hindu Mysticism, are beautifully blended in the psalms of *Tāyumānavar*. He conceived and experienced God as Absolute Existence, Consciousness and Bliss—*Sat-Chit-Ānanda*. He calls it *Sat-Chit-Ānanda-Sivam*. The final beatitude, according to him, is beyond speech, beyond time and space, not limited by day and night, and as an endless and limitless expanse of Bliss.

Tāyumānavar may be called the philosopher-mystic of *Saiva Siddhānta* who communed with God both internally and externally. He says: “Knowing all things to be the manifested forms of that Stillness, to that I bow in worship.”

கண்டனவே லாமோன வருவேளிய தாகவும்
கருதியஞ் சலிசெய்கு வாம்.

Though the Reality is omnipresent, yet he experienced It as the fountain of sweet honey within his being. He rapturously exclaims:

எத்திக்குந் தானாகி என்னிதயத் தேயூறித்
தித்திக்கும் ஆனந்தத் தேனே பராபரமே.

He describes his mystical experience very graphically thus:

The words that he spake, how shall I say? cunningly He seated me all alone, nothing before me. He made me happy, dear, he caught me, and clung to me.

சொன்னசொல் லேதென்று சொல்வேன்—என்னைச்
சூதாய்த் தனிக்கவே சும்மா விருத்தி
முன்னிலை யேதுமில் லாத—சுக
முற்றச்செய் தேயெனைப் பற்றிக்கொண் டாண்டி.

“Away with other clingings, cling to me within,” He said. What I got as I clung to Him, how can I tell? He spake things that should never be spoken, dear.

பற்றிய பற்றற வுள்ளே—தன்னைப்
பற்றச்சொன் னுன்பற்றிப் பார்த்த விடத்தே
பெற்றதை யேதென்று சொல்வேன்—சற்றும்
பேசாத காரியம் பேசினுன் தோழி.

“By grace behold all things, He said. Not understanding, by my intelligence I beheld, differentiating. I saw but darkness. I saw not even me, the seer. What is this, sister?

அருளா லெவையும்பா ரென்றான்—அத்தை
யறியாதே சுட்டியென் னறிவாலே பார்த்தேன்
இருளான பொருள்கண்ட தல்லாற்—கண்ட
வென்னையும் கண்டில னென்னேடி தோழி.

“Of me and thee think not in thy heart as of two. Stand undifferentiating.” This one word when He uttered, the bliss that straightway grew from that word how can I tell, my dear?

என்னையுந் தன்னையும் வேரு—உள்ளத்
தெண்ணாத வெண்ண மிரண்டற நிற்கச்
சொன்னது மோவொரு சொல்லே—அந்தச்
சொல்லால் விகிந்த சுகத்தையென் சொல்வேன்.

The field where grew the bliss of Sivam, that pure space I drew near. Weeding the weeds

of darkness, I then looked. Save the Lord's splendour I saw naught, Sister.

விகாயஞ் சிவானந்த பூமி—அந்த
வெட்ட வெளிநண்ணித் துட்ட விருளாங்
களையைக் களைந்துபின் பார்த்தேன்—ஐயன்
களையன்றி வேறென்றுங் கண்டிலன் தோழி.

The blissful light that assailed me, made me, — who am less than atom, — made me by His Grace, pure fulness that goeth not, nor cometh. Lo, how wonderful, dear!

தாக்குநல் லானந்த சோதி—அணு
தன்னிற் சிறிய வெளைத்தன் னருளாற்
போக்கு வரவற் றிருக்குஞ்—சுத்த
பூரண மாக்கினான் புதுமைகாண் மின்னே.

There thought was born, there thought died and became pure. All states are there, there too, I the seer stand non-dual.

சிந்தை பிறந்தது மாங்கே—அந்தச்
சிந்தை யிறந்து தெளிந்தது மாங்கே
எந்த நிலைகளு மாங்கே—கண்ட
யான்ரு னிரண்டற் றிருந்தது மாங்கே.

Is there a 'there' or a 'here' when thou hast seen the splendour of the *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* rise infinite and fill everywhere. Can there be said to be then a 'One' or a 'two'?

ஆங்கென்று மீங்கென்று முண்டோ—சச்சி
தானந்த சோதி யகண்ட வடிவாய்
ஓங்கி நிறைந்தது கண்டாற்—பின்ன
ரொன்றென் றிரண்டென் றுரைத்திட லாமோ.

—A Revel in Bliss.¹¹

Dr. Arno Lehmann of East Germany, who has translated the hymns of *Tāyumanavar* into German calls him "Prince of Tamil Mystics." Dr. Lehmann has also translated selections from the *Tevarams* of *Sambandhar*, *Tirunāvukarasar* and *Sundaramoorthy*.

Vaisnava Mystics

In the devotion of the *Ālvars* the emphasis is mostly on the Personal and the transcendental

beauty and charm of God. Their hymns speak of the ardent longing for the Lord. Their earnest longing is sometimes expressed in terms of pathological symptoms similar to those found in ordinary lovers, such as sending messengers, spending the whole night in expectation of the beloved and in the expression of ravishing joy felt by the seemingly actual embrace of the Lord. Though their psalms are full of deep emotional pathos, yet, there are moments where they rise to very great heights of transcendental delight. *Nammālvār* describes the transcendental nature of God Thus :

Thou art all animate and inanimate objects. Thou hast not the object that the schools of philosophy have. Language is not sufficient to describe Thee and the five senses are not capable of understanding Thee. Thy very form is knowledge. If the mind of any one is disconnected with matter and concentrated on Thee without wavering, any one can obtain liberation.¹⁶

யாவையும் எவரும் தானு யவரவர் சமயந் தோறும்
தோய்விலன் புலனைந் துக்கும் சொலப்படா னுணர்வின் மூர்த்தி
ஆவிசே ருயிரி லுள்ளா லாதுமோர் பற்றி லாத,
பாவனை யதனைக் கூடி லவனையும் கூட லாமே.

They saw God in everything and in the most intimate terms known to human relationship they sought to express the passionate hunger of heart for Him. *Kabīr Dās*, the *Vaisnava* mystic of North India, describes the Supreme thus :

O how may I ever express that secret word?
O how can I say He is not like this, and He is
Like that?

If I say that He is within me, the universe
is ashamed :

If I say that He is without me, it is falsehood.
He makes the inner and the outer worlds to be
indivisibly one ;

The conscious and the unconscious, both are His footstools.

He is neither manifest nor hidden, He is neither revealed nor unrevealed:

There are no words to tell that which He is.¹⁹

Bridal Mysticism

In the case of mystics like *Nammālvār*, *Tirumangai Ālvār*, *Āndāl* and *Mira Bai*, Bridal Mysticism or *Madhura Bhava* assumes an overwhelming importance. In their psalms we may find most of the pathological symptoms of amorous longing. The following *Tevāram* of *Appar* gives in a nut-shell the process of Bridal Mysticism or *Ātma Vivaha* as exemplified in the lives of the Hindu Mystics.

முன்னம் அவனுடைய நாமங் கேட்டாள்
 முர்த்தி அவனிருக்கும் வண்ணங் கேட்டாள்
 பின்னை யவனுடைய ஆரூர் கேட்டாள்
 பெயர்த்தும் அவனுக்கே பிச்சி யானாள்
 அன்னையையும் அத்தனையும் அன்றே நீத்தாள்
 அகன்றாள் அகலிடத்தார் ஆசா ரத்தைத்
 தன்னே மறந்தாள் தன்னுமங் கேட்டாள்
 தலைப்பட்டாள் நங்கை தலைவன் றுளே.

First she heard His name and obtained information as to His nature and Person; then she inquired about His native land. Immediately becoming passionately attached to Him, she abandoned her mother and father. Renouncing all worldly conventions, losing herself and her name, she started a life of dedicated service to His Feet.

St. Nammālvār's longing to be united with his beloved is well seen in the following psalms:²⁰

Oh, my swans of beautiful gait: You are very fortunate not to be parted from your consorts. Go you to Him who begged the world in the form of a dwarf. His ways are very mysterious.

Tell Him that a poor woman is sorrowful and repents of her foolishness and her sin is not yet quenched.

விதியினுற் பெடைமணக்கும் மென்னடைய வன்னங்காள்
மதியினுற் குறள்மாணு யுலகிரந்த கள்வர்க்கு
மதியிலேன் வல்வினையே மாளாதோ வென்றோருத்தி
மதியெலா முள்கலங்கி மயங்குமா லென்னீரே.

Oh, Thou morning ocean! why are thou restless; why dost thou toss thy waves day and night? Has sleep foresaken thee? Like unto me, dost thou too melt and long for Him who has caused fire to be set to Lanka? Peace be unto thee?

காமுற்ற கையறவோ டெல்லே இராப்பகல்
நீமுற்றக் கண்டுயிலாய் நெஞ்சருகி யேங்குதியால்
தீமுற்றத் தென்னிலங்கை யூட்டினுன் தாள்நயந்த
யாமுற்ற துற்றயோ வாழி கனைகடலே.

The spirit of self-surrender found among the *Ālvāsr* is different from that of the *Saiva* mystics. In them it melts down into the sweetness of passionate love. Its tender quality softens down to rapturous emotion of conjugal love. *Nammālvār* is the founder of *Prapatti*, the doctrine of Salvation by complete self-surrender. He adopted, as shown above, the *nāyaka-nāyaki bhāva* in his devotion. *Bhagavat Prēmā*, love for the Divine, is known in the West as Bridal Mysticism. *Prēmā* is different from *Kāma* though they appear to possess the same characteristics outwardly. *Prēmā* is unselfish love for the Divine. *Kāma* is the desire to possess a thing for one's own sense satisfaction. "Bridal Mysticism is spiritually fruitful and not morbid or quietistic. It is morbid and erotic only when divine love is humanized and brutalized; but when human love, especially the feminine instinct of love, is spiritualized and divinized, it is a miracle of mystic love."²¹

Sri Āndāl the celebrated *Vaisnava* female mystic very realistically describes with deep emotion her wish to be united with her Lord in conjugal terms. The following two stanzas out of the eleven which are in the form of a conversation with her maid give us an idea as to what heights she had gone in her *Prēmā* to be one with her Lord:²²

Oh; Maid dear, I dreamt that my beloved *Madhusudhanan*, came and grasped my hand, amidst the resounding music of drum and conch-shell, under a canopy decorated with garlands of pearls.

மத்தளங் கொட்ட வரிசங்கம் நின்றூத
முத்துடைத் தாம நிரைதாழ்ந்த பந்தற்கீழ்
மைத்துனன் நம்பி மதுகுதன் வந்துள்ளனைக்
கைத்தலம் பற்றக் கனககண்டேன் தோழிநான்.

Oh; Maid dear, I dreamt, my beloved *Narayanan*, mine not in this birth only, but in seven births, lifting my leg with his beautiful hands and placing it on the grinding stone.

இம்மைக்கு மேழேழ் பிறவிக்கும் பற்றுவான்
நம்மை யுடையவன் நாரா யணன்நம்பி
செம்மை யுடைய திருக்கையாற் தாள்பற்றி
அம்மி மிதிக்கக் கனககண்டேன் தோழிநான்.

In the Bridal Mysticism of the *Vaisnavas*, all devotees consider themselves as *Rādha* and *Sri Krishna* as the only Beloved. The sublimity of this conception is well illustrated by the following incident in the life of *Sri Mira Bhai*. *Mira*, when she reached the sacred town of *Brindāban*, was anxious to see *Sri Jivi Goswami*, the *Vaisnava* leader of the place. She went to his *ashrama* and expressed her desire to see him. But *Goswami* refused to permit her to come into his presence saying that he would not allow any woman into his presence. *Mirā Bāi* respectfully retorted "I thought that everybody in holy *Brindāban* was a woman and only *Girdhar Lal*

(*Sri Krishna*) a man. But today I learnt there are other males besides *Sri Krishna* in *Brindāban*.”

St. Mānickavāchakar's 'Tirukōvayar' is the most outstanding composition on the *Nāyaka-Nāyaki bhāva* devotion in Tamil language. Compositions known as '*Kuravanjis*' also deal with erotic mysticism. '*Tirukuttala Kuravanji*' is the most popular of its kind. Both these belong to the *Saiva* school of Mysticism.

Vātsalya Bhava (Mother Mysticism)

Apart from Bridal Mysticism, there is another type of mysticism called *Vātsalya Bhāva*, adoration of the Supreme as child. Among the *Ālvārs*, *Periālvār* adopted this method in the worship of *Sri Krishna*. *Sri Krishna* was worshipped as the child *Gōpāla* of *Gōkula*. In Bridal Mysticism, the devotee considers himself or herself as the bride betrothed to the Lord who is the spouse. In *Vātsalya Bhāva*, every devotee considers himself as the mother and God is treated as the child. In *Saivism* *Murukan* takes the place of *Sri Krishna*. This type of devotion has brought into Tamil Literature a type of composition known as *Pillai-Tamil*. In these compositions, the childhood of *Murukan* is divided into 10 stages or *Paruvams* and hymns are composed adoring Him at each stage praising the peculiar characteristic of that stage. The following are the stages:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Kāppu Paruvam</i>
காப்புப் பருவம் | Invoking gods to bless the child and protect it from danger. |
| 2. <i>Chengīrai Paruvam</i>
செங்கீரைப் பருவம் | The playful pranks of the child at the age of five months. |
| 3. <i>Thāla Paruvam</i>
தாலப் பருவம் | The stage at which the child listens to the lullabies. |
| 4. <i>Sappāny Paruvam</i>
சப்பாணிப் பருவம் | The playful clasping of hands by the child. |

5. *Muthap Paruvam* The period when the parents
முத்தப் பருவம் and others ask it to kiss them.
6. *Varukai Paruvam* The stage at which the child
வருகைப் பருவம் walks towards others.
7. *Ampuli Paruvam* Playing with the moon.
அம்புலிப் பருவம்
8. *Chittil Paruvam* Playing at building houses and
சிற்றில் பருவம் destroying them.
9. *Chiruparai Paruvam* Playing with a small drum.
சிறுபறைப் பருவம்
10. *Chiru Ter Paruvam* Constructing small toy cars
சிறுதேர்ப் பருவம் and playing with them.

Pillai-Tamil compositions are very late innovations into the Tamil language and this mode of devotion must have come into *Saivism* as a result of *Vaisnava* influence from the north.

Mysticism in Modern Hinduism

If religious life is to be a vital factor in social life, then mystics should form a part and parcel of the community. "If religion is a living truth, if it has any vitality, it must be capable of producing men, who from time to time bear witness to the truth and confirm and correct from their own experience the religious tradition. When the springs of experience dry up, our love for religion is a mere affectation, our faith a belief and our behaviour a habit with no reality behind it."²³ Modern Hinduism, true to its tradition, is not without its saints and has continued the mystic tradition. *Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahansa* is the greatest mystic of the 19th century. He harmonized in himself the two types of mysticism—devotional and transcendental. *Sri Ramana Maharishi* who passed away a few years ago, was a typical mystic of the purely

transcendental type. He exemplified in his life the *Upanishadic* realization of the union of the *Ātman* with *Brahman*, through the process of self-analysis. *Mahātma Gandhi* and *Swāmi Rāma Dās* who is still alive, belong to the class of *Vaisnava Bhaktas* who lose themselves in the joy of repeating God's name — *Rāma Nāma Japa*. *Sri Aurobindo Ghose* was a typical *Yōga* mystic.

There are scattered among the various provinces of India and Ceylon, many mystics, little known outside their immediate circles. Even small Jaffna has its own share in this respect. I cannot refrain from mentioning three outstanding mystics of Jaffna — *Kadaiyil Swāmigal*, *Chellappah Swāmigal* of Nallure and *Sri Chellachi Ammāh* of Chunnakam. These are the proofs to show that the Hindu mystical tradition is still alive in Hinduism in spite of its cultural, political and economic vicissitudes.

Swāmi Vivekānanda says:

Get the mercy of God and of His greatest children, these are the two chief ways to God. The company of these children of light is very hard to get; five minutes in their company will change a whole life, and if you really want it enough, one will come to you.

Every Hindu's religious ideal and hope are firmly built on the above truth.

References:

Chapter Nine

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2. *ibid* p. 55
3. *Tēvaram: Tirunāvukarasar*.

4. *Tiruvāchakam*, Translation: Dr. G. U. Pope, 275
5. *Tāyūmānavar*. [pp. XXXII - IV
6. *Tiruvāchakam*, Translation: Dr. G. U. Pope,
7. *Hymns of the Tamil Saiva Saints*, p. 125
8. *ibid* p. 89
9. *Tiruvāchakam*, Translation: Dr. G. U. Pope, 296
10. *Studies and Translations—Philosophical and Religious*, p. 162
11. *ibid* p. 166
12. *ibid* p. 167
13. *Tiruvāchakam*, Translation: Dr. G. U. Pope, 351
14. *Tāyūmānavar*.
15. *Psalms of a Saiva Saint*, p. 98
16. *Psalms of a Saiva Saint*, p. 93
17. *Studies and Translations—Philosophical and Religious*, pp. 184, 188, 189, 190
18. *Tiruvāimoli*, Translation: 65
19. *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, p. 9
20. *Tiruvāimoli*, Translation: p. 25
21. *Mystics and Mysticism*, p. 327
22. *Nālāyira Pirapantham*
23. *Great Indians*, p. 61

Chapter Ten

HINDU VIEW OF ETHICS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Ethics is the science of moral conduct. It is a field of knowledge which deals with the principles which guide man's conduct towards himself and others. The behaviour of individuals is generally conditioned by three factors—physiological, psychological and spiritual or religious. The conduct and behaviour of primitive man was closer to the animal world and was conditioned by his physical needs. His desires and urges were circumscribed by the factors of hunger, sleep and reproduction. His emotions generally centred round these instincts and he felt happy or contented only when these were satisfied. The culture of primitive man may be said to be very low in the scale of values and is more body conscious than otherwise. If ever he attempted to think of a supernatural being, it was for the purpose of self-preservation. Fear of physical harm or illness or death made him seek the aid of an unseen power which, he thought existed behind the objective world and conditioned all unusual phenomena. If he possessed a theory of ethics, it was also governed by rules and motives which were purely selfish and environmental.

With the advancement of civilization and culture, man began to look beyond his immediate physical needs and became aware of a mind and discovered

tendencies within himself which were more abiding and powerful than his physical needs. He gradually developed the capacity to look within himself and behind nature, and discovered powers which transcended the physical laws of cause and effect. As a result of this introspective and analytic method of observation and experience, he learnt the art of subordinating the physical to the psychical, and thereby gave a secondary place to the physical. His conduct and behaviour then began to be guided more by the needs of his psychic personality. This changed outlook brought into existence the various avenues of knowledge and arts and techniques which have helped man to evolve towards advanced stages of culture and civilization.

The ups and downs of life, the unforeseen havocs of destruction wrought by nature, the impermanent character of physical existence, the destruction of his nearest and dearest by the inevitable phenomenon of death, all contributed towards his search for a state which was not subject to the laws of change and destruction. This made him to discover within himself a reality or a substance which survived death and which controlled the activities of the body. This realization gradually brought into existence the various forms of religious beliefs, doctrines, dogmas and philosophies. Frustration and disappointment always compelled man to seek the aid of the unseen power which he thought was the cause of whatever happened without the aid of human agency.

In the history of thought, we find a conflict between materialistic realism and spiritual idealism. The desire to live in the world and enjoy the pleasures of life, with the aid of the knowledge that man has acquired, and the desire to transcend the finite experience of worldly pleasures and attain

a state of pure Peace and Bliss, have divided humanity into two warring groups—those who desire to tread the path of the Spirit and those who follow the way of the flesh. In the lives of the nations, one of these tendencies in turn asserts itself more powerfully than the other. A period of luxury and comfort generally brings about a moral and religious decadence. This in turn compels the leaders of thought to endeavour to resuscitate spiritual values and arrest the moral decline. When spiritual life and values lose their significance and become mechanical and lifeless, a desire for material wellbeing and prosperity revives. Such has been the cyclic law of progress and decline in social evolution throughout history. It is the belief of the Hindus that when the moral and spiritual values decline and men descend to a low level of human existence, the divine law personifies itself in a man and tries to lead the people back to divine awareness and make them live a spiritual life.

The ethical behaviour of man is always controlled by the nature of his ideology and the state of his cultural advancement. As man evolves towards civilization, his ethical concepts also change. Primitive man, because of his physical nature or character, was more selfish and his loyalties seldom went beyond himself and his family. The civilized citizen, as a result of his intellectual and cultural progress, is prepared to understand his fellow beings and extend his loyalties beyond his family. The man of spiritual tendencies seeks oneness with all beings and attempts to practise universal love. Self-sacrifice and renunciation become the foremost virtue of the man of the spirit.

The different outlooks create different types of activities and ethical standards. When the motive of action at the various levels of culture is different,

the ethical rules governing such conduct also vary from stage to stage. A way of life which has for its purpose the attainment of moral purity for the realization of religious ideals, will entail on the individual concerned, an ethical standard of a spiritual character. But this cannot be said about the ethical conduct of those for whom social, economic and political aims are important. Behaviour changes from age to age according to circumstances and social environment. In the history of social evolution, different ideologies and ethical standards were prominent at various epochs. During the early period of human history when the priests and everything connected with priestly institutions dominated the social life of the people, ethical virtue centred round acquiring merit by pleasing them and promoting their well-being. It was the same case later when kings and emperors became powerful and extracted obedience and loyalty from the people. Even priests and religious institutions submitted to them. The king was considered the representative of God on earth and the embodiment of the divine will. Loyalty to his will was the highest form of virtue. No one dared to question his action. But today, the ideals of monarchy and social and political institutions founded on it have almost disappeared. Today, human individuality is subordinated to the collective good of the state. The individual is an insignificant entity. He is looked after and cared for only for the sake of the state. Now, social and political ideologies are more state-centred than man-centred. To suit the changing conditions of the times, our conception of right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice is also gradually undergoing change. Religious life and religious experience are not considered essential elements for the smooth functioning of a modern state. Religion is considered a relic

of primitive culture and as a factor which disturbs the social and political equilibrium. Modern psychology has no need for a soul. It has externalized man and has made him a slave of his environment. Dialectical materialism and a communistic state based on it have no room for a God. The terms *Nirvana*, 'Kingdom of God', 'The mystic Path', *Mōksha* and *Jīvan Mukti*, 'Renunciation and Self-Sacrifice' are meaningless phrases without any social or economic value in the eye of the so-called cultured man of today. Therefore, it is a vain search to discover in the ethical life of the individual of today, the ideas and ideals which shaped the aspirations and ideals of the people of ancient India and those of the middle ages of Europe.

Mr. C. E. M. Joad, has very aptly described the culture of today as the 'stomach-and-pocket view of life.' Everything is valued from the point of view of the stomach and the size of one's pocket. Our values have changed and with them our standard of ethics. Writing about the cultural climate of our age, Mr. Joad, observes: "Here, then is an age which is without beliefs in religion, without standard in morals, without convictions in politics, without values in art. I doubt if there has ever been an age which was so completely without standards or values. ...They are, I am, convinced, disastrous. I have remarked that the modern generation suffers from a fund of unexpended seriousness. I now add that it suffers from a repressed need to believe. Its agnosticism, in short, is not only wide-spread, but wistful. Tell us what to think, and how to act; tell us, in a word, how we are to be saved. Such has been the unspoken plea of the last ten years. It is only today, that the need is coming into consciousness, and begins to find articulate expression. Now a life without standards or values, a life de-

void of beliefs, is par excellence a bored and a boring life; and this generation is par excellence a bored generation. A parable of Oscar Wilde puts the point far better than I could hope to do."

"The parable recounts how, shortly after His ascension, Jesus comes down from heaven in the shape of a dove to visit the world and see how it has fared since He left it. As He is descending to earth, He glances through the window of an attic and sees a man lying on his bed, racked with headache, the result of an overnight drunken debauch. 'What on earth is the matter with you' asked Jesus, 'that you spend your time getting drunk?' 'Lord, I was sick and you healed me' replies the man. 'What else was I to do?' As He alights in the streets, still in the shape of a dove, Jesus sees another man, running after a painted harlot. He asks him, 'Have you nothing better than this to do with yourself?' 'Lord, I was blind and you gave me sight,' returns the man. 'What else was I to do?' Jesus sees a third man, cursing and weeping and bemoaning his lot. 'And what, pray, is the trouble with you' asks Jesus. 'Lord,' he replies, 'I was dead and you raised me. What else am I to do?'"

The man of science who is in search of a soul has not yet found it. The cultured intellectual is still in search of the one thing which is good and worth-while, in terms of which he could evaluate everything else. Then, what shall we say of the ordinary man who is overpowered by power politics and dazed by the glamour of the so-called cultured man's life?

In the study of ethics in relation to conduct, we should be prepared to differentiate between social ethics and spiritual ethics. When the motive of action at the various levels of culture is different,

the ethical conduct cannot be the same. Ethical conduct which aims at spiritual perfection only has an absolute value and is uniform throughout the various stages of life irrespective of environment conditioned by social and economic factors.

Hindu View of Ethics

Hinduism has nothing to do with any race, language or nation. It is neither *Āryan* nor *Dravidian*. It is a synthesis of all the spiritual elements of the cultural groups of India so arranged and systematized as to guide man towards spiritual freedom. It is the only religion in the world which is prepared to assimilate spiritual truths wherever found. This inherent quality is the reason for its undying continuity and vitality in spite of the various vicissitudes both internal and external. Its dogmas and doctrines, like science, have no geographical boundaries. Scientific laws discovered anywhere in the world are common to all, though the names by which such laws are known to belong to particular countries. Similarly, no single individual or group or set has a copyright to religious truths. They are the common heritage of the world. A student of social evolution, should study the Hindu social synthesis in the light of what we have stated.

Dharma

The Hindu conception of Ethics is based on the concept of *Dharma*. Ethics is known as *Dharma* in Sanskrit and *Aram* in Tamil. *Dharma* is the principle which gives form and pattern to a thing. According to Hinduism everything in the world moves according to Divine Law and this law is called *Dharma*. The religion of the Hindu is also known as *Sanātana Dharma*, the eternal *Dharma* which leads man towards spiritual perfection or

union with God. Not only has every individual his or her own *Dharma*, but everything has a purpose and pattern according to which it evolves. When the *Dharma* of a thing is obstructed, the thing itself is destroyed.

Hinduism is a way of life and not a bundle of beliefs and dogmas. Institutionalism is only an aid and not an end in itself. If a Hindu leads a life true to his evolutionary stage or attainment, he will ultimately reach final emancipation. Every individual has a purpose and the fulfilment of this purpose is the aim of life. Man through his individual and collective activities is moving towards the realization of the aim of life. A state of manifoldness is the world. Unity or oneness is the aim of the spiritual life. Whatever is conducive to the promotion of unity is in conformity with *Dharma*. All activity which divides and separates is *Adharma*. In the way of life of the Hindus this distinction reigns supreme. Whatever helps spiritual fellowship and understanding is *Dharma*. Whatever is wordly, in the sense of promoting self-interest, in any sphere of activity, belongs to the realm of *Adharma* or ignorance. Therefore individual events, actions and conduct, as such, have no virtue or evil in themselves. They are good or bad from the standpoint of the ultimate good or the realization of Unity or Perfection. Even good actions can be bonds and barriers for spiritual progress. Virtue is a means to an end. The end is the attainment of Self-purification. When virtue is practised as an end in itself, it will develop into a monotonous habit and sicken the mind and soul of the individual concerned. Virtue is necessary to neutralize vice, good is essential to combat or overcome evil. But both should be transcended if we are to attain

nue to exist as an independent category. The Christian dualistic doctrine of Good and Evil is traceable to the influence of Babylonian and Assyrian influence on Jewish religious thought. St. Augustine, influenced by Greek thought, taught that everything in the world is good. Even that which appears to be evil to us is actually good in that it fits into the whole pattern of the universe. He held the view that absolute evil cannot originate from God who is all Good and Perfect. Evil therefore, is relative for St. Augustine. Aquinas follows Augustine and holds that the goodness or badness of a particular action depends upon the aim or purpose of the actor. However, he does not hold with Augustine that an evil act may be good if the actor intended it to be so. Intention will not make, according to Aquinas, a bad act good.

To the qualified-monists good and evil come from God. Evil to them is also a divine element which exists for the growth of man towards perfection. To *Sri Ramānuja*, *Asat* or Matter is an Attribute of God. In the *Tēvaram* it is said:

Thou art Error and Thou art Virtue.

குற்றம் நீ குணங்கள் நீ

In the *Thiruvāchakam*, it is said:

For Him Who is the *Vedam* and the Sacrifice;
 For Him Who is the *Falsehood* and the *Truth*;
 For Him Who is the Splendour and the *Gloom*:
 For him Who is *Affliction* and Delight;
 For Him Who is the Half, Who is the Whole;
 For Him Who is the *Bond* and the *Release*;
 For Him Who is the First, Who is the Last;
 Dancing, pound we the sacred dust of Gold.³

வேதமும் வேள்வியு மாயினுர்க்கு

மெய்ம்மையும் பொய்ம்மையு மாயினுர்க்குச்

சோதியு மாயிரு ளாயினுர்க்குத்

துன்பமு மாயின்ப மாயினுர்க்குப்

பாதியு மாய்முற்று மாயினுர்க்குப்
 பந்தமு மாய்விடு மாயினுருக்
 காதியு மந்தமு மாயினுருக்
 காடப்பொற் சுண்ண மிடித்துநாமே.

To Meister Eckhart, the good life is one which strives to return to the divine unity and become one with God. He writes: "Whoever would see God, must be dead to himself and buried in God, in the unrevealed desert Godhead, to become again what he was before he was." The good life for Eckhart, then, is not one of deeds but of being. We do not attain goodness by striving to do good. We reach that which is perfect goodness by losing ourselves in the unity of God.⁴

To the monist or transcendentalist both good and evil are states due to ignorance or *Avidya* and they should be transcended.

In theism every act which takes us nearer to God is good and everything that takes us away from God is evil. To the monist everything which helps the realization of identity with the Supreme is good and everything that separates and emphasizes the self or ego is evil. Therefore, acts by themselves have no inherent quality of goodness or evil in them. Killing is evil and is a sin according to the religious concept. But one who is born a fisherman or a hunter can only live by killing. Taking intoxicants is prohibited as a sin, but if prescribed as a medicine, the use of it cannot be considered a sin. Killing a man is a sin according to ethical standards. But killing a man in an attempt to defend righteousness cannot be interpreted as sin. The *Bhagavad Gīta* maintains that wars for self-aggrandizement is *Adharma*. But according to it, a war to establish Righteousness or *Dharma* is not an evil. *Tirōthāna*, and *Tiruarul* are both powers of *Siva*.

A man who desires to wash the dirt in his body applies soap, but washes away the lather before he finishes the bath. No one goes out of the bath-room with the lather, because it is also foreign to the body like dirt. If the lather is allowed to dry on the body, then, it will become dirt again. It is the same with good and evil. They are relative conditions and not absolute in themselves. Hindu ethics is built on this fundamental conception about good and evil. There is no absoluteness in the ethical conduct or nature of man in Hinduism. It varies according to circumstances connected with the spiritual advancement of individuals. This elasticity or relativeness has given room to all kinds of misunderstanding about the Hindus and their ethical philosophy.

Varnāshrama Dharma

The *Varnāshrama Dharma* of the *Shāstras* is not the present decadent caste system and the tyranny of untouchability connected with it. The caste rules of the middle ages and of modern Hindu India are an aberration from the true ideal of *Varnāshrama Dharma*. *Varna* classification was meant to help the gradual evolution of the people towards a spiritual democracy based on higher values. It had no aim of providing economic affluence for the enjoyment of unlimited sense pleasures. The classification has in view only the realization of spiritual values and every other aspect or aim in life is subordinated to it. Whether such a view of life is right or wrong is not our purpose here to discuss. What we like to state is that we should judge the system from its original point of view and not criticize it from another angle. Consolidation and progress of society for the purpose of fostering spiritual values is the aim of *Varnāshrama Dharma*.

Varnāshrama Dharma is the way of life which is imposed on those whose aim in life is the attainment of spiritual freedom. It is the only way open to all those who aspire after the Kingdom of God. Mahatma Gandhi writes: "I shall believe in *Varnāshrama Dharma*. *Varnāshrama Dharma* to my mind is the law which, however much you and I may deny, cannot be abrogated. To admit the working of that law is to free ourselves for the only pursuit in life for which we are born. *Varnāshrāma Dharma* is humility. Whilst I have said that all men and women are born equal, I do not wish therefore to suggest that qualities are not inherited. But on the contrary I believe that just as every one inherits a particular form so does he inherit the particular characteristics and qualities of his progenitors, and to make this admission is to conserve one's energy. That frank admission, if he will act up to it, would put a legitimate curb upon our material ambitions, and thereby our energy is set free for extending the fields of spiritual research and spiritual evolution. It is this doctrine of *Varnāshrama Dharma* which I have always accepted."⁶

Note the statement. '*Varnāshrama Dharma is humility.*' To practise the rules and laws of *Varnāshrama* we require humility. We should surrender our self-interest to the ideal of spiritual realization. *Varnāshrama* is the ladder by which man ascends to a life of non-attachment and holy living. "Of all the animal creation of God, man is the only animal who has been created in order that he may know his maker. Man's aim in life is not therefore to add from day to day to his material prospects and to his material possessions but his predominant calling is from day to day to come nearer his own maker, and from this definition it was that the *rishis* of old discovered this law of our being. You will realize

that if all of us follow this law of *Varna* we would limit our material ambition, and our energy would be set free for exploring those vast fields whereby and where-through we can know God.”⁶

Hindu social life and its activities are based on the rules of *Varnāshrama Dharma*. “The rules of propriety and impropriety, marriage ceremonies and funeral rites, rituals and ceremonies, amusements and occupations, professions and industries, nay all the details of social life, must be in perfect harmony with the laws and customs which have been handed down through generations to the communities of today. These social laws are called ‘*Jāti Dharma*,’ or the duties of a *Jāti* or community. Each clan family, from the lowest *Pariah* to the highest Brahmin, is guided and governed by the *Jāti Dharma*.”⁷ The aim of life according to the *Dharma Shāstras* is the attainment of *Mōksha* through *Dharma*, *Artha*, and *Kāma*. The four ends of life are *Dharma*—righteous living, *Artha*—aquirement of wealth by right means, *Kāma*—pursuit of pleasure with the purpose of sublimating emotions and controlling passions so that through unselfish love and renunciation, man may transcend his finiteness and attain Freedom or *Mōksha*.

The ideal of *Varnāshrama* is to evolve the Brahmin or the man of Wisdom. The ideal Brahman is one who lives a life of spiritual consecration. He is fully engaged in the pursuit of spiritual values and endeavours to live a life of dedication, self-sacrifice and universal love. The *Gītā* describes the duties of the four orders as follows:

The control of the mind and the senses, austerity, purity, forbearance and also uprightness, knowledge, realization, belief in a hereafter,—these are the duties of the *Brahmanas*, born of their own nature.

Prowess, boldness, fortitude, dexterity, and also not flying from battle, generosity and sovereignty are the duties of the *Kshatriyas*, born of their own nature.

Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the *Vaishyas*, born of their own nature; and action consisting of service is the duty of the *Shūdras*, born of their own nature.⁸

In the '*Tirukural*' the ideal Brahmin is described thus :

It is saintly men that are to be called Brahmins; for it is they that have compassion on all life. Even the Vedas if forgotten can be learnt again: but once fallen from virtuous conduct, the Brahmin is fallen from his place for ever.⁹

அந்தண ரென்போ ரறவோர்மற் றெவ்வுயிர்க்குஞ்
செந்தண்மை பூண்டொழுக லான்.

மறப்பினு மோத்துக் கொளலாகும் பார்ப்பான்
பிறப்பொழுக்கங் குன்றக் கெடும்.

It is said in the '*Dhammapāda*':¹⁰

Him I call a Brahmin who does not hurt by body, speech, or mind, who is controlled in these three things.

Him I call a Brahmin who is free from anger, who is careful of religious duties, observes the moral rules, pure, controlled, and wears his last body.

Him I call a Brahmin who, like water on the leaf of a lotus or a mustard seen on the point of an awl, does not cling to pleasures.

Not by matted hair, not by lineage, not by caste does one become a Brahmin. He is a Brahmin in whom there are truth and righteousness. He is blessed.

Āshrama Dharma

The division of the life of an individual into stages is known as *Āshrama Dharma*. The first stage

is that of the *Brahmachari*, the student; the second is that of the *Grhastha*, the householder; the third is that of the *Vānaprastha*, the man who is exclusively devoted to religious practices or *Tapas*; the fourth is the *Sannyāsin*, the man of spiritual freedom or one who has attained *Mōksha* or liberation or *Jīvan Mukthi*. Even householders can attain *Jīvan Mukthi*.

Hinduism does not insist on a life of absolute celibacy for the attainment of spiritual illumination. It does not believe in any permanent feud between the human world of natural desires and social aims and the spiritual life with its religious disciplines. It condemns only worldly desires which are not conducive to a spiritual life. It insists on the individual leading a natural life and evolving towards perfection by stages. There may be exceptions to this which are also recognized. Spiritual perfection is not a denial or a negation of life lived according to the laws of nature. It is a fulfilment of the natural law or *Dharma* which is directing all towards the ideal of spiritual emancipation. Although worldly experiences are not permanent, yet, they are indispensable for the higher evolutionary process of man. "The eternal is manifested in the temporal, and the latter is the pathway to the former." According to Hinduism, the temporal and the eternal are two aspects of the same thing. They cannot be separated into water-tight compartments. What is expected is a correct evolution of their relationship and interdependence.

Sex and Marriage

Here, I like to make a few observations on sex and marriage in Hinduism. Sex in Hinduism is not a sin nor is it an offshoot of sin. God created the world out of love. Multiplication is a Divine Act.

Sex is the divine urge in man to multiply following the example of God, and on it depends the whole process of human evolution towards emancipation. The life of the householder is praised in all the *Dharma Shāstras* as the mainstay of all social and religious activities. A man is not debarred from spiritual realization while living as a householder. Socrates lived with his wife and led the life of a householder. The *Rishis* of the Upanishads were all householders. The majority of the *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* saints were householders. Self-control does not mean the destruction of the five senses but the rational and natural use of them for the development of the higher powers of man which are latent. If a man attempts to control his senses by destroying their natural functions, he will only end his life in a lunatic asylum or in an invalids' home.

St. Tiruvalluvar describes the householder thus: "If a man fulfilleth aright the duties of the householder, where is the need for him to take up other duties. Among those that seek after salvation the greatest are they who lead a virtuous family life. Behold the householder, who helpeth others in the observance of their vows and who leadeth a virtuous life him-self, he is holier than the austere ones themselves."¹¹

Rational sex is not prohibited by the *Dharma Shāstras*. Only over-indulgence in sex is denounced. Modern society has lost this fundamental view of sex. Sex, like hunger, is an instinct and is essential for the well-being of man and society. When hunger is misused by gluttony, the result is disease. Similarly, misuse of sex will bring not only disease but also moral and spiritual degradation. Observe the animal and see how they live their lives according to the laws of nature. It is man, who because of

his free-will, perverts his natural urges under false pretext and ends his life in misery and disease.

Woman in Hindu Society

Another great misconception is about the status of woman in Hindu Society. Foreigners and especially missionaries who have noticed the social life of the Hindus during their period of decadence round about the 18th and 19th centuries, have spread outside India an opinion that in Hindu society a woman occupies the place of a slave. She is represented as a household drudge meant to serve the sex instinct of man. This opinion still lingers in some places. There may be found references in ascetic literature of an extreme type where woman and sex are denounced. But such attitudes are also found in the ascetic mysticism of the Christian Middle Ages. Ascetic theology in Christianity definitely considers sex and marriage as sin.

Hinduism is the only religion in the world which worships God in the form of Mother. According to Christianity sin came into the world through a woman. But, in Hinduism, the Grace of God manifests for the good of mankind as *Parāsakti*, the Divine Mother. You are all aware that *Sāktism*—the worship of God as Mother—is a sect of Hinduism. One aspect of *Siva* according to *Saivism*, is known as *Ardhanārēswarar*. The right-half represents the Father Aspect and the left half represents the Mother Aspect. All *Siva* images are made with a *Kundalam* in the right ear, and a *Tōdu* in the left ear, to symbolize the male and female aspects in one and the same image. Worship is not offered to Pure *Siva*. *Siva* with *Sakti* is the aspect in which *Siva* is worshipped.

Hindu books of ethics extol the mother above every one else. She is compared to a temple.

'There is no greater temple than the mother,' says the grand old lady *Auvai* of Tamil Nad. The ideal of every woman is mother-hood. Mother's love is considered the highest form of love in human relationship.

Second to the mother, the wife occupies pride of place in the Hindu home. She is an equal partner with man. The husband is forbidden to perform any religious rite without the wife sharing in it. No priest can perform his duties and officiate in temple ceremonies or social ceremonies unless he is married. The wife is called in the *Dharma Shāstras* as *Saha Dharmini* and *Dharma Pattini*, one who shares in the performance of *Dharma*. *Sīta*, *Savitri*, *Damayanti*, *Nalāyani*, *Arundhati*, *Tilagavathyār*, *Mangaiyarkarasiār*, *Karaiikāl Ammaiār*, *Shakuntala* are the ideal women of Hindu culture. In them the Hindu conception of wife-hood attained its highest. Their names shall remain cherished as long as the Hindu conception of a wife lasts. *Manu*, the Hindu Law giver says:

Women must be honoured and adored by their fathers, husbands, brothers, brothers-in-law, who desire their own welfare. Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are dishonoured, no sacred rites yield rewards.

Where female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers.

(*Chapt: III. 55, 56, 57*).

The *Mahābhārata* defines a wife thus:

A sweetly speaking wife is a companion,
In solitude, a father in advice,
A mother in all seasons of distress,
A rest in passing through life's wilderness.

The '*Tirukural*' describes the grandeur and noble characteristics of an ideal wife in one chapter of ten verses thus:

What is there that is grander than woman, when she is strong in the strength of her chastity? All other blessings turn to nought if the wife faileth in wifely virtues.

பெண்ணிற் பெருந்தக்க யாவுள கற்பென்னுந்
திண்மையுண் டாகப் பெறின்.
மனைமாட்சி இல்லாள்க னில்லாயின் வாழ்க்கை
எனைமாட்சித் தாயினு மில்.

It is said in '*Moothurai*':

The home is truly blessed in all
Where wife obeys Duty's call:
Bear garden 'tis where she gives vent,
The Shrew, to fury turbulent.

இல்லா ளகத்திருக்க இல்லாத தொன்றில்லை
இல்லாளு மில்லாளே யாமாயின்—இல்லாள்
வலிகிடந்த மாற்ற முரைக்குமே லவ்வில்
புலிகிடந்த தூரூய் விடும்.

The '*Araneri-Chāram*' says:

The house-wife beloved, and one-self
The two together yoked, must draw the cart; by
The chariot of domestic virtue pure [one alone,
Onward rolls not, but standeth still.

மருவிய காதல் மனையாளுந் தானும்
இருவரும் பூண்டுய்ப்பி னல்லால்—ஒருவரால்
இல்வாழ்க்கை யென்னும் இயல்புடைய வான்சகடம்
செல்லாது தெற்றிற்று நின்று.

In short, Hindu culture gives woman a place of absolute equality in all social and religious matters subject to the limitations of her physiological and psychological make-up.

To come back to the *Āshramas*, the ideal of social classification is to evolve the man of spiritual wis-

dom. The purpose of the four *Āshramas* also is to transform the individual gradually into a spiritual personality. The *sannyāsin* is the ideal for every Hindu. Not a *sannyāsin* in form and external appearance but a *sannyāsin* who has renounced all 'I-ness' and 'My-ness' in life. He is a true *sannyāsin* wherever he may live, who has transcended good and evil, vice and virtue, and has attained the Supreme Beatitude.

Duties

The Hindu *Dharma Shāstras* very clearly describe the duties of the various social groups and the individuals according to their *Āshrama*. Above all these, they also clearly lay down the fundamental moral rules which everyone should follow irrespective of social and individual circumstances. Rules which relate to the *Varnāshrama* and *Āshrama* are relative and are applicable to the particular situation or condition only. The violation of such rules is not a sin in the moral or spiritual sense. A Brahmin should perform the rites and duties prescribed for him if he wishes to retain his Brahminhood or his place in society as a member of the group. Punishment for violation of social rules is excommunication. According to the *Shāstras* everyone is born into the world as ordinary human beings and attain social and religious ranks after *upanayanam* or initiation. Initiation entitles the person concerned to perform all socio-religious rites.

The five great sins—*pancha-mahā-pāthakams*—which are prohibited and the committing of which will corrupt a man morally and spiritually are: Killing (கொலை), Theft (களவு), Intoxicants (கள்), Lust (காமம்) and Anger (கோபம்). Some texts mention disrespect and disloyalty to one's *guru* (குருநிந்தை) as the fifth. The violation of the rules of *Varna* and *Āshrama*

Dharmas will only make people lose their social or economic position, but will not convert them into sinners. The committing of any of the moral sins, will damage the moral life of an individual and retard his spiritual progress. *St. Tāyumanavar* says:

Thy Grace can be won only by abandoning killing, theft, intoxicants lust and anger, Oh: Supreme.

கொலைகளவு கட்காமம் கோபம்விட் டாலன்றே
மலையிலக்கா நின்னருடான் வாய்க்கும் பராபரமே.

Āpath Dharma

Although, it is incumbent on all to observe their *kula dharma* or caste rules, and the *ashrama* rules, yet, the *Shāstras* give room for the non-performance of them in extraordinary circumstances. Such actions are called *Āpath Dharma*—emergency conduct. Adaptation to the changes of environment is the law of life. Any organism which fails to adjust itself to its environment will die. The Hindu law givers knew this principle and have permitted changes in the social rules. Different *Smrtis* were compiled to suit the various social and geographical conditions of the various parts of Hindu India. “Though *Dharma* is absolute, it has no absolute and timeless content. The only thing eternal about morality is man’s desire for the better. But time and circumstances determine the ‘better’ in each situation. We cannot elevate social conventions into absolute rules, without taking into account the concrete attendant circumstances. There is no positive human action that can be pronounced a priori to be absolutely right or wrong, wholly without regard to the circumstances in which it is done.”¹² *Tiruvalluvar* has the following in his chapter on Truthfulness:

Even false-hood is of the nature of truth if it bringeth forth unmixed good.

பொய்ம்மையும் வாய்மை யிடத்த புரைதீர்ந்த
நன்மை பயக்கு மெனின்.

The falsehood that is contemplated in this verse is the untruth that even the most virtuous of men will not flinch from uttering when an innocent victim has to be rescued from death, cruelty or dishonour about to be inflicted by ruffians, and when there is no other means of saving him from the same."¹²

Humanism and Religion

It has become a sign of progress and culture to talk of service to others as religion. This is a cheap substitute for religion for those who are unwilling and unprepared to make the sacrifice which real religion demands. Service is a means and not an end in itself. If service is taken as an end in itself, it will only develop in us self-importance. Because of the conflict between scientific materialism and religious dogmatism, humanism has gained ascendancy in Western thought. It is no doubt gaining ground in the East as well. Humanism is today a formidable rival to religion as understood in terms of mysticism. Very many educated people in the world are prepared to call Humanism their religion. Religious humanism is a view which does not consider belief in God and in the transcendental spiritual experience vital to religion, a view in which interest in human values is central. It is purely man-centred and not God-centred.

Social service is good and useful if it can kill in the spiritual aspirant his 'I-ness' and 'My-ness.' If it fails to achieve this, it will be the greatest snare to bind us to an ego-centric life. Hinduism preaches the great truth that one should adopt social service as a religious *sādhana* but transcend it for the realization of Final Beatitude. That is the universal teaching of all religions which emphasize

mystical transcendence as the goal of religion. The lives and teachings of all the saints and mystics both of the East and the West, are in keeping with this great ideal.

If Thou wouldst make me do service to Thy devotees
In true spirit, the Beatific Vision, will come by Itself.
Oh, Supreme.

—*Tāyumanāvar*

அன்பர்பணி செய்யவேளை யாளாக்கி விட்டுவிட்டால்
இன்பநிலை தானேவந் தெய்தும் பராபரமே.

Society and Higher Values

Living a life of devotion to God and service to fellow man form an essential part of a Hindu's daily life, and the structure of society and the religious rites are so arranged to help him to realize the higher values of life. A society in which man cannot practise the virtues which are fundamental to a good life, is absolutely worthless. The sooner it is destroyed or changed, the better it is for humanity. The world cannot have an independent purpose other than that of providing man with the possibilities of perfecting himself. Games are meant for man to develop his physique. They are not for the improvement of the playground. If the playground fails to serve the purpose for which it is meant, the sooner it is converted into a paddy-field, the better for all concerned. Society and social rules are meant to make us better beings. Religion is meant to make us saints. What we do after attaining spiritual emancipation is a matter connected with the Divine Will. We should resolutely give Him our heart and empty it of everything else, so that He may take ours and put in whatever He pleases. This is the aim of all religious experience in Hinduism and what it preaches

very emphatically is "Know the Truth and It shall make you Free."

'*Tirukural*'

I cannot conclude this subject better than by making a reference to the immortal work of *St. Tiruvalluvar* in Tamil. The ethical and moral concepts of the ancient Tamils of 2000 years ago are systematically treated in the '*Tirukural*.' I do not think that there exists in any language a book on ethics equal to '*Tirukural*.' *Tiruvalluvar* has given to the world a work to which in perfection of form, profundity of thought, nobleness of sentiment, and earnestness of moral purpose, very few books, outside the grand scriptures of humanity, can at all be compared." The '*Kural*' can be adopted as a text-book on morals by all the religious sects of the world. There is nothing narrow or sectarian about it which is revolting to any religionist. The approach of *Tiruvalluvar* to the problems of life are practical in application and eclectic in form. If a country or a nation is to be judged by its moral and spiritual insight, then the Tamils will undoubtedly occupy a unique place. Mr. E. W. Hopkins writing about the '*Ethics of India*,' makes the following observation; "He (author) has written the book not to sustain any ethical, philosophical, or religious dogmas, but to exhibit the ethical teachings of the ancient Hindus, feeling confident, that it will be a pleasure to many and a grief to none to know that truthfulness, generosity, kindness of heart, purity of soul, forgiveness, and compassion were taught in India as every day precepts long before the Christian Era."¹⁴ '*Kural*' is a book belonging to the first century before Christ, and it has been accepted by all Tamils, irrespective of their creed, as the standard book on Ethics. It may be said that '*Tiru-*

kural' contains the quintessence of the moral and ethical philosophy of Hinduism. Very many consider it as the *Tamil-Vedam* and give a place equal to that of the four Sanskrit Vedas. *Sri Rājagopāl-āchāriar* commenting on *Tiruvalluvar* says: "Tiruvalluvar was one of those rare and great men whose catholic spirit rose above all denominations and whose vision was not clouded by dogma or prejudice of any kind. His approach to moral doctrine is marked by a very thorough knowledge of human psychology, and a desire to help imperfect men with practical hints in the struggle against evil. Throughout we can see how the poet and saint brings everything down to the level of practicality without losing hold of the ideal."¹⁵

CONCLUSION

I have outlined in the course of the ten studies the fundamental doctrines, dogmas and philosophy of Hinduism as I understand them in the light of modern thought. All Truths are eternal and universal. But they have to be understood and interpreted in the context of the traditional religious culture and learning of the age and environment in which the people live. Mystical experience is beyond thought and verbal description. When the mystics attempt to interpret their experience, they always use the language and form of the religious culture in which they are brought up. This has been the case throughout history in all lands. Buddha may be said to be an exception to this. He only chalked out the way to the attainment of *Nirvāna* and refused to be drawn into any discussion concerning the transcendental experience, because of the fact that all descriptions about it are misleading. Bertrand Russell writes: "The definite beliefs at which mystics arrive are the result of reflection

upon the inarticulate experience gained in the moment of insight. Often beliefs which have no real connection with this moment become subsequently attracted into the central nucleus; thus in addition to the convictions which all mystics share, we find, in many of them, other convictions of a more local and temporary character, which no doubt become amalgamated with what was essentially mystical in virtue of their subjective certainty. We may ignore such inessential accretions, and confine ourselves to the beliefs which all mystics share."¹⁶

In the study of religions, therefore, we should try to grasp the fundamental truths which are universal and not waste time and energy in trying to reconcile the local and the temporal with the eternal and the universal. No one can reconcile the institutional accretions with the transcendental experience which is the real essence of religion. A student of Comparative Religion should adopt a scientific attitude, and approach the study with an unbiassed mind free from personal predilections. I would earnestly appeal to the non-Hindus who desire to study and understand Hinduism to do it with an open mind. Dr. W. R. Inge writes: "Following many of the leaders of thought in our day, I have been deeply interested in the 'wisdom of the East.' I have quoted a saying of Whitehead that if Christianity and the Asiatic religions both show signs of weakness, one reason may be that they have remained too much aloof from each other. It is a reproach to us that with our unique opportunities of entering into sympathetic relations with Indian Thought, we have made very few attempts to do so. The Germans have done more work upon Indian philosophy than we have. I am not suggesting that we should become Buddhists or Hindus, but I believe that we have almost as much

to learn from them as they from us.”¹⁷ A comparative study of religions will always help one to understand his religion better. “We cannot understand our own religion,” writes *Radhakrishnan*, “unless it be in relation to one or more of the other faiths. By an intelligent and respectful study of other religions we gain a new understanding and appreciation of their traditions and our own. Anything which contributes to this growth of harmony of thought deserves to be encouraged. Comparative Religion is one of the chief instruments by which the historic consciousness of the spiritual growth of mankind can be gained.”¹⁸

When we take up the study of the doctrines and dogmas of other religions or the lives and teachings of the religious mystics of other lands we should approach it with respect and an attitude of mind to know the truth and be benefited by it. What *Tiruvalluvar* says, should be the attitude of a student of Comparative Religion :

Though things diverse from diverse sages' lips we learn
'Tis wisdom's part in each the true thing to discern.

எப்பொருள் யார்யார்வாய்க் கேட்பினும் அப்பொருள்
மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்ப தறிவு.

“That which exists is one, the Sages call it variously,” is the message of the Vedas. “The path proclaimed by those of Illumination, which transcends day and night, is the same everywhere,” says the Hindu Mystic of the 18th century, *St. Tāyumānavar*.

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GLOSSARY

A

- Abhāva* — Non-existence.
- Achintiya*
Bhedābheda — Incomprehensible difference and non-difference.
- Achit* — Matter. Non-spirit.
- Advaita* — Non-dual.
- Āgamas* — Religious scriptures. Sectarian Texts.
- Āgāmiya* — The new Karma which man continually creates by his present and future actions.
- Ahangkāra* — I consciousness.
- Ahimsa* — Non-Killing.
- Aikya* — Union.
- Aikyasthala* — State of Union.
- Ājnā* — Psychic Centre between the eyebrows.
- Ākāsā* — Ether.
- Ālvārs* — Vaisnava Saints of Tamil Nad.
- Anahata* — Psychic Centre near the heart.
- Ānanda* — Bliss.
- Ānanda Maya Kosa* — One of the five sheaths which cover the soul.
- Ānava* — Name used in the Agamas for the principle of evil or ignorance.
- Anima* — Power of becoming small as an atom.

- Anirvāchaniya* — Indefinable ; Indescribable.
- Annamaya Kosa* — One of the five sheaths ; physical body.
- Annaprasana* — The ceremony of feeding the child with solid food for the first time.
- Antahkarana* — Internal Organs.
- Antaryāmin* — Inner ruler, pervader.
- Anugraha* — Bestowing grace.
- Anumāna* — Inference.
- Aparāvidyā* — Relative Knowledge.
- Āpath Dharma* — Emergency conduct.
- Appu* — One of the five elements. Water.
- Archa* — Appearance of God as an Image.
- Archanai* — Prayerful request.
- Ardhanārēswarar* — One aspect of Siva. Siva and Sakti in one form.
- Artha* — The necessary means by which all right desire, whether of the lower or higher kinds may be fulfilled.
- Arul* — Grace.
- Arūpi* — Formless.
- Āshrama* — The four stages or periods in the life of a Hindu. They are Brahmacharya, Grhastha, Vanaprastha & Sannyasa.
- Atharva Veda* — One of the four Vedas.
- Ātma* — Soul.
- Ātma Suddhi* — The state in which the soul identifies itself with Divine Grace : Arul.

- Ātma Darsanam* — Is the clear knowledge of the intrinsic nature of the Soul's true nature.
- Ātma Rupam* — State of awareness of one's own Spiritual Nature.
- Avasthas* — Psychic conditions or states.
- Avatara* — Incarnation.
- Avidyā* — Ignorance. Nescience.

B

- Bhakti* — Devotion.
- Bhakti-Sthala* — State of devotion.
- Bheda-bheda* — Different and non-different; dual and non-dual.
- Bhōga* — Objects of enjoyment.
- Bhūta-Yajna* — Offerings to the animals.
- Bhuva* — World.
- Bīja* — Seed. Root.
- Brahmacharya* — Period of studentship.
- Brahman* — Absolute Reality.
- Brahmanas* — Portions of the Vedas which deal with sacrifices.
- Brahma-Yajna* — Study of the Vedas.

C

- Chaitanya* — Consciousness.
- Chandah* — One of the six Vedangas which deals with metre & prosody.
- Charyā* — External worship.
- Chit* — Consciousness.
- Chitta* — One of the Antah Karanas.
- Chūda-Karana* — Ceremony of shaving the head of a child for the first time.

D

<i>Darsana</i>	— View; insight; School of Philosophy.
<i>Dāsa-Mārga</i>	— The path of Master & Servant.
<i>Deva-Yajna</i>	— Offerings to the gods.
<i>Dhāraṇa</i>	— Concentration.
<i>Dharma</i>	— The eternal & immutable principle which holds together the Universe in its parts and in its whole, whether organic or inorganic matter; The principle of right living by which man fits himself for this world, heaven & Liberation.
<i>Dharma-Shāstras</i>	— Law books.
<i>Dhyāna</i>	— Meditation.
<i>Dikku</i>	— Space.
<i>Dīkshā</i>	— The giving of Mantra by the Guru to the disciple.
<i>Dravya</i>	— Substance.
<i>Dvaita</i>	— Dualism.
<i>Dvaitādvaita</i>	— Dual & non-dual.

G

<i>Gānapathya</i>	— The sect which worships God in the name & form of Ganesha.
<i>Garbagrha</i>	— Holy of Holies; The place where the image of the chief deity is placed.
<i>Garimā</i>	— Power of becoming heavy in weight.
<i>Gopuram</i>	— Ornamented tower built over the entrance of a Hindu temple.
<i>Grhastha</i>	— Householder.

- Grhya* — Pertaining to the house; domestic.
- Guna* — Quality or attribute.
- Guru* — Religious teacher & spiritual guide.

H

- Hari* — Name of Visnu.
- Hatha Yōga* — A System of yoga practices performed for the development & well-being of the physical body.

I

- Ichchā* — Desire.
- Idealism* — Any system or doctrine which emphasizes mind or spirit or life as fundamental. It is teleological.
- Ihamuthrārtha-Pala*
Bhoga-Virāha — Not desiring benefits in this world or in the next world.
- Īshitva* — Power of Lordship over all things.
- Ista-Devata* — Devotional object of one's own choice.
- Īsvara* — Personal God.
- Itihāsa* — Epic.

J

- Jagra* — Waking state; conscious plane.
- Jangama* — Company of Saiva devotees.
- Jāta Karma* — Ceremony performed at the birth of a child.

<i>Jīvan-Mukta</i>	— One who has realized oneness with God while living in this world.
<i>Jīvan-Mukti</i>	— Salvation attained while in body.
<i>Jīvātma</i>	— Soul.
<i>Jñāna</i>	— Spiritual knowledge.
<i>Jñāna-Kānda</i>	— Knowledge portion of the Vedas.
<i>Jñānendriyas</i>	— Organs of knowledge.
<i>Jyotisa</i>	— Astronomy & Astrology. One of the Vedangas.

K

<i>Kaivalya</i>	— Mukti.
<i>Kāla</i>	— Time.
<i>Kalpa</i>	— Sacrificial Rules. One of the Vedangas.
<i>Kalyāna Mandapa</i>	— The hall where deities are placed & worshipped during festival days.
<i>Kāma</i>	— Lawful & moral desires for wealth, success, position and family; One of the four purusarthas.
<i>Karana</i>	— Organ.
<i>Kāraṇa</i>	— Cause.
<i>Karma</i>	— Activity; results of activity which is the cause of rebirth.
<i>Karma-Kānda</i>	— Ritual section of the Vedas.
<i>Karmēndriyas</i>	— Organs of action.
<i>Karna Vedha</i>	— Ear-boring Ceremony.
<i>Kaumaram</i>	— The sect which worships God in the name and form of Kumara or Subramania.

- Kevalādvaita* — Absolute monism. Name by which the Sankara school of Vedanta is known.
- Krama-Mukti Kriyā* — Graded salvation.
- Kriyā* — One of the four paths of Saiva Siddhanta.
- Kundalini* — Psychic power coiled up in the muladhara.
- Kundalini Yoga* — A path of Yoga by which the Kundalini sakti is made to rise up and reach the head.

L

- Linga* — Symbol of Siva.
- Lingayatism* — Another Name for Virasaivism.

M

- Mahā-Mandapa* — The hall where movable images are placed in the temple.
- Mahā-Vākya* — The sacred word.
- Mahesvara Sthala* — The stage in which a devotee always feels a joy in doing good to others.
- Mahima* — Power of becoming immensely large.
- Mala* — Principle of impurity.
- Malaparipaka* — Ripe state of Anava Mala.
- Manana* — Reflection.
- Manas* — One of the Antakaranas.
- Manipūraka* — One of the six chakaras; Psychic centre near the navel.
- Manomaya Kosha* — Mental body; one of the five sheaths.
- Mantras* — Hymns.
- Mantra Yoga* — Path of Yoga practice based on mantras or sacred words.

<i>Manusya-Yajna</i>	— Offerings to men.
<i>Māyā</i>	— Principle of matter.
<i>Māyon</i>	— One of the names of Visnu.
<i>Monism</i>	— The theory that there is only one fundamental Reality.
<i>Mukti</i> }	— Liberation; Salvation.
<i>Mōksha</i> }	
<i>Mūlādhara</i>	— The Psychic centre situated between the base of the sexual organ and the anus.
<i>Mūla-Moorthy</i>	— The chief deity.
<i>Mumukshutva</i>	— Intense desire for salvation.

N

<i>Nādam</i>	— Primordial sound; first evolute.
<i>Naimittika-Karma</i>	— Rituals performed on special occasions.
<i>Namakarana</i>	— Ceremony connected with giving name to the new born child.
<i>Nididhyasana</i>	— Profound and repeated meditation.
<i>Nimittōpadana- Parinamavāda</i>	— The theory that holds God as the material and efficient cause of the universe.
<i>Nirguna</i>	— Quality-less; absolute.
<i>Nirūpādika</i>	— Limitless.
<i>Nirvana</i>	— Liberation or final emancipation.
<i>Nirvikalpa</i>	— Indeterminate.
<i>Niskriya</i>	— Actionless.
<i>Nityakarma</i>	— Obligatory duty.
<i>Nityānitya vastu viveka</i>	— Knowledge that discriminates between the real and the unreal.

- Nivṛtti* — Withdrawing from the world.
Niyaya — One of the six systems of Hindu Philosophy; theory of knowledge.

P

- Padam* — Syllable.
Padārthas — Substances. Categories.
Padōdaka — Sacred water.
Panchākshara — The five syllable mantra of Siva.
Pantheism — The doctrine that reality comprises of a single being of which all things are modes or projections.
Paramānandam — Supreme bliss.
Pāramārthika — Pertaining to the Absolute. Absolute standpoint.
Paramātman — Supreme Being.
Parā Vidyā — Spiritual knowledge.
Parināma — Transformation.
Pāsam — Bond.
Pasu — Soul.
Pitr Yajna — Offerings to the ancestors.
Pluralism — The theory that there are more than two ultimate substances.
Pūja — Adoration or worship.
Prakāmya — Power of fulfilling one's wishes.
Prakṛti — Primary matter.
Pramana — Means of valid knowledge.
Prāna — Life force.
Prānalīnga-Sthala — The state at which the self is indentified with the Linga Symbol of Siva.

- Prānamaya-Kosha* — One of the five sheaths.
- Prapti* — Power of transporting oneself anywhere.
- Prārabdha* — A portion of the Sanchita Karma which is ripe and which is worked out and bears fruit in the present birth.
- Prasāda* — Grace; things distributed to the devotees after they are offered to the deity.
- Prasāda-Sthala* — The stage in which a devotee enjoys the favour (grace) of God—Siva.
- Pratyabhijnā-Darsana* — Another name for Kashmir Saivism.
- Pratyāhāra* — Withdrawing the mind from the external objects.
- Pratyaksha* — Direct Perception.
- Pravṛtti-Mārga* — Wordly activity.
- Purānas* — Treatises which deal in legendary stories about Gods.
- Purusārtha* — Aim of life.
- Purusha* — Spirit; Soul.
- Purva Mīmāmsa* — One of the six systems of Hindu philosophy. It deals with the philosophy of ritualism.

R

- Rajas* — One of the gunas of Prakṛti; energy.
- Rajā Yoga* — The path of self-control concentration and meditation.
- Realism* — The doctrine that ideas have objective existence.

- Rishis* — Sages who composed the Vedic Hymns.
- Rudrāksha* — Sacred bead worn by Saivites.
- Rūpi* — (Personal) with form.

S

- Sabah-Mandapam* — The hall where music and drama are held.
- Sabdha* — Sound.
- Sad-Chakra* — Six centre.
- Sādhanā* — The means or practice by which the desired end may be attained. It consists in the exercise and training of the body and psychic function.
- Saguna* — With qualities.
- Sahasrara* — The seventh psychic centre which is on the top of the head. Thousand petalled.
- Saiva Siddhānta* — Philosophy of religion followed by the Tamils. One of the Saiva sects.
- Saivism* — The sect which worships God in the name and form of Siva.
- Sakala* — With qualities.
- Sakalar* — Souls with the three malas, Anava, Karma and Maya.
- Sakha* — Friend.
- Sākta* — One who worships God as Mother.
- Sakti* — Power of God personified as Mother.
- Saktinipatham* — Descent of Arul.

- Sāktism* — The sect which worships God as Sakti.
- Sakti Visistādvaita* — Another name for Vira-Saivism. The theory which considers the world as the manifestation of Sakti and not Siva.
- Salōka* — In the same world; Sivaloka.
- Samādhi* — The supreme state of peace.
- Sāmānyā* — Common.
- Samhitas* — Anthologies.
- Samsāra* — Cycle of births and deaths.
- Samskāras* — Purificatory ceremonies; residual or subliminal impressions; Latest disposition.
- Sanātana Dharma* — Eternal Truth.
- Sanchita* — Accumulated mass of the unexhausted Karma of the past whether good or bad which has still to be worked out.
- Sandanam* — Sandal wood paste.
- Sāṅkhya* — One of the six systems of Hindu philosophy.
- Sanmārga* — Path of Jnana; One of the four paths in Siddhanta.
- Sannyāsa* — Renunciation.
- Sannyāsin* — One who has renounced the worldly activities.
- Santāna-Ācharyas* — Four Saiva Siddhanta theologians; Meikandar, Arulnandhy, Maraijnana Sambandhar and Umapati.
- Sarana-Sthala* — The state at which the devotee completely surrenders to Siva — God.

- Sareera* — Body.
- Sarūpa* — Attaining the same form.
- Sat* — Existence.
- Satputra-Mārga* — One of the four paths of devotion where a devotee considers God as father.
- Sattva* — One of the qualities of Prakriti; pure; luminous.
- Savikalpa* — Determinate.
- Sāyujya* — Complete identification; Union.
- Seyōn* — Name of Muruka or Skanda.
- Siddhars* — Persons endowed with power.
- Siddhi* — Success; accomplishment or achievement.
- Sīksha* — Science of phonetics; one of the six Vedangas.
- Siva Bhogam* — The final state of spiritual perfection spoken of in the Siddhanta Shastras.
- Siva Darsanam* — The state in which a devotee sees Siva in all and everywhere.
- Sivādvaita* — Philosophy of religion propounded by Sri Nilakanta Sivachariar. It is a qualified monism. Supreme Reality is Siva.
- Siva Rūpam* — The attainment of the knowledge that Para Sakti performs the five acts of Creation, Preservation, Concealment, Destruction and Bestowal of Grace and the realization of the Presence of Siva in One's own soul.

<i>Siva-Tattva</i>	— The first evolute of Suddha-Maya.
<i>Siva-Yogam</i>	— The state in which the Soul identifies itself with Siva.
<i>Sivōham Bhavana</i>	— The practice adopted for union with Siva.
<i>Smṛti</i>	— That which is remembered. Scriptures which deal with socio-religious rules.
<i>Srāddha</i>	— Ceremonies performed annually in remembrance of the dead.
<i>Sravanam</i>	— Hearing.
<i>Sṛsti</i>	— Creation.
<i>Srūti</i>	— Revelation.
<i>Stambha-Mandapam</i>	— The hall where the flag staff is erected.
<i>Sthapana-Mandapam</i>	— Hall where people stand and worship.
<i>Sthiti</i>	— Preservation.
<i>Sthūla</i>	— Gross.
<i>Suddha Advaita</i>	— Pure-Monism; School of Vedanta founded by Sri Vallabha.
<i>Suddha Māyā</i>	— Pure aspect of matter.
<i>Sūkshma</i>	— Subtle.
<i>Susupti</i>	— Dreamless sleep.
<i>Svadisthana</i>	— The psychic centre at the base of the sexual organ above Mula-dhara and below the navel.
<i>Svapna</i>	— Dream state.
<i>Svarūpa-Lakshanam</i>	— Fundamental or essential characteristic; Ontological aspect.
<i>Swagata bheda</i>	— The relationship that exists between a part and whole; e. g. body and limbs.

T

- Tantras* — Sakta Agamas.
- Tanu* — Body.
- Tatastha-Lakshana* — Incidental quality; relative characteristic.
- Tattva* — Principle; reality.
- Tattva Darsanam* — A clear understanding of the nature of Tattvas.
- Tat-Tvam-Asi* — Thou-Art-That.
- Tattva Rūpam* — A clear knowledge of the evolution of Tattvas.
- Tattva Suddhi* — Act of cutting asunder one-self from the control of the Tattvas
- Tejas* — Fire.
- Tēvārams* — Devotional Hymns.
- Theism* — The doctrine which considers God different from the world and Souls.
- Tirōbhava* — Concealment.
- Tirumuraikal* — Saiva Siddhanta Sacred Anthologies.
- Trika* — Another name of Kashmir Saivism.
- Turiya* — Deep Sleep; fourth state.
- Turiyātīta* — Beyond Deep Sleep.

U

- Upādana Kāranam* — Instrumental cause.
- Upamana* — Comparison.
- Upāsana* — Meditation. •

V

<i>Vaidika Dharma</i>	— Religion of the Vedas.
<i>Vaidikas</i>	— Followers of the Vedas.
<i>Vaisesika</i>	— One of the schools of Hindu Philosophy.
<i>Vānāprastha</i>	— Recluse or ascetic.
<i>Varna-Āshrama</i>	— Chief divisions of Hindu society which are four; Brahmana Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.
<i>Vashitva</i>	— Power of controlling all creations and elements.
<i>Vātsalya Bhava</i>	— Adoration of God as a child, Mother mysticism.
<i>Vayu</i>	— One of the five elements; Air
<i>Vedāngas</i>	— Aids to the study of Vedas.
<i>Vedānta</i>	— End of Vedas. One of the Hindu systems of philosophy.
<i>Vedantin</i>	— One who is a follower of the Vedanta system of philosophy.
<i>Vibhūthi</i>	— Sacred Ash.
<i>Vidyāramba</i>	— Initiation into studies.
<i>Vijnāna Kalar</i>	— Soul with anava mala only.
<i>Vijnāna-maya-Kosha</i>	— One of the coverings of the Soul.
<i>Vimāna</i>	— Tall tower above the Holy of Holies of a temple.
<i>Vīra Saivism</i>	— One of the Saiva Sects.
<i>Visesa</i>	— Attribute.
<i>Visistādvaita</i>	— Qualified Monism.
<i>Visuddha</i>	— One of the six psychic centres; the one near the throat.
<i>Vivaha</i>	— Marriage.

- Vivarta-Parinamā-* — Theory of illusory transfor-
Vāda mation.
Vyāpaka — Pervasive.
Vyavakarika — Phenomenal.

Y

- Yajnas* — Sacrifices.
Yantra — Diagram engraved or drawn on metal which is worshipped in the same manner as an image.
Yoga — One of the Hindu systems of Philosophy; Union.

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