Nidān

JOURNAL OF
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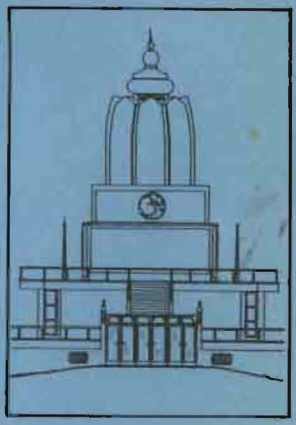

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Nidān is the Journal of the Department of Hindu Studies, University of Durban-Westville. The Journal, published annually, is devoted to the study of Hindu religion, philosophy and culture. The Editorial Board considers for publication articles that have not previously appeared or been submitted similtaneously elsewhere. Scholarly contributions of up to 6000 words on topics of contemporary significance in the academic study of Hinduism are invited. All articles will be subject to evaluation by the Editorial Board and if necessary, independent referees drawn from the Consultant Editors.

Views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editorial Board, or the Consultant Editors or The Department of Hindu Studies.

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N I D Ā N

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EDITORIAL

"Nidān", Journal of the Department of Hindu Studies, University of Durban-Westville, has materialised in the Ninth year of the existence of the Department. It is being offered to the academic world and interested laity with the humble wish that it has something of interest to all its readers.

The Department of Hindu Studies has been perceived as a dynamic forum for the dissemination, discussion and formulation of Hindu views, in their entire diversity spanning the millenia from the realization of the Holy Vedas to the present day.

Hinduism has always been a dynamic way of life, and the academic, intellectual analysis and diagnosis of the fundamental meta-physical and ethical concepts developed by the great ṚṢIS have exercised their inherent dynamism to engage the minds of twentieth century man.

The concept of the divinity of man, and his essential freedom to realize and manifest this divinity are legacies of the Hindu tradition which are particularly esteemed. It is thus the ardent wish of the Department of Hindu Studies and the Editorial Board to examine and investigate those views, concepts and injunctions that explain and advance these fundamental principles.

It is acknowledged that Hinduism as such is a complex phenomenon, comprising manifold limbs with different structures and functions. However, it is also conceded that the various limbs serve the purpose of making the single organism whole, perfect, through harmonious interaction. This standpoint indicates that the various aspects of the Hindu way of life, each in its own way expressing the Hindu Weltanschung need to be comprehended and embraced in order to arrive at the truth.

The Editorial Board decided to choose the name Nidān for this Journal because of its meanings allied to the religio-philosophical inquiry: viz. primary or essential cause, diagnosis, purity, correctness.

This First Volume of Nidān is dedicated to the University Hindu Centre, University of Durban-Westville; a diagram of which appears on the cover.

FREUD AND ŚAṄKARA: RELIGION AS NEUROSIS AND LIBERATION (MOKṢA)

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Sigmund Freud's attempts to assess the meaning of religion in the life of the individual and in society was a natural extension of his concern with the structure and development of the human personality. Religion was too obvious and important a factor to be ignored and Freud seems to have been preoccupied with this subject quite early in his career. One of his most significant contributions to the understanding of modern societies is his idea of the archaic heritage as an important and active feature in social life. This heritage operates in an unconscious, but effective manner on human behavior and is partly constituted of religious traditions and moral values. Freud was, throughout his life, a proclaimed atheist, a fact which, undoubtedly would have influenced his approach to analyzing and explaining religion. His propositions about religion, like most of his other theories, were born out of his clinical practice as a psychoanalyst. His inquiries into the origin of religion turned out to be an investigation into the roots of civilization and human community, for he thought that he had discovered the sources of law, morality and communal life in man's reaction to the Oedipus complex.

In Freud's view, the genesis of religion lies in the very early childhood experiences of the individual. The initial and primary experience of the human infant is one of total dependence. This is even more important because of the considerable length of time during which the human infant is dependent on its parents in contrast to the infants of other species. In this relationship of intense physical and emotional dependence, the child's

gratifications and frustrations centre on the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of its desires by the parents. It is a cushion for the child against the harsh realities of life, and the infant mind interprets the world through this parental relationship. In terms of the child's later development, this relationship is fundamental, and important patterns of behavior are first established here.

A debunking effect, according to Freud, occurs at a later stage in life when reality intrudes and the child discovers that parents are not as omnipotent as they were earlier thought to be. This discovery, however, does not lead to the shedding of childhood attitudes and the development of a independent confrontation with reality. Like all conflicts which are too traumatic for the conscious mind, says Freud, they slip into the realm of the unconscious, only to manifest themselves in a similar situation of helplessness. At such times, Freud claims, the individual regresses into childhood patterns of behavior.

According to Freud, the individual, when confronted with the realities of existence, is again unavoidably made aware of his helplessness. The terrors of nature and the realization of the insignificance of life in the face of death are prominent experiences in the awareness of one's helplessness.

> There are elements which seem to mock at all human control: the earth, which quakes, is rent asunder and buries man and all his works; the water, which in tumult floods and submerges all things; the storm, which drives all before it; there are diseases, which we have only lately recog-

> nized as the attacks of other living creatures; and finally there is the painful riddle of death, for which no remedy at all has yet been found, nor probably will be. With these forces nature rises up before us, sublime, pitiless and inexorable; thus she brings again to mind our weakness and helplessness, of which we thought the work of civilization had rid us.[1]

In this situation, one responds on the basis of the earlier established forms by projecting a God (or gods), who is not as helpless as oneself and upon whom one can depend.

> For there is nothing new in this situation. It has an infantile prototype, and is really only the continuation of this. For once before one has been in such a state of helplessness: as a little child in one's relationship to one's parents. For one had reason to fear them, especially the father, though at the same time one was sure of his protection against the dangers then known to one. And so it was natural to assimilate and combine the two situations.[2]

Following the infantile prototype, claims Freud, the human being projects the forces of nature as gods and assigns to them the characteristics of the father. By personifying the forces of nature, one can attempt to influence these and so react to one's helplessness.

> But if the elements have passions that rage like those in our own souls, if death itself is not something spontaneous, but the violent act of an evil Will, if every-

> where in nature we have about us beings who resemble those of our own enviorment, then we can breathe freely, we can feel at home in the face of the supernatural and we can deal psychically with our frantic anxiety. We are perhaps still defenseless but no longer helplessly paralysed; we can at least react; perhaps indeed we are not even defenseless, we can have recourse to the same methods against these violent supermen of the beyond that we make use of in our own community; we can try to exorcise them to appease them to bribe them, and so rob them of part of their power by thus influencing them.[3]

With the passage of time, however, there is a gradual shift in emphasis on the role of the gods. This is brought about by the discovery that there are fixed and regular laws of nature, developed no doubt by the gods, but now functioning independently. Even the gods themselves seem subordinate to destiny and incapable of remedying the dictates of fate. In this situation, contends Freud, the primary task of religion is the preservation of culture and civilization.

> It now becomes the business of the god to adjust the defects and evils of culture, to attend to the sufferings that men inflict on each other in their communal life and to see that the laws of culture, which men obey so ill, are carried out. The laws of culture themselves are claimed to be of divine origin, they are elevated to a position above human society, and they are extended over nature and the universe.[4]

Freud posited an inherent conflict between human nature and the process of civilization. In his view, there are certain essential proscriptions accompanying the growth of civilization which impose severe limits on our instinctual needs. These are needs which, if unchecked, lead to chaos and disorder, thus rendering impossible the progress of civilization.

> ..... because every individual is virtually an enemy of culture, which is nevertheless ostensibly an object of universal human concern. It is remarkable that little as men are able to exist in isolation they should yet feel as a heavy burden the sacrifices that culture expects of them in order that a communal existence may be possible.[5]

The instinctual needs identified, by Freud, are those of incest, cannibalism and murder and, according to Freud, they are reborn in every new generation. Many of the norms of culture are internalized by the individual and need no coercion for their enforcement. There are others, however, to which people are obedient only by the threat of force. The supreme role of culture, as noted by Freud, is the defence of civilization against human instinctual needs which threaten to destroy its framework. Religion, as one of the vital tools of culture, is an instrument in this process. Religion also compensates for the instinctual renunciation demanded by society and its imperfections. In this role, there seems to be a similarity with the analysis of the function of religion propounded by Karl Marx.

Everything that takes place in this world expresses the

> intentions of an intelligence, superior to us, which in the end, though its devious ways may be difficult to follow, orders everything for good, that is, to our advantage. Over each of us watches a benevolent, and only apparently severe, Providence, which will not suffer us to become the plaything of the stark and pitiless forces of nature; death itself is not annihilation, not a return to inorganic lifelessness, but the beginning of a new kind of existence, which lies on the road of development to something higher.[6]

The injustices of civilization and the renunciation which it demands become tolerable in the light of such a view of the world. Eventually all good is rewarded and evil punished, even though this may be in the distant future or in another world.

So far, the analysis of Freud's views on religion seems to be centered on the individual. But religion is not an entirely individual activity. Beliefs and practices are generally shared by a community. In his work, Totem and Taboo, published in 1914, Freud offered an explanation of this phenomenon.[7] He describes the slaying of the dominant primal father by his sons. This act, however, filled them with guilt and remorse and increased the power of the dead father in the children's minds. In this act, Freud sees the origin of totemism. The totem animal is a symbol of the murdered father and the injunction against killing is an expression of their guilt. The denial of sexual relations with the females of the group is a further demonstration of this guilt.

Freud attributes a historical reality of this theory. In his view, it explains the origin of religious rites and also accounts for their persistence in the continuous play of the Oedipus complex. This supposedly historical account of the origin of totemism has been severly criticized. Robert Towler points to three logical derivations of it. Totemism should be religion found in the simplest societies; the totem should be ritually killed and eaten; pre-totemic societies should be cannibalistic and promiscuous. None of these, he argues, can be supported by any anthropological evidence.[8]

Relgious beliefs, according to Freud, presist because they are the fulfillment of the oldest and most powerful wishes of mankind. They are strong because of the strength of those wishes. These are helplessness, the demands for justice and the yearning for immortality. The father, in particular, met the needs of the helpless infant, and the persistence of this helplessness made it essential to cling on to the existence of a more powerful father.

> Thus the benevolent rule of divine providence allays our anxiety in the face of life's dangers, the establishment of a moral world order ensures the fulfillment of the demands of justice, which within human culture have so often remained unfulfilled, and the prolongation of earthly existence by a future life provides in addition the local and temporal setting for these wish-fulfillments.[9]

Freud uses the term "illusion" to define religious beliefs, carefully distinguishing that term from an "error". He cites the

belief of Aristotle that vermin are evolved out of dung as an example of an "error". On the other hand, Columbus's belief that he had discovered a new sea-route to India is an example of an "illusion". An illusion is not necessarily false, but its main characteristic is that it is derived from the wishes of human beings. In the words of Freud, "we call a belief an illusion when wish fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, while disregarding its relations to reality, just as the illusion itself does".[10]

Freud draws an analogy between the psychological development of the individual child and the development of mankind as a whole. The growing child passes through a neurotic phase because of the suppression of instinctual impulses.

> This is because the child is unable to suppress by rational mental effort so many of those instinctual impressions which cannot later be turned to account, but has to check them by acts of repression behind which there stands as a rule an anxiety motive.[11]

Normally, says Freud, the child overcomes these neuroses in the very process of growing up, and those which persist can be treated by psychoanalysis. Freud sees a comparable development in mankind. Humanity, before it developed a strong enough intellect as well as science and technology, had accomplished the instinctual renunciations which make communal existence possible by using purely effective means. The neurosis of humanity arose out of the relationship to the father, just as it does for the child,

and still persists in civilization. Thus religion could be seen as the "universal obsessional neurosis of humanity". Religion has the advantage, for its adherents, of saving them from having to invent their own personal neurosis. They gain from the social nature of religion, rather than the purely private character of a personal neurosis. He drew parallels between the nature of our obsessional neurosis and religious ritual, seeing them both as efforts to gain release from nagging feelings of guilt and anxiety. He discusses the repetitive nature of both types of activities. Freud, however, pointed to one important difference in this comparison. The obsessive ritual of the neurotic is isolating and this makes his condition worse. Because of the collective nature of religious ritual, the individual is united with others in a common purpose.

In development, according to Freud, humanity was at a point where it is better to leave religion behind. There is no point in continuing to veil the truth in symbolism, for the truths are so distorted and disguised that they are unrecognizable as truths to most people. In general, Freud saw religion as a constraint on the human personality, hampering the development of a healthy realism. He felt that the human energies diverted to religion could be far more usefully applied to the creation of a healthier civilization. The time had come for humanity to do without the neurotic relics contained in religion. In his evolutionary vision, Freud hoped that the illumination of scientific wisdom will enable us to grow out of our religious phase. Science and reason

now seem, according to Freud, to offer us more hope of happiness and a decrease in suffering than is offered in religion. The optimism about the possibilities of science was also shared by Marx, and in this attitude they were typical post-Darwinians. For them, the scientific approach was not synonymous with technology, but embraced human affairs at all levels and even the values which we pursued.[12]

Some of the insights of Sigmund Freud have undoubtedly enriched our understanding of the nature of human religiosity. Thinkers before Freud, like Herbert Spencer and E.B. Tylor, had explained religion as an error of primitive persons in interpreting their experiences. Their vivid dreams and ever-present shadows gave them their first notions of the spirit. Freud sought to explain religion in a hitherto unappreciated dimension of the human personality, a now unquestioned storehouse of human motivation, the unconscious. The search to understand religion in the depts of the unconscious was a radical shift of vision and very important and revealing step. Many conscious processes were better illuminated by his approach. Freud appreciated the wider cultural role of religion in the growth of civilization, although he was wrong in emphasizing only the repressive role of culture and the unnatural nature of group life. His emphasis on the importance of the early formative experiences of the child is no longer questioned.

When Freud's theories concerning the origin and nature of religion are evaluated from an Advaita Vedānta perspective, the

most obvious limitation is that he generalized on the basis of findings about a limited number of people in a single society. Even more important is the fact that those whom he studied were the religious neurotics he encountered in his clinical practice. This is not to deny that religious neuroticism of the kind which Freud describes is a fact of life. It is questionable, however, to generalize about religion, in the broadest sense, on the basis of these cases. His conclusions are not born out of anthropological evidence derived from the world's religions. In Freud's writings, the term religion refers particularly to the Judeo-Christian traditions. The limitations and deficiencies of Freud's generalizations are clearly evident when they are applied to the propositions of the Advaita Vedānta tradition.

Although Freud refers to our sense of helplessness, dependence and morality in explaining the origin and persistence of religion, he still attaches most importance to the slaying of the dominant primal father and the continuous play of the Oedipus complex. In other words, both the origin and persistence of religion are explained in terms of the interplay of urges at the unconscious level of the human personality. At this level the sexual urge is primary. In Freud's theories, the motive for the religious quest is not seen as having its origin in our conscious and deliberately rational thought.

In Śaṅkara, on the other hand, the religious quest is primarily of the nature of disciplined intellectual inquiry (jijñāsa).[13] The quest is impelled by the search for meaning which is natural to us as self-conscious rational beings. Religious inquiry is

the culmination of mature and honest reflection on the nature of one's varied desires and activities and on the generally limited results achieved through their fulfillment. It is undertaken after the discovery that the attainment of limited ends and objects always leaves one with a sense of want and incompleteness. In Advaita Vedānta, the religious quest is the pursuit of fullness (ānanda) and meaning (jñāna). These two are not distinguishable, for they are both fulfilled in the discovery of the limitless (brahman). The religious motive in Advaita Vedānta is very well exemplified by Naciketā's of the Katha Upanisad. His relentless search for meaning is inspired by his awareness of the transient character of all other pursuits. In Naciketā's famous rebuttal, "Man is not to ge satisfied with wealth alone", wealth is inclusive of all limited ends and possibilities. Mundaka Upanisad 1.1.12 sees the religious quest as being initiated by the insight that the real object of all human search, the limitless, is not to be accomplished by any limited action, productive of finite ends. In his commentary on this text, Sańkara sums up very well the state of mind which is a precondition for inquiry.

> In this universe there is nothing that is akrta, a non-product, for all the worlds are effects of karma; and being products of action, they are impermanent. The idea is that there is nothing that is eternal. All actions are productive of transitory things, since all effects of actions are only of four kinds--they can be

> produced, acquired, purified, or modified; over and above these, action has no other distinctive result. But I am desirous of the eternal, immortal, fearless, unchanging, unmoving, absolute Entity and not of its opposite.[14]

Narada's anguish in the Chāndogya Upanishad 7.1.3. is quite typical of the sort of predicament and unaccountable anguish which motivates the inquirer towards the knowledge of brahman (brahmajñāna). After listing his accomplishments and mastery of various subjects, he declares his helplessness before the teacher, Sanatkumara:

> It has been heard by me from persons like your reverence that one who knowns the Self passes beyond sorrow; I am in sorrow, - please make me pass beyond that sorrow.[15]

The point of these many examples is that, contrary to the sweeping generalization of Sigmund Freud, the religious quest is not universally associated with a neurotic condition of mind, but can also be the result of a rational appraisal of the human condition and predicament.

The divergences between Sigmund Freud and Śaṅkara appear even more radical when we consider their respective responses to the human predicament. The religious solution to this predicament, according to Freud, is the personifying and projecting of a God who is not as helpless as the human being. This God is a prototype of the father and one can depend upon and seek to influence him. In other words, one seeks to overcome the limitations of one's condition by manipulating the attributes and actions of the projected deity. One's relationship towards such a deity is not different in quality from the relationship pattern with the human father. The entirely different response of Śaṅkara is derived from his vision of the nature of ultimate reality (brahman) and his understanding of the human problem. The deity which is regarded by Freud as the exclusive object of religious interest is held, in Śaṅkara, to be true and valid

only from the empirical or practical (vyāvahārika) standpoint. This is the standpoint from which the world is considered to have an absolutely real and independent status from God. God may be regarded as the cause and and sustainer, possessed of all good qualities (saguna brahman). But the world, in Śaṅkara, is conceived as an inexplicable appearance for which God is both intelligent and material cause. Creation and all that it implies is a view of God from a partial perspective. It does not constitute God's essence (svarūpa). Essentially, brahman is free from all qualities (nirguna). The description of God as Consciousness (jñānam), Reality (satyam) and Infinite (anantam) is an attempt to define God's essential nature.[16]

Because of Śaṅkara's analysis of the fundamental human problem as ignorance (avidyā) of the Self (ātman), the solution proposed stands as a significant exception to Freud's generalization. There is no attempt to influence and manipulate the actions and attitudes of a deity for the attainment of spiritual freedom (moksa). In Sankara's view, the problem of avidyā does not imply a complete ignorance of the ātman. Being of the nature of consciousness (cit), ātman is self-revealing. It is absolute awareness in whose light everything stands revealed. There are several important and interesting discussions in Śaṅkara's commentaries which are relevant to this issue. In his introductions to the Brahma-sūtra, for example, an objector asks whether brahman is known or unknown.[17] The point of the query here is that if brahman is known, there is no need for a means of knowledge or an inquiry to ascertain its nature. If, on the other hand, brahman is entirely unknown (i.e. not even the object of a desire to know), it cannot become the subject of any kind of inquiry (jijñāsā). Sankara, however, denies that brahman is entirely unknown.

> Besides, the existence of Brahman is well known from the fact of Its being the Self of all; for everyone feels that his Self exists, and he never feels, 'I do not exist'. Had there been no general recognition of the existence of

> the Self, everyone would have felt, 'I do not exist'. And that Self is Brahman.[18]

If the ātman is known, is not inquiry into the śruti, which is the valid source of knowledge (pramāna), redundant?

> No, for there is a conflict about Its distinctive nature. Ordinary people as well as the materialists of the Lokayata school recognize the body alone to be the Self possessed of sentience. Others hold that the mind is the Self. Some say that it is merely momentary consciousness. Others say that it is a void. Still others believe that there is a soul, separate from the body, which transmigrates and is the agent (of work) and the experiencer (of results). Some say that the soul is a mere experiencer and not an agent. Some say that there is a God who is different from this soul and is all-knowing and all-powerful; others say that He is the Self of the experiencing individual. Thus there are many who follow opposite views by depending on logic, texts and their semblances. If one accepts any of these view without examination, one is liable to be deflected from emancipation and come to grief. Therefore, starting with the presentation of a deliberation on Brahman, here is commenced an ascertainment of the meaning of the texts of the Upanisads with the help of reasoning not opposed to the Upanisads themselves, for the purpose of leading to emancipation (through knowledge).[19]

Sankara's reference to the absence of distinctive or particular knowledge suggests that the kind of knowledge of the Self (ātman) which we possess is of a general nature only. In the case of ātman, that 'I exist' and 'I know' are self-revelatory. This knowledge, however, is of a general nature. Upon this existence (sat) and awareness (cit), morality and finitude are superimposed. That one exists in all three periods of time is unkown. Bliss (ānanda) is manifest in various experiences, but

its identity with the ātman is unknown. It is generally understood to be a quality of sense objects. Where the ātman is concerned therefore, the problem is a lack of specific knowledge. The result is the ascription of qualities of the non-Self upon the Self and vice-versa. If the ātman is fully known or entirely unknown, it cannot become the locus of any kind of superimposition. It is clear that from Śaṅkara's viewpoint, the problem does not involve the knowledge of an entirely unknown, unrevealed or remote Self. It is one of incomplete or erroneous knowledge of an ever-available and self-manifesting ātman.

It is extremely significant that Śankara opens his commentary on the Brahmasūtra with an introduction on superimposition (adhyāsa). Since adhyāsa is a product of avidyā, it can be negated by jñāna. It is absurd to employ any other means, as it is to use a stick for protecting oneself against the snake perceived in place of the rope. An apparent bondage, with its basis in incomplete and erroneous knowledge, can be overcome by jñāna. It is Śaṅkara's repeated contention, supported by numerous scriptural references, that mokṣa is simultaneous with the gain of knowledge. He is emphatic in his denial of the necessity for any intervening action between the two. In fact, from the standpoint of Sankara, it is not even accurate to say that mokṣa is the fruit or effect of jñāna. Mokṣa, being identical with brahman, is ever accomplished and eternal. The function of jñāna lies in the removal of obstacles to the appreciation of the liberated Self.[20] The limitless, which is the object of the seeker's quest, is not different from one's own Self. Being unaware of this, one assumes the guise of finitude and is subject to all its attendant sorrows. Knowledge frees one by pointing out the identity of the seeker and sought. No actions are required for the attainment and freedom of one's own Self.

The attainment of mokṣa is therefore independent of all actions intended to influence and manipulate the attitudes of a deity. In addition, it also implies the freedom of the

individual from dependence on anything for his fullness. In Freud's analysis, the individual, following the infantile prototype, responds to his or her helplessness by becoming dependent on the deity which is projected. The solution to one's predicament is sought outside of oneself. In Śaṅkara, on the other hand, the quest is through self-inquiry and discovery. The response to the sense of helplessness, insignificance and mortality is not the evasion or escape of Self, but the discovery of Self. The appreciation of one's identity with the limitless brahman is the realization of fullness of being. In self-knowledge is discovered the fulfillment of all limited desires. There is rejoicing, satisfaction and contentment in the Self which is identical in all beings. The Bhagavadgītā specifically refers to the total freedom of such an individual and Śaṅkara understands this in the widest sense.

> Nor is there in all beings from Brahma (Prajāpati) down to the sthāvara or immovable objects, any whose support he has to gain by action. He has no object whatsoever to gain, for which he has to depend upon any particular being.[21]

Freud, as we have noted earlier, posits an inherent and fundamental conflict between human nature and the requiremens of civilization and communal living. Human beings are obedient to the laws of culture because these are claimed to be of divine origin, and they tolerate the renunciation of instinctual wishes because of the promise of future rewards. Freud's understanding of the relationship between the individual and society and the role of religion in the process again contrasts in important ways with the vision of the Advaita tradition to which Śaṅkara belongs. Advaita does not propose any fundamental incompatibility between human nature and the demands of communal life. On the other hand, it is very optimistic about the possibilities of the human being. Social tension and violence is not a reflection of the truth of human nature, but the outcome of a very distorted and untrue view of ourselves. It is a view which focuses on our isolation and separateness and emphasizes the importance of

our own narrow needs and interests above all else. In the Advaita estimation, this view misses the more fundamental and real unity which lies at the heart of all existence, and the knowledge of which leads to the identifying of one's interests with the interests of all. The liberated individual (jīvan-mukta) who has imbibed this vision of unity and who sees his own Self (ātman) in all beings possesses no sense of antagonism and rivalry towards other beings.

> He who sees all beings in the very Self, and the Self in all beings, feels not hatred by virtue of that knowledge.[22]

The motives and actions of the jīvan-mukta are clearly of a different order from those conceived by Freud. In this case, compassion, love and striving for the welfare of the group are not primarily motivated by obedience to a law considered to be of human or divine origin. Actions are not also motivated by the expectation of immediate or future rewards. The ethics of the jīvan-mukta are the spontaneous results of his self-understanding. A love and compassion that reaches out to all beings is natural to a vision of unity and identity. The requirements of communal life are not an imposition on his nature. The jīvan-mukta simply acts in conformity with the truth of his or her nature. In the words of Śaṅkara, "he sees that whatever is pleasant to himself is pleasant to all creatures, and that whatever is painful to himself is painful to all beings. Thus seeing that what is pleasure or pain to himself is alike pleasure or pain to all beings, he causes pain to no being"[23] The attitude of the jīvan-

mukta also questions Freud's understanding of renunciation as a demanding sacrifice for which religion must compensate. For the jīvan-mukta, the shedding of self-centered wants and actions is an effortless consequences of the fullness which is discovered in the ātman. Nothing of abiding value has been renounced. Since the fullness of life is attained in the present moment, no inducements in the future are necessary.

In this essay, I have attempted to outline the principal elements in Freud's analysis of religion and demonstrate the limitations of his propositions by identifying some fundamental areas of difference with Śaṅkara. These divergences centre around the understanding of the nature of the religious quest, the fundamental human problem and its resolution, the nature of liberation, and the motivation of the jīvan-mukta. Freud's pessimism about the possibilities of religion was directly related to his limited knowledge of the religious traditions of the world. On the basis of his experience of the Judeo-Christian traditions, he generalized about the nature of religion. His hopes for the salvation of the world through the development of science have remained unfulfilled. On the other hand, the misuse of technology threatens the very survival of the world. In this context, the liberating possibilities inherent in the Advaita Vedānta vision of the human person need to be further explored and their implications demonstrated.

1. Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), pp. 26-27.

2. Ibid., p.29.

3. Ibid., pp. 28-29.

4. Ibid., pp. 31-32. See also Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955).

5. Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 9.

6. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

7. Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (London: Routledge, 1919).

8. Robert Towler, Homo Religious (London: Constable, 1974), p. 28.

9. Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, pp. 52-53.

10. Ibid., pp. 54-55. Religious ideas are not verifiable by ordinary experience, according to Freud. To accept, like Tertullian, that religious ideas must be believed because they are absurd does not enable one to distinguish which absurd propositions should be believed. Freud is also unimpressed by the argument that religious propositions are 'as if' types of propositions, and one should accept them in this way, living as if it were true that there were Gods.

Freud dismisses this line of argument as appealing only to someone caught up in the artifices of philosophy.

11. Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 75.

12. While Freud agreed with Marx that a larger degree of economic equality would help to reduce the conflicts in modern capitalist societies, he differed radically from Marx in proposing that there were other sources of human conflict, hostility and violence than that of economic relationships. It is possible also to see Freud's work as clarifying the argument of Max Webber in his study of the relationship between Protestant ethics and the rise of capitalsim. Freud provides an understanding of unconscious processes which deepens the insight into the Calvinist character and its relationship to the rise of modern capitalism.

13. The Brahmasutra, for example, commences with the aphorism, "Now therefore the inquiry (into the real nature) of brahman. See the Brahmasutrabhasya of Śaṅkarācārya, 3rd ed., trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), I.i.1.

14. See Śaṅkara's commentary on Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12, in Eight Upanisads: With the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965-66). Isa, Kena, Katha and Taittīriya are in vol.1,

and Aitareya, Mundaka, Mandukya and Karika and Prasna are in vol. 2.

15. The Chandogya Upanisad trans. Ganganatha Jha (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1942).

16. See Taittiriya Upanisad 2.1.1, and Sankara's commentary.

17. See Sankara's commentary on Brahmasutra 1.1.1. Since Sankara's commentary on a particular sutra could run into seceral pages, the page numbers are given here for easy reference.

18. Ibid., p. 12. Also 2.3.7, p. 455.

19. Ibid., 1.1.2,. pp. 12-13.

20. Ibid., 1.1.4, pp. 28-29.

21. The Bhagavadgita: with the commentary of Sri Sankaracarya, trans. A.M. Sastry (Madras: Samata Books, 1977) 3:18, p. 104.

22. Isa Upanisad, 5.

23. Bhagavadgita commentary 6:32.

SOME ASPECTS

OF

HINDU PERSONAL LAW

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This paper will examine the rights relating to inheritance or succession, marriage, divorce and remarriage as derived from the ancient sources of Hindu Law and developed by case law. Reference will be made to modern Hindu Law as codified in the following statutes: The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 and the Hindu Widow Re-marriage Act of 1856. (INDIA)

Greater emphasis will be placed on the Hindu Law as derived, and developed outside the modern legislature, in order to focus attention on the Hindu view. Even the modern codified laws have retained much of the spirit and substance of the ancient legal heritage; and, as Paras Diwan expresses it:

> "On the whole the codified Hindu Law is a remarkable experiment of blending the new with the old, of retaining an old frame-work within which new, at times radical, structures with all the outlook of modernity have been built". **(Diwan, 1979; xii)**

This exercise may prove valuable to South African Hindus in view of the fact that we are governed by laws that do not take cognisance of Hindu law, and the recent demands made that the authorities grant recognition to Hindu and Islamic law. One ought to be able to deduce from this whether the fundamental principles of Hindu law are irreconcilable with the legal concepts which have a bearing on our lives.

Law may be classified as a secular subject; however,

difficulties arise in the instance of Hindu Law with regard to such categorisation. The sources of Hindu Law, as well as the goals towards which they were directed, are transcendental.

Hindu law originates from God, and the object of Hindu life was Moksha or release from the cycle of birth and death. It would therefore appear that the original concept of law amongst the Hindus was secular only to the extent that the provisions of the law enabled and enjoined man to live his life in a manner that would facilitate the spiritual goal of Moksha.

As stated above, the Hindu sages believed that all laws emanated from the Supreme Being; hence the term "Dharmashastra" for the sources of Hindu Law. (Dharmashastra meaning Teachers of the Law) There was gradual modification of this view which allowed for the development of a positive law by the Commentators who were lawyers. Nothwithstanding this new development, the source and final authority for law was still the scriptures, viz Srutis and the Smritis.

The Srutis are revealed knowledge and do not contain any "lawyer's law". The Smritis constitute the principal sources of Hindu Law, and are based on the Srutis, thus they enjoy absolute authority. The Smritis contain rules governing all aspects of life - they are made up of Vidhis injunctions; and Nishedhas - prohibitions. They prescribe and prohibit acts in accordance with the birth or Varna - (caste) and stage of life - Ashrama - of the individual. The object of these injunctions and prohibitions was the purification and perfection of the individual, leading to

Moksha through the cessation of birth and death.

The Smritis were augmented and revised by the sages over the centuries since Manu laid down the Institutes of Manu or Manusmriti. Thus the Smritis were free to develop as long as they did not contradict the Srutis (Vedas) which remained final authority in all cases.

These Smritis were called the Dharmashastras - which are the Hindu Law Books. Dharma means, inter alia, rules governing human conduct; duty; and submission to rules. These rules contained in the Smritis or Dharmashastras owe their origin to the Srutis or Vedas: thus they too, together with the laws embodied therein, are of divine origin. The Vedas or Srutis also constitute the Dharmashastra, being the very source of the laws; however, for practical reasons the Smritis alone are referred to as the Dharmashastras, since the Smritis developed the positive Hindu Law. This distinction has prevailed since the time of Manu:

SRŪTISTU VEDO VIKṢEYO DHARMAŚĀSTRANTU VAI SMRITI

(By Sruti is known the Veda, and by Smriti the Dharmashastra)

(Sarkar, 1940; 12)

The Manusmriti is the principal Dharmashastra; the Institutes of Yajnavalkya, the Narada-Smriti and Vishnu-Smriti constituting the other important sources of Hindu Law.

The Manusmriti, also known as the Manava Dharma Shastra, is the most authoritative work on Hindu Law. Much of modern Hindu Law is developed from the Manusmriti, even in British

and Independent India. The Manusmriti laid great stress on the Varnashrama Dharma. The Varna Dharma divided society according to innate qualities to perform duties, into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. The Ashrama Dharma divided man's life into four stages - Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. Sannyasa is the stage of total renunciation and complete devotion to spiritual contemplation. In addition to the Varnashramadharma, there also existed the four Purusharthas, or four goals of human life - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Dharma or righteousness is the first goal. This implies the performance of one's duties on righteous lines, thereby acquiring Artha (wealth) in order to satisfy one's own and one's family's needs (Kama). After a life lived righteously and to the full, one had to turn to the spiritual development of the individual - Moksha. These four goals begin with Dharma and end with Moksha, thereby making the material life nothing more than an intermediate stage. It can be deduced from this that the Hindus, including their law-givers, gave more attention to spiritual advancement than to material achievement.

The Institutes of Yalnavalkya (Yajnavalkyasmriti) is the next in importance. This work has an air of modernity about it, and the Mitakshara School of Hindu Law, which applies throughout India except Bengal, where the Dayabhaga school prevails, was founded by Vijnaneshwara on the basis of the Yajnavalkya Smriti.

HINDU LAW OF INHERITANCE/SUCCESSION

In this field of Hindu Law the statute has become paramount on account of the complexities of the Mitakshara and Dayabhaga Succession. The confusion of these two major schools of law has been obviated by means of the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, although the basic framework as well as the classification of succession into Hindu male and Hindu female succession have been retained. The Mitakshara principle of propinquity with regard to succession has also been entrenched in the Hindu Succession Act. The Act has removed the exclusion of females from succession, and the preference for agnatic succession has been modified.

Let us have a brief look at the ancient Hindu law of succession: This is based on the Institutes of Yajnavalkya, and moulded on the joint family. In this scheme all male relations inherit in their order: agnates or gotrajas (those related by blood or adoption wholly through the male side) and then cognates or bandhus (not wholly related through the male side). Even amongst the agnates there was preference given to the sapindas over the samanodakas, because the latter did not have the capacity to offer the pindas or oblations to the departed. Thus the law of succession was moulded on spiritual considerations. The Privy Council confirmed this view in VIDACHELA V RANGANATHAN 1922 PC 33:

> "It is a mistake to suppose that the doctrine of spiritual benefit does not enter into the

scheme of inheritance propounded in the Mitakshara..."

"And apart from this it seems to be well established that cakes (PINDAS) offered to the paternal ancestors are of superior efficacy to those offered to maternal ancestors".

Women were as a general rule excluded from inheritance, unless expressly named heirs. The Bombay High Court recognised female agnates as heirs and the Madras Court gave recognition to female cognates. The widow inherited if she had been lawfully wedded and remained loyal. She inherited the widow's estate, and her husband's heirs followed her. In the Mitakshara, the widow used to inherit it as Stridhana, which was the only property a woman was allowed to inherit by the Manusmriti. Stridhana has been abolished by the Hindu Succession Act of 1956.

The Succession Act of 1956 applies to all Hindus as we understand the term in South Africa, as well as Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs. It applies in all parts of India except Jammu an Kashmir. The Act contains features common to any modern succession law, and the bulk of the Act deals with intestate Succession. Section 10 of the Act describes the distribution of the property of the Hindu male, between class I and class II heirs as listed in the schedule. Class I heirs are son, daughter, widow, mother, son and daughter of predeceased son, widow of predeceased son, son and daughter of predeceased

daughter, son or daughter of a predeceased son of a predeceased son, widow of a predeceased son of a predeceased son. The order of succession amongst class I heirs is as follows:

(i) the intestate's widow, or if there are more than one widow, all the widows together, shall take one share;

(ii) the surviving sons and daughters, and the mother of the intestate shall each take one share;

(iii) the heirs in the branch of each predeceased son or each predeceased daughter of the intestate shall take between them one share.

Class II heirs are made up of: the father, son's daughter's sons and daughters, brother and sister of the intestate, daughter's grandchildren, and the parents and brothers and sisters of the intestate's parents. It is interesting to note that a father is considered a class II heir, as a result of the Mitakshara school's views of propinquity.

THE RIGHTS OF A HINDU MARRIAGE

The Hindu Shastras considered marriage to be a religious institution. Marriage is the last of the ten purifying sacraments or Samskaras in a Hindu's life. It is enjoined upon man for procreation and the begetting of sons to continue the family and offer oblations (eg. Pinda). The commentator Raghunandana says that the bride was not a real party to the marriage: She was the subject of a gift (Kanyadana). Hindu law vested the bride absolutely in her parents and guardians,

thus her consent was unnecessary. The marriage of the bride amounted to a transfer of the dominium from father to husband. The Mitakshara School defined wife as Patni - the lawfully wedded wife who was married in the approved manner, and who may become the husband's heir. There were eight forms of marriage identified by the Shastras - four approved forms viz. Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, and four forms that were not approved - viz. Gandharva, Asura, Rakshasa and Paishacha. Only the Brahma and the Asura forms are used today.

Every male Hindu was competent to marry, and marriage was the only sacrament compulsory for woman. Only an extreme degree of mental derangement was considered a disqualification for marriage. Impotency was not a disqualification. The age approved for marriage was 24-30 years for boys and 8-12 years for girls. This age was justified thus: Marriage was for the fulfilment of religious duty and immediate gratification of the senses at this stage was not possible. Furthermore, the young bride could be easily assimilated into her husband's family. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 has laid down the age of 21 years for boys and 18 years for girls for a valid marriage.

There were many legal consequences to the Hindu marriage. The bride or wife acquired membership and domicile of the husband's family, as well as its gotra. The husband acquired custody of the bride's person. The wife retained her husband's gotra, and could marry into her father's gotra if she became a widow!

The rights and duties of the husband and wife arose out of operation of law. The wife was obliged to reside with her husband wherever he chose to be domiciled, even if the husband had another wife. In this regard it is important to note that the Hindu marriage Act of 1955 prohibits bigamy in section 17; and it is a criminal offence in terms of the Indian Penal Code (SS 494, 495).

The husband was bound to maintain the wife and live with her. The wife qualified for maintenance from his estate after his death, as long as she remained chaste. However, a wife could not claim maintenance from her husband if she lived in her father's home against the wishes of her husband, or deserted him without cause. The wife was entitled to separate, and claim maintenance from him if the husband habitually treated her with cruelty and violence.

A Hindu marriage is a sacred institution, and once it is solemnised with the prescribed rites, it is complete and binding, even if it is not consummated. The Act make provision for the registration of a Hindu marriage for facilitation of proof thereof, but registration is not obligatory. This emphasizes the binding nature of the Hindu marriage, something which the South African Legal system would have to take cognisance of.

DIVORCE

A Hindu marriage was regarded as an indissoluble union between man and wife, and this union extended to the next world. Thus Hindu law did not recognise divorce. However, it has been held by the courts that where divorce is recognized as a custom, it attains legal force. The divorced wife was obliged to return all the ornaments to the husband, and if she remarried, her next husband had to reimburse the previous husband the marriage expenses of the failed marriage. This may be regarded as a disincentive to divorce for the purpose of marrying another person! In any case, the divorce and remarriage of the woman was against the spirit of Hindu Law, and her second marriage did not acquire legal status.

The Hindu Law had provision for separation of man and wife, and even for desertion or renunciation (Tyaga). But the marriage tie was not dissolved by these, and apostasy also did not dissolve a Hindu marriage. It is easy to deduce the binding force of the Hindu marriage from these facts. The Hindu Marriage Act provides for judicial separation as well as divorce on the same lines as any other modern statute on the subject. It is interesting to note that, contrary to the traditional Hindu Law, apostasy is recognised as a ground for Divorce in the Hindu Marriage Act.

REMARRIAGE

Remarriage can be considered in two circumstances; following

divorce; or upon the death of one of the partners in a marriage.

Hindu law had permitted a man to remarry, or to contract a second or further marriage, but the Hindu Marriage Act prohibits bigamy with criminal sanctions.

The Hindu sages extolled single-husbandedness for women; ie. they did not favour a woman remarrying: Nevertheless they did not absolutely forbid it because they took into account human needs and inclinations.

Narada and Parasara allowed a woman to remarry even while the first husband was still alive, if he had abandoned her for any reason whatsoever or he had entered a religious order, or had become impotent or outcaste. It is stated that such re-marriages were confined to the lower caste groups.

REMARRIAGE OF WIDOWS

The Smritis, which are the fundamental lawbooks of the Hindus, provided three alternative dispensations for widows: suttee, ascetism and remarriage. Suttee has been abolished by legislation, although one still occasionally hears of acts of Suttee - when the wife joins her deceased husband in the funeral pyre.

The ascetic life of strict discipline and spiritual pre-occupation was the ideal for High-caste Hindus. The choice of remarriage was thereby precluded. This necessitated the passing of the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, after much effort towards it by the revered Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar.

The Act gave validity to a marriage contracted by a Hindu widow.

The foregoing demonstrates the far-reaching influence of the Hindu legal heritage even in modern statutory enactments. Whenever liberal innovations have been made they are most laudable.

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THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

IN

SOUTH AFRICA: A STUDY

OF RELIGION IN ACTION

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INTRODUCTION

The history of religions is punctuated by the appearance of new sects, religions or denominations in times of transition, stress, social and religious decay. Under conditions of rapid social change, acculturation or intensive cultural contact, the traditional institutional structures of a society tends to break down. These new movements are an expression of and dissatisfaction with the declining trends in religious and cultural values in a given society, and a desire for revival, regeneration and restoration, i.e. a need for revitalization.

Since the mid 19th century Hindu society has felt an unprecedented urge for religious revival and renewal, giving rise to various movements. Many new Hindu movements arose in India which are both a response and accommodation to the British rule in India and an attempt was made to renew, revive and revitalize Hindu religion, customs, practices and society. The three most prominent movements which emerged during this period are the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission which have subsequently been classified as the Neo-Hindu Movements, incarnating this spirit of change. The Neo-Hindu Movement was in essence a movement aimed at the resurgence of the whole of Hindu society and as such its primary concern was its spiritual awakening. This they sought to achieve by purifying their own religion by means of ideas derived from itself. The Neo-Hindu spirit was a pervasive one; it was potent enough to outstrip the bounds of religion properly so-called and to irradicate at

once the fields of contemporary literature, the fine arts, music, history, education and politics. The movement itself had a large scope - it was in fact the embodiment of a vision of the new India as it could be made (Nath 1981: 7).

If one were to read many of the books and articles written by scholars who deal with modern India one might conclude that the Hindu renaissance ends with the death of Sri Aurobindo or Radhakrishnan, who were most certainly the intellectual giants of the post independence period. But a visit to India provides the intelligent observer with a different picture. One becomes immediately aware that new gurus have taken the place of those who have died, and that the Hindu renaissance continues in full bloom. Of these gurus one of the most famous is Swami Sivananda, the founder of the Divine Life Society (Miller 1984: 81).

Swami Sivananda was born on 8 September 1887 in Pattamadami in Tamil Nadu. His father an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva descended from the family of Appayya Dikshitar, a 16th century saint scholar whom Sivananda describes as peerless, not only among his contemporaries but even among scholars of several decades before and after him.

From his childhood Sivananda nurtured religious and spiritual tendencies and selflessness. He was educated in a western styled institution and so he was exposed to western ideas and values from his school days (Gyan 1980: 22).

In 1903 after having passed his matriculation examination Sivananda entered the Tanjore Medical Institute. After the

completion of his medical degree Sivananda spent the next 6 years practicing medicine while at the same time he was the editor of a medical journal founded by him in 1909. Through the journal he sought to channel his energies to be of service to humanity at large.

Besides allopatic medicine Sivananda acquired knowledge of Ayurveda, (natural healing), and synthesized both for excellent remedies for man's physical sufferings.

In 1913 at the invitation of a medical associate Swami Sivananda sailed for Malaya where he joined the staff of the Rubber Estate Hospital. As a doctor he was conscientious, methodical, courteous, sympathetic; the sick found him a man who cared for them, who cheered them and encouraged them. Sivananda brought faith and religion to the sick and always prayed while attending to his patients.

Swami Sivananda's spiritual tendencies grew in Malaya for he found time to read books on philosophy, spirituality, Yoga and Vedanta. During this period his medical profession brought him close to the suffering masses and he began to ponder on the nature of the transitory world. He reflected on questions relating to the meaning and purpose of life and existence. In the midst of all this inner-turmoil Sivananda felt that the call of the Divine was demanding and urgent, thus he decided to return to India to find a place where he could achieve absolute serenity, perfect peace and lasting happiness.

On his return to India he assumed the life of a parivrajaka

(a wandering mendicant) and embarked on a pilgrimage to several holy centres in India. In 1924 he arrived at Rishikesh in the Himalayas, a place sacred and renowned for its spiritual atmosphere. It was here that Sivananda was initiated into the order of Sannyasa by Swami Vishwananda Saraswathi. Henceforth Sivananda worked tirelessly in serving humanity through the charitable dispensary founded by him. He also spent much of his time rendering spiritual discourses, hosting religious conferences and writing articles on the Vedanta philosophy. He toured several parts of the country conducting sankirtan, public or congregational singing and discourses. In January 1936 after a successful Sankirtan tour in India Swami Sivananda was convinced that the revival and renewal of Hindu religion, culture and society is possible through an organised effort. As a consequence he initiated the founding of the Divine Life Society on the 6th April 1939.

The aims and objects of the Divine Life Society can be tabulated briefly as follows (Krishnananda 1967: 26-27)

1. To disseminate spiritual knowledge;

a. By publication of books, pamphlets and magazines dealing with ancient, oriental and occidental philosophy, religion and medicine.

b. By propagating the name of the Lord and by holding and arranging spiritual discourses and conferences and frequent sankirtans.

c. By establishing training centres for the practice of Yoga, for moral and spiritual sadhanas, to enable aspirants to achieve regeneration through worship, devotion, wisdom, right action and higher meditation with systematic training in asanas, Pranayana, Dharma, Dhyana, and Samadhi.

d. By doing all such acts and things as may be necessary and conducive to the moral, spiritual and cultural uplift of mankind.

2. To establish and run educational institutions and assist deserving students by granting them scholarship for undertaking research in Hindu religion and philosophy and comparative religion as well as to train them to disseminate spiritual knowledge in the most effective manner.

3. To help deserving orphans and destitutes.

4. To establish and run medical organisations hospitals or dispensaries for the treatment of disease and dispensing medicines and performing surgical operations.

The above aims and objects of the Divine Life Society clearly indicates their concern for the spiritual regeneration of Hindu religion and culture and for the physical well-being of humanity at large.

Swami Sivananda attained mahasamadhi on 14 July 1963, aged 76 years. He was succeeded by his ardent disciple Swami Chidananda who still continues to lead the Divine Life Society up to the present day. Under the leadership of Swami Sivananda and subsequently Swami Chidananda and a host of dedicated

sannyasins, sadhakas and devotees the Divine Life Society has established numerous branches in India and abroad. Currently there are over 300 branches engaged in the propagation and promotion of the message of "Divine Life". Most of the foreign branches are found in Britain, Kenya, France, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Fiji, Australia, USA and South Africa. These Divine Life Society branches are spreading and expanding the mission of their founder, Swami Sivananda, and thus have become vital instruments of creating a new mood for the renewal of religion and culture.

SWAMI SIVANANDA'S CONCEPT OF DIVINE LIFE

The doctrine of Divine Life provides the theological and ideological basis for the establishment, existence and contribution of the Divine Life Society. The philosophy of Divine Life is in essence Vedantic. Sivananda taught that one's present birth is the occassion for the attainment of one's ultimate goal - Moksha or God-realization, i.e. a desire to live in the spirit or the Divine. God is the source of life, and the purpose of this existence is to return to its original source, Brahman. To lead a Divine Life means transformation of one's inner self and transcendence of the I and Thou dichotomy and this can be achieved by realizing the oneness of Atman and Brahman, the Pure Principle of life. (Sivananda 1976: 8)

This Divine Life is attainable in this existence through a process of spiritual discipline designated "Integral Yoga" by Swami Sivananda. Integral Yoga encompasses the four main parts to God-realization i.e. Karma Yoga, the path of selfless service, Bhakti Yoga the path of devotion, Raja Yoga, the path of mystical union and Jnana Yoga the path of knowledge, which frees man from the bondage of karma-samsara. Sivananda practiced and preached all four Yoga systems together. He himslef said "I practice and advocate the yoga of synthesis"(Sivananda 1954: 85).

The concept of Divine Life as taught by Swami Sivananda aims at the integration of the whole person; religion must educate and develop the whole person, his heart, intellect and hand, only then will he reach perfection. The Yoga of synthesis alone will bring about integral development; action, emotion and intelligence should work in perfect harmony or unison. The ideal of Divine Life is to become harmonious and balanced in all directions. This can be achieved by the practice of the yoga of synthesis (Sivananda : Bliss Divine (s a): 568). The yoga of synthesis expounded by Swami Sivananda is an echo of the yoga systems as taught in the Bhagavad Gita. In the Gita the yoga systems are sometimes treated separately and their characteristics pointed out. But in actual spiritual life they are inseparable. They are only the different aspects of a single process of discipline leading to a well balanced spiritual life (Sarma 1966: 114).

To live a 'Divine Life' is to live a Dharmic or moral righteous life by obeying the precepts of the Hindu shastras, by cultivating virtue, such as kindness, generosity, humanity, tolerance, compassion, love and selfless-service. Sivananda considers Divine Life as that life which gives the individual inner peace, joy and satisfaction of being with God.

The philosophical foundation of Divine Life is Vedantic. Everything is seen as part of the Divine Being. When the individual starts living in Divine Life he sees everything as part of the Divine Brahman. "It is Brahman alone that shines as the world of varigated objects" states Swami Sivananda, just as there is no difference between gold and the ornaments made from it so there is no difference between God and the universe (Sivananda 1973: 7). One's world view changes and one perceives everything as a manifestation of Brahman, the Divine Being.

According to Sivananda, every individual irrespective of colour, creed or sex can pursue the object of life and attain Divine Life or Moksha. Every member of the Divine Life Society aims to lead the Divine Life, live in Divine Life, light up the Divine Life everywhere.

Swami Sivananda, a follower of Sankara's Advaita Vedanta philosophy believed as stated in the Upanishad that man is essentially divine and the main purpose of his existence is to regain his divinity. Hinduism as a spiritual discipline aims at the liberation of man from Karma-Samsara, transmigration

from the cycle of birth and death. Moksha is the central concern of Hinduism and Swami Sivananda repeatedly made it the main theme of his teachings, writings and discourses.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African branch of the Divine Life society took root in Durban in 1949 through the initiative of V Srinivasan, an ardent admirer of Swami Sivananda. As a result of regular correspondence with Swami Sivananda, Srinivasan received instructions from the Swami to establish a branch of the Divine Life Society in South Africa. Initially satsangs, religious services, were held at the Umgeni Road Temple in Durban. Srinivasan undertook a pilgrimage to Rishikesh in 1956 where he was initiated into the holy order of sannyasa by his guru Swami Sivananda and given the monastic name of Swami Sahajananda. Upon his return to Durban in the same year Swami Sahajananda worked dedicatedly to disseminate the teachings of his Master by means of satsangs, publication and distribution of literature and humanitarian work.

In November 1955 due to the generosity of one of the devotees the Divine Life society acquired 5 acres of land in Reservoir Hills in Durban. As a result of the dedicated fund raising efforts of its members the society began constructing an ashram on the said property in March 1959. On 9 September of the same year the ashram was officially opened, thus providing the

society with a permanent home. The Reservoir Hills ashram which is the headquarters of the Society in South Africa is the nucleus of the Society's multifarious activities in the country. It is also from here that new branches of the Society are initiated and established in several parts of the country. Presently the society has 6 ashrams in South Africa as well as over 50 branches spread throughout the country.

The rapid growth of the society in South Africa over the past three decades is due largely to the dedicated and inspired leadership of the Spiritual Head of the Society, Swami Sahajananda.

THE GURU

The Divine Life Society is based on the ancient Upanishadic institution, the ashram, which operates on monastic lines. It is a retreat centred around a guru whose presence in many ways makes the ashram. The traditional concept of the guru is a unique idea in the cultural treasury of India. For, it is this concept that is to a large extent responsible for the safe and unbroken perpetuation of some of the most important aspects of India's spiritual heritage. It is the institution of Guru Shishya parampara, Guru disciple lineage, that has from generation to generation and over the centuries closely safe-guarded and transmitted the living experience of the seers of the Vedic age (Sivananda 1981: 29).

As in traditional Hinduism where the guru is the first basic

feature of ashram life, Swami Sahajananda, the Spiritual Head of the Society in South Africa, is the focus and inspiration of the ashram. As Spiritual Head, Swami Sahajananda represents traditional authority, all decisions and activites of the ashram must first receive his sanction and blessings. While he is Spiritual Head, Swami Sahajananda is also directly involved in overseeing the secular duties of the ashram. Although he is deeply immersed in traditional Hinduism he is not removed from the needs and challenges that face modern Hindu society in a Western secular environment. It is this awareness that attracts many enquiring young people who are products of this milieu to the society.

In addition to being guru, i.e. spiritual preceptor who guides the devotees in the spiritual path, he is totally involved in the multifaceted activities of the ashram.

Swami Sahajananda characterises the true spirit of sannyasa. His entire life is dedicated to selfless service for the welfare of humanity as a whole. His actions and life echoes the true spirit of sannyasa as reflected in the Bhagavad Gita - Sarva bhutah hite ratah - one who delights in the welfare of all beings.

THE ASHRAM

The Divine Life Society is modelled on the ancient religious institution, the ashram. The ashram is an important institution in Hinduism that has existed since Upanishadic times and

has served an important spiritual function in disseminating religious and philosophical ideas. Everything in the ashram way of life, i.e. work, prayer or devotion, awakens unto an awareness of Brahman, the transcedent absolute.

The ashram of the Society at Reservoir Hills, Durban consists of a mobile and a permanent community. The mobile community is comprised of visitors and spiritual aspirants who are welcome to stay at the ashram for a limited period. Visitors and aspirants residing at the ashram are required to follow a spiritual routine which includes asanas, meditation, study and karma yoga. The purpose of their stay should be utilised to enhance their spiritual life. The permanent residents consist of the guru, brahmacharis, brahmacharinis, girhasthas, i.e. married individuals who have dedicated their lives to the spiritual path, and sadhakas. The sadhakas are those devotees who are totally committed to the ashram although they may not necessarily reside at the ashram.

One of the most striking features is its strict code of discipline which governs the life of the ashramites. This disciplined atmosphere is a source of the strength of the ashram because it ensures that the ashramites, who are looked upon by the public as a source of inspiration, live a lifestyle that is a credit to the sannyasa ashram. A daily routine is maintained by the ashramites who are involved in different forms of karma yoga. This includes working in the Sivananda printing press, building projects, collection of funds, literature distribution

conducting prayer services etc. The brahmacharis and sadhakas occupy themselves in the sadhana of selfless service. The injunctions of Swami Sivananda viz. serve, love, purify, meditate and realise are given practical expression in the life and actions of the ashramites at the ashram where God and religion are taught and lived. The ashramites constitute the core of the ashram since all the undertakings of the ashram depends to a large extent on the dedication and devotion of the ashramites.

RELIGIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The Divine Life Society as a religious institution is rendering spiritual and cultural service with a view to spreading the salient features of Hindu religion and culture which proclaims that man is essentially divine and the aim of human life is to realize this great truth. The Divine Life Society lays emphasis on all aspects of life and is fulfilling a valuable service in catering for the religious and cultural upliftment of society through various departments of service such as the satsang, Sadhana (Yoga) camp, Children's Cultural Centre and publication and dissemination of literature.

THE SATSANG

The satsang is the most important religious activity of the Society. It is a time when the devotees, the ashramites and

the laity come together as a worshipping community. The Satsang which is held daily at the ashram broadly includes prayer, kirtan, bhajans, religious discourses, reading from scriptures, listening to taped music, discourses on saints and sages, meditation, chanting and public lectures.

Swami Sivananda constantly extolled students to seek the company of holy personages and listen to their conversation; the novitiate on the spiritual path will strengthen his own aspiration by communion with others who share them. He maintained that satsang is of great help in the attainment of Moksha. Satsang purifies and illuminates a person and assist in gaining knowledge of the Divine or Supreme Self. Faith in God and in the scriptures, attachment and devotion to God is developed through regular attendence of satsang. Through constant satsang one will gradually realise its incalculable benefits and utilise it profitably in the realisation of the Self (Sivananda 1980: 606).

THE SADHANA (YOGA) CAMP

In its endeavour to constantly find new methods to accelerate the spiritual development of devotees the Divine Life Society inaugurated the monthly Sadhana (Yoga) Camp in January 1983. The Yoga Camp caters for the devotees who seek to speed up their sadhana by following the spiritual precepts laid down by Swami Sivananda. The integral philosophy of Swami Sivananda forms the

basis of the teaching given during the yoga camp.

For Swami Sivananda, sadhana is spiritual movement that is consciously systematized. The object of sadhana is to release life from the limitations to which it is bound. One's interest in sadhana should be cultivated by constantly keeping company with the holy, by studying religious scriptures, by prayer, repetition of the Lord's Name and meditation. Sivananda maintained that sadhana should be regular, continuous, unbroken and earnest if the aspirant wants to attain self-realisation. Every bit of sadhana, according to him, is recorded without fail in the hidden consciousness. No sadhana is ever performed in vain (Sivananda, Bliss Divine (sa): 422-428).

The Sadhana Camp is held on a monthly basis at the Reservoir Hills and Pietermaritzburg branches of the Divine Life Society. On average the attendance at the Reservoir Hills Sadhana Camp is between 300-350 people. The Sadhana Camp follows a fixed programme every month with slight variations when the need arises. The format of the Sadhana Camp includes the following spiritual practices, satsang, sadhana, chanting, meditation, yoga asanas, scriptural studies, karma yoga, religious discourses, group discussions and cultural items.

The Yoga Camp serves to expose devotees to the vast scope of Swami Sivananda's teachings, thus encouraging integral yoga to be given practical expression in their daily life. The Camp offers the devotees an opportunity to experience the spiritual way of life. Swami Sahajananda stresses that the Camp

helps to perfect skills through worshipfully performed actions.

SIVANANDA CHILDREN'S CULTURAL CENTRE

The Sivananda Children's Cultural Centre which incorporates the children's Sunday school was officially inaugurated on Guru Purnima day in August 1983 by Swami Sahajananda. The Sunday School which is held every Sunday from 9.00 a.m. to 10.15 a.m. follows a set format. The subject matter taught at the Sunday School is based on a syllabus compiled by senior devotees under the guidance of Swami Sahajananda. The teachings are drawn mainly from the writings of Swami Sivananda, although the writings of other saints and philosophers are also utilised. Swami Sahajananda stressed that the teachings of the Sunday School be an incorporation of Sivananda's integral yoga, which seek to educate and develop the whole person-mind, body and soul.

In addition to formal education the children are taught to apply the tenets of their learning in their daily life. Emphasis is placed not only on theoretical learning but practical application. The activities of the Sunday School also incorporates selfless-service in the social sphere. In this regard the children are involved in reaching out to the community through feeding schemes. Swami Sivananda stated that childhood is the most impressionable period. Impressions formed at an early age forms deep roots in one's nature. It is therefore the most conducive period to create reiligious impressions in the minds

of children (Sivananda 1985: 17-18).

Swami Sahajananda also holds the view that the child is most elastic and very easily moulded. Hence the Sunday School aims to help the growing child acquire and cultivate spiritual qualities and to create religious impressions in their mind.

THE SIVANANDA PRESS-LITERATURE

Dissemination of spiritual knowledge in the form of printed literature was for Swami Sivananda one of the most important means of transmitting religion to the people. This Jnana Dhana or gift of knowledge possesses a characteristic which other gifts fail to have. Swami Sivananda employed that the study of religious books, swadhyaya, is important for a householder sadhaka as well as other aspirants. They provide for him a constant reminder of the goal of life, they fan the embers of his Shraddha and keep the fires of spirituality constantly alive. (Venkatesananda 1961: 102). Swami Sivananda as one of India's more significant interpreters of the Hindu tradition is credited with writing an astonishing number of over 340 books and pamphlets during his life time.

The Divine Life Society in South Africa is extensively involved in the printing and distribution of spiritual literature. All the spiritual literature distributed by the Society is printed at the Sivananda Press housed at the ashram in Reservoir Hills. The ashram has one of the most modern printing press in

the country with equipment valued at over 2 million rands. All the work in the Sivananda Press is done by means of voluntary labour. Due to the vital importance of the dissemination of spiritual literature, work in the press is considered of prime importance and given priority. Much of the literature published at the Sivananda Press is exported to branches in other countries viz. India, Australia, USA and Britian.

Swami Sahajananda in addition to his numerous duties as Spiritual Head works tirelessly daily in the Press and undertakes all the printing himself.

Over the years the Divine Life Society has published several thousand copies of Swami Sivananda's numerous works. In addition to publishing books and magazines the Society often publishes leaflets, booklets and reports to inform and educate the public on religion, philosophy and the various activities that the society is engaged in. Most of the literature published by the Society is distributed free to the public or sold at minimum cost.

RELIGIO SOCIAL-ACTIVITES

The Divine Life Society, while it is first and foremost a religious institution, is deeply involved in a vigorous programme in the social sphere, directed to the social upliftment of the community regardless of distinction of race, colour or creed.

The deep involvement of the Divine Life Society in humanitarian services is in keeping with Swami Sivananda's strong

emphasis on selfless-service to one's fellow-men. According to Swami Venkatesananda (1961: 88), a disciple of Swami Sivananda, one of the strongest aspects of Sivananda's creed and philosophy of life can be expressed as "give, give, give". To him the word represents the quintessence of Vedanta. The humanitarian work of the society is viewed as a spiritual discipline. It aids the sadhakas to develop purity, compassion and spiritual values and attributes Service should be performed with the pure spirit of karma yoga, selfless service and must be accompained by the corect bhav, attitude.

The humanitarian activites of the Society are wide and varied. It incorporates the building of schools and clinics for the underprivileged, poor-feeding schemes, Mobile Health Services, distribution of food hampers, feeding of school children, self-help projects and prayer services for prisoners.

BLACK EDUCATION

One of the spheres in which the Society is rendering valuable service to the community is the building of schools for the Black community in the Natal KwaZulu area. The school building project that was initiated in 1974 has been an ongoing activity ever since. By the end of 1987 the society has built over 60 schools in the Natal KwaZulu area. In addition it also under-took construction of additional classrooms and other facilities to existing schools.

Another major project, completed by the Society is the construction of a large complex on a five and half acre site at Empangeni. This complex, housing an art and crafts centre, caters for the training of Black women in sewing and other handicrafts.

Certificates are given to women who complete the course of training successfully.

The Divine Life Society is also engaged, at its premises, in manufacturing and distributing school furniture to schools in need of such equipment. The Society has invested in a complete set of machinery for desk building purposes.

The most ambitious project that the Society has undertaken in recent times in catering for the needs of Black education is the construction of the Sivananda Technical College and High School at KwaMashu near Durban. The project arose out of the acute need for technical education since there is a tremendous shortage of trained personnel among the Black community to occupy industrial positions. The Sivananda Technical College which opened in 1987 is the first and largest of its kind in KwaMashu and cost over 2 million rand to construct. The College which caters for both high school as well as technical education provides training for students in most technical disciplines such as motor mechanics, carpentry, metal work and electronics.

At the inauguration of the Technical College Dr F T Mdlalose, a Cabinet Minister in the KwaZulu Government expressed the gratitude of the people of KwaZulu to the Divine Life Society for the services rendered to the Black Community, in the following words (Report, Divine Life Society, September 1985:2)

"In a world torn by unrest, violence and selfishness, Swami Sivananda's Gospel of neighbourly love and service is the only way to bring about peace, harmony and goodwill".

MEDICAL RELIEF

The activities of the Divine Life Society in its efforts to serve have not been restricted only to the educational field but the health needs of the Black community is also catered for. Since the beginning of the involvement of the Society in its work 14 years ago in this sphere, 4 clinics and 4 dormitories for crippled Black children have been built. To commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of Swami Sivananda in 1987, the Society built a massive clinic known as the Sivananda Clinic at Umzinyati in Inanda, Durban. It comprises a large maternity ward, X-ray unit, baby's ward and outpatient section. The Society also provided an ambulance for the clinic.

A Mobile Health Clinic which travels to very poor Indian and Black areas which provides health services is also operated by the Society. The work of the clinic is undertaken by a team of dedicated Indian, Black and White devotees.

The positive impression created by the Divine Life Society for working selflessly for the social upliftment of the Black community has led to further requests by the community for their continued assistance. This sentiment is echoed in the address of the Mayor of KwaMashu, who recently drew attention to the great deal of suffering that her people were presently

experiencing. She said she was greatly moved by the attitude of the Divine Life Society, "which had decided to continue its work in spite of the recent disturbances in KwaMashu and Inanda (Report, Divine Life Society, September 1985: 2).

The Divine Life Society also provides free medical assistance to the community at the Sivananda Clinic at its headquarters in Reservoir Hills. The Clinic which was established in 1961 is staffed by medical doctors from the community who offer their services on a voluntary basis. Two types of treatment viz. Allopathic and Homeopathic is provided by the Clinic which treats an average of over 200 patients every month.

Swami Sivananda always taught that selfless service to the sick and neglected is service to God. He believed that one of the best forms of service is treating the sick in the spirit of selflessness. In the self same spirit of their Master the Divine Life Society is rendering invaluable service in providing medical aid to the poor, sick and needy.

POOR FEEDING

In the wake of economic recession and unemployment another important area in which the Divine Life Society is providing valuable service to the poor is through the distribution of food hampers to the community as well as providing free-meals to indigent school children. The Society distributes over 400 food hampers three times a year in the Black townships of Abalindi and Lamontville. Apart from the usual distribution

of food hampers the Society also provides assistance whenever requested. Numerous families in need in the Indian Township of Phoenix also receive food hampers on a monthly basis from the Society.

The Society is involved in an extensive school-feeding programme in the Indian, Black and Coloured communities. The Abalindi Welfare Society prepares meals daily on behalf of the Society for over 1000 Black children in the Inanda area. The Society's ashram in Pietermaritzburg provides lunch for over 1000 Indian, Black and Coloured school children daily. The ashram in Chatsworth provides meals for over 1500 school children in Chatsworth, Shallcross and Merebank. In Phoenix the Society provides meals for about 1000 students daily.

The Divine Life Society in providing assistance in the social sphere does not distinguish in terms of race or creed. Assistance is rendered to all those in need of help and those who approach the Society for assistance.

CONCLUSION

The Divine Life society has been part of the South African ~~context~~ for the past 40 years. Within this short timespan it has grown into one of the largest and most influential movements in the country. The Divine Life Society appeared on the South African scene at a time when the Hindu community was faced with several challenges, amongst them that of secularization,

westernization and the in-roads made into Hinduism by Christian missionaries. The need for organised religious and cultural activity was urgently required during this period. The Society, like other neo-Hindu movements that arose in South Africa during this period had a vital role to fulfill. The Divine Life Society with its sound organisational structure is better equipped to deal with the challenges of adaption necessary in a foreign context. The society has fulfilled an important role in substituting the function fulfilled previously by the joint family. It provides the devotees with a sense of congregational worship. It also served to intensify a sense of identity amongst its adherents in that devotees take pride in seeing themselves as members of an organised religious institution.

One of the reasons why the Divine Life Society is expanding in South Africa is the well structured and regulated administration and organisation of the Society. This accounts for the efficient functioning of the society which is involved deeply in its multifaceted activities. The steady source of income from regular donors, well-wishers and devotees, as well as the sales of books has placed the Society on a sound financial footing. It is as a result of its strong financial position that the Movement is able to undertake its numerous activities.

How potent the neo-Hindu formula of uniting humanitarian service with the search for spiritual experience was, can be seen by the extensive involvement of the Society in the social

sphere where both these aims are combined. The Divine Life Society as an expression of neo-Hinduism as founded in the 19th century has been emphasizing humanistic ideologies encompassing the key concept of humanism i.e. the centrality of man as an object of care and concern. However, despite all the emphasis that the Society in South Africa places on humanitarian service, the ethical ideal of service remains an adjunct to his spiritual quest, the attainment of Moksha.

The Divine Life Society perhaps more than any other group in the Indian community is actively involved in fostering healthier race and intergroup relations between the Black and Indian communities. Despite the divisive laws of our country that isolate groups from one another the Divine Life Society through its programmes of inter-cultural activities and humanitarian work has initiated a move to unite society as a whole and create a better environment for all, built on understanding and mutual love and trust.

The healthy relationship the Society has fostered with the Black community in Natal is reflected in the appreciative words of Dr Oscar Dhlomo, Minister of Education, of the KwaZulu Government, speaking at the inauguration of the Sivananda Technical High School and College:

> "I particularly wish to thank Swamiji for his abiding philanthrophy and concern for his under-privileged fellowmen. We admire your humility, Swamiji, you are an understanding man of God who always has very little to say

> and quite a lot to do. You are a living example of the saying of the Lord: "Love thy neighbour as thyself". When the names of those patriots who laid the foundations for sound race relations in KwaZulu are recalled by future historians, you Swamiji, and the Divine Life Society will not be forgotten".

The Divine Life Society is playing a central role in the development of contemporary Hinduism as a reviver of Hindu religion as a viable way of life and providing an appealing locus of allegiance to contemporary Hindu thought. The Society has given a new self-esteem and prestige to Hinduism in South Africa. Its highly organised and structured programme of activities has taken the message of Hinduism to the larger society mainly through the extensive distribution of spiritual literature. Furthermore, the Society has given practical expression to its philosophy of integral yoga by its deep humanitarian involvement in the social sphere.

The Divine Life Society has permeated Hindu society to a large extent. However, its sphere of influence in infusing the masses with a clear and philosophical understanding of their religion can be expanded even further by reaching out to the masses directly. The absence of trained Hindu religious teachers is a problem that needs to be addressed urgently by the local Hindu Community. The Hindu community at large con-

fronted with the complex societal demands characterised by the scientific age of enquiry seeks guidance and direction from the leading religious institutions. The future direction of Hinduism in South Africa is being shaped by institutions such as the Divine Life Society which has within its fabric viable adaptive alternatives which seek re-orientation of Hinduism from the formal to its fundamental philosophy.

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SRI AUROBINDO :

THE LIFE DIVINE

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INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo Ghose, the political revolutionary who became one of India's greatest mystic philosophers, represents a remarkable synthesis of seemingly irreconcilable opposites: he is at once Indian and Western, ancient and contemporary, mystical and unfailingly practical. In the first decade of this century Sri Aurobindo was one of the most spiritual as well as the most radical of political revolutionaries fighting against the British rule of India. Although he subsequently spent forty years as a recluse dedicated entirely to spiritual discipline (1910-1950), he nevertheless generated a teaching and a community emphatically committed to individual and historical transformation.

The similarities and differences between Aurobindo and other modern Indian figures are also revealing. Like Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo is an original spiritual genius who is regarded as an avatar; like Vivekananda and Gandhi, he embodies the distinctively modern synthesis of spiritual discipline and historical activism; like Tagore, he is a poet, an educationist and a defender of Indian culture. But unlike any of these modern Indian teachers, Sri Aurobindo's influence is only now beginning to spread. In years to come, the significance of his teachings will be increasingly difficult to separate from the meaning given to these teachings by the activities of his disciples. Thus, as this article will show, Sri Aurobindo is not only a very significant

Spiritual teacher, he may also be appropriated by a religious movement in the making.

LIFE HISTORY

The life of Sri Aurobindo falls into three different phases; his boyhood dominated by western education; his young manhood as a discoverer of India and a leader of the Indian nationalist movement; and his mature life as a yogin and spiritual leader. However, Sri Aurobindo's own philosophy ought to warn us against isolation of the various parts of his life. For he insists that the earlier stages of evolution are gathered up in the later, and that the lower is gathered up in the higher, and this is equally true of his own life.

Sri Aurobindo was born on 15 August 1872 in Calcutta. His father gave him an English education in India, then from 1879 he studied in England. Aurobindo was to return to India only in his 21st year, after completing his education in London and Cambridge. He became a scholar of repute in Greek and Latin and in addition also learnt French, German and Italian. Aurobindo was irrevocably influenced by western views of matter, progress, the worth of this world, evolution and history. However, in spite of this purely occidental education and up-bringing Aurobindo ranks foremost amongst the Indians of the present age who have shown a profound knowledge of the soul of India (Satprem 1970 : 15-20).

The second stage of Aurobindo's life was set in Baroda from 1893-1906. His actual job was firstly in administration with the Maharaja, then as Professor of English, and finally as Vice-Principal in Baroda College. It was during this time that he laid the foundations for his future work in India by learning Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages and assimilating the spirit of Indian civilization and Hindu religion. He began a self-culture which later became oriented in the direction of yoga. He also began literary activity in the form of poetry later published at Pondicherry, and articles that were immediately published in the Indu Prakash of Bombay. These articles which dated from as early as 1893-1894 included political writings. And so from as early as his return to India, Aurobindo was engaged in a dual task, namely religious and cultural self-orientation, and political thought. In April 1901 he married Mrinalini who died in 1918 having seen very little of Aurobindo due to his intense political activity during this period of his life. During the period 1906-1910 Aurobindo's activity helped to change the face of Indian politics. He became, along with Tilak, leader of the more extreme Nationalist wing of Congress against the more moderate wing. He anticipated Gandhi on passive resistance, Swaraj, Swadeshi and national education. He edited the Bande Mataram which transformed the political thought of India. Suspected of revolutionary activity he was twice arrested and acquitted. The period of Sri Aurobindo's detention in the Alipur goal in 1908, if we are to judge from

his own words, was the most momentous period in his life. In prison he had a profound religious experience which totally altered the course of his life. This experience took the form of a vision of Sri Krishna and a new call. "Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the Rishis, saints and Avatars, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word This is the Sanathana-dharma this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanathana-dharma that shall be great (Aurobindo 1952:62-63).

In obedience to this message, Sri Aurobindo retired from public life in 1910 and settled in Pondicherry where he spent the rest of his life. The third stage of Aurobindo's life is easily described in outward terms. In correspondence with his disciples he insisted that only he could write about himself, for his inner life was crucial but hidden, but he never did. From 1910-1914 he practised Yoga. From 1914-1921 he conducted a monthly philosophical review named the Arya in which his most important philosophical works appeared. These included The Life Divine, Essays on the Gita, The Synthesis of Yoga, Isa Upanishad, and also reflections upon the Vedas. As first he lived in retirement with four or five disciples.

But later others gathered around him and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram came into being to cater for the needs of the greater numbers who were congregating in Pondicherry. In 1926, on November 24, Aurobindo had the experience of "overmind" which led to his retirement into complete seclusion. The affairs of the Ashram were left in the hands of the Mother, a French disciple, Mrs Mira Richards. Aurobindo continued in Yoga for the rest of his life. He also wrote, edited, kept an interest in the events of the world, and gave occasional darsana to the people. The mahasamadhi of Sri Aurobindo occurred on the 5 December 1950 (Whaling 1979:62-63).

RELIGIO - PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

The 40 years in Pondicherry was the culmination of Aurobindo's endeavours. During that time he gathered up all that had gone before and transformed it under the experience of his spiritual meditations. The Ashram came into being which now continues his work. The legend of Sri Aurobindo was born. The paradox of those years is that a philosophy which stressed the value of matter, the created world, progress, history, and evolution was exemplified in a life in almost complete isolation.

It is impossible to understand the life of Sri Aurobindo without reading his philosophy, and impossible to understand his philosophy without studying his life. In the light of this life-sketch, we will now analyse Aurobindo's religious thought.

As we examine the spiritual sources of the modern Indian leaders, we are struck by the fact that Aurobindo reinterprets and is influenced by the whole range of Hindu scriptures. Like the Brahmo Samaj leaders, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Radhakrishnan, he draws out the implications of Vedanta in his purna Vedanta synthesis. At the same time, he also goes back to the original Veda itself. He also has a deep affinity with the Tantric tradition, and in this he is linked with Ramakrishna. No one else has taken the Veda, Vedanta and Tantra seriously all at the same time; and in this Aurobindo is unique.

The Tantra is important for Aurobindo, both in the sense of its actual substance but even more so in that his general attitude have a Tantric flavour. Even a brief glance at Aurobindo's system is enough to show that it is influenced by the Tantra. At an obvious level there is his stress upon the guru. He himself was and is looked upon as a guru of the highest order. The same is also true of the Mother. Since his death, Aurobindo's samadhi has been at the centre of the Ashram, and he and the Mother are regarded with an exalted reverence by the disciples. In this respect, Aurobindo was following Ramakrishna, and it remains to be seen whether the Aurobindo Ashram and the new town of Auroville built to further his principles will have the same influence as the Ramakrishna Mission.

The teachings of Sri Aurobindo may be traced back through the Tantras, through the Gita, through the Isa Upanishad, to

the Rig Veda itself. The Vedas are of extreme importance for Aurobindo. Aurobindo and Dayananda Saraswati have gone back to the original Veda itself as a source of authority. However, they have used it as an authority in different ways. For Dayananda the Vedas are, as Aurobindo puts it "a plenary revelation of religious, ethical and scientific truth." But Aurobindo goes even further to state that "the Vedas contain other truths of a science the modern world does not at all possess and, in that case, Dayananda has rather understated than overstated the depth and range of the Vedic wisdom " (Aurobindo 1956:37).

Along with Gandhi, Tilak and Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo gives great importance to the Gita. He sees it as drawing out the integral view of life as seen in the Vedas and the early Upanishads. It is primarily a book of yoga. The synthesis of the Gita was an inspiration to Aurobindo in the formulation of his own wider synthesis. The important points that Aurobindo makes in his elaborate commentary "Essays on the Gita", may be briefly stated here. Firstly, the Gita is not merely a gospel of humanitarian work or of social service or of duty for duty's sake, but primarily a a gospel of Yoga or fellowship with God. Secondly, this fellowship implies, on the part of man, both a new birth and a new ideal of work, as exemplified by the birth and the work of the avatar himself. Thirdly, this fellowship has to be won by disinterested action in society, and by a mystic insight into the unity of all things in God. The Gita thus teaches us a synthetic Yoga, harmonizing all the elements of

spiritual life and giving due place to Karma, Bhakti, Dhyana and Jnana. Fourthly, according to the Karma Yoga taught here, we have to surrender not only the fruit of action but also the action itself and its agency. According to Sri Aurobindo, the first step in self-liberation is to get rid of the delusion of agency, to realize that it is Nature that acts and not the soul. The next step is to hand over this agency of Nature to the divine Shakti. When the soul withdraws itself into God and makes its whole, adhara, or its physical and psychical framework act according to His Law - that is its freedom, its utter liberation.

Fifthly, when one's own nature is true to the law of its being, the resulting action will be characterized by ease ~~and~~ and spontaneity. That is what the Gita calls Svadharma. Svadharma depends upon Svabhava. Svadharma, is not caste duty, but work which is organically related to one's own nature. It implies that all action should be determined from within by the natural endowments of the man. Just as the Gita accepts the Vedic theory of sacrifice but gives it a profound turn and a universal significance, so too it accepts the theory of the four Varnas but gives it a subjective and universal meaning. It does not teach any such absurd doctrine as that every man should follow, without regard to his personal bent and capacities, the profession of his parents. What the Gita is concerned with is not the Ancient Aryan social order, but the relation of man's outward life to his inward being, the evolution of his action according to the inner law of nature. Sixthly, the ideal man of the Gita is one who not

only works in accordance with the law of nature, but also transcends nature. By taking refuge in God and surrendering himself entirely to Him, he may be said to have gone beyond the qualities of Nature - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. He is called a Trigunatita or one who has transcended the three qualities of nature. Seventhly, the Gita speaks of three Purusha, namely, Kshara, Akshara and Uttama. According to Sri Aurobindo, Kshara is the individual soul subject to nature. Akshara is the Lord supervising the work of Nature, and Uttama is the Supreme Spirit who pervades nature and extends beyond it.

Aurobindo maintains that the supreme spirit is neither the one nor the many, but the one in, through and beyond the many. Similarly, it is both personal and impersonal for these are all distinctions which are made by our conceptual minds, but which do not exist in Reality. Finally, Sri Aurobindo points out that the Gita gives no support to such one-sided views as illusionism, asceticism, quietism, etc. held by some of the later schools of philosohpy (Sarma 1967:211-212).

This integral view of life with its spear-head of synthetic Yoga, as taught by the Gita, the earlier Upanishads and the mystic parts of the Veda, is retained in the Tantras. For the Tantras, maintain that freedom is to be won within the world, and not outside it, and that is consists in making oneself a perfect instrument of the divine Shakti working in the world.

The aim of Sri Aurobindo is to reaffirm the integral view of life set forth in the Veda, the Isa Upanishad, the Gita and the Tantras, and also to rediscover, as it were, the ancient sadhana and free it as far as possible, from the limitations and the symbolism of any particular theology and make it available for all, without distinction of caste or creed, nationality or religion, so that, following it, humanity may reach a higher plane in its spiritual evolution. He states, "All religions have saved a number of souls, but none has yet been able to spiritualize mankind. For that, there is needed not cult and creed, but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution."

The philosophy that lies behind Sri Aurobindo's own effort at the promotion of the evolution of the race is fully set forth in the Life Divine. Aurobindo envisaged the Life Divine as being a group experience, not merely an individual realization. "The inner change can begin to take shape in a collective form only if the gnostic individual finds others who have the same kind of inner life as himself and can form with them a group with its own autonomous existence or else a separate community or order of beings with its own inner law of life". (Aurobindo 1960:1260) Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville are symbols of the "Tantric" desire to achieve the Life Divine as a group and to act through the group as a "philum" for the emergence of the Life Divine in the rest of humanity.

We will now look at the total complex of Aurobindo's thought. A bare outline of it is all that can be attempted

here. Sri Aurobindo takes his stand on what he calls the original Vedanta, not of the schools of metaphysical philosophy, but of the Upanishadic Rishis, intuition must be corrected not by logical reasoning, but a more perfect intuition. It is not through logical reasoning that we can arrive at great spiritual truths. In fact, the mind of man is such an imperfect instrument that it can grasp only half-truths and never the full integral truth. The errors of the conceptual mind have, therefore, to be corrected by the supermind, which according to Sri Aurobindo, is the connecting link between the two hemispheres of Being and Becoming, of the Absolute and the Relative, of Knowledge and Ingnorance.

The apparent incompatibility between Pure Being and cosmic activity is an error of our limited mind, which is incapable of conceiving a consciousness comprehensive and strong enough to indicate both in a simultaneous embrace. The logic of the supermind is the logic of the infinite, which can resolve the opposition existing in our conceptual minds between oneness and diversity, between the universal and the individual and between Being and Becoming. Supermind is pure self-awareness which has become dynamic, Brahman figuring as Ishvara or Shiva energizing his Shakti. It is a state of consciousness which man has gradually to acquire, and not only acquire but also possess and not only possess but

also utilize for transforming his entire being, his body, mind and soul. Supermind is, in fact, the key-word in Sri Aurobindo's system. In his writings he gives several other names to it as truth-consciousness, spiritual consciousness, creative energy, gnosis, vijnana and amritatva. But supermind is his favourite expression, and the consciousness denoted by it is said to be the connecting link between Being and Becoming (Sarma 1967:215).

The absolute of the higher hemisphere of Being is one in reality, but triune to our mental view. It has the three well-known aspects of Sat, Chit, Ananda. Sri Aurobindo translates these Vedantic terms into the Pure Existent, Consciousness-Force and the Delight of Existence. Force, according to Sri Aurobindo, is inseparable form Being, as Shakti is inseparable from Shiva. Thus the consciousness aspect of the Absolute is in its nature a self-expressive force capable of infinite variation in phenomenon and form and endlessly enjoying the delight of that variation. All creation is nothing but this self-manifestation. The Pure Being owing to its inherent Force and its sheer Delight manifests itself, without undergoing any diminution, as the world of forms. By means of self-variation, self limitation and self-absorption or concentration, the spirit manifests itself in the universe. Accordingly we have here a sort of refraction of the divine Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind into matter, life, psyche or soul and mind. The former terms constitute the higher hemisphere of Pure Being and the latter terms the lower hemisphere of cosmic manifestation. Sri

Aurobindo states "The Divine descends from pure existence through the play of consciousness-force and bliss and the creative medium of supermind into cosmic being; we ascend from matter through a developing life, soul and mind and the illuminating medium of supermind towards the divine being. The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere, is where the mind and supermind meet with a veil between them. The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity; for by that rending, by the illuminating descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the all-comprehending supermind; the soul realises its divine self in the all possessing, all blissful, Ananda, life reposes its divine power in the play of omniscient consciousness force and matter open to its divine liberty as a form of the Divine Existence" (Aurobindo 1960:404).

The descent of the divine into matter is the involution of the spirit. Sri Aurobindo presumes that the spirit passed into matter through the intervening stages of mind and life, but this process is outside time. He presumes too that the descent through these stages resulted in various worlds other than our own, inhabited by appropriate beings - worlds of pure mind unhampered by life, and worlds of pure life unhampered by matter. These higher worlds or planes are also at every moment acting upon in communication with our own plane of being. Though their action is not ordinarily

present to our working consciousness, we become aware of it when we extend our consciousness or go back into our subliminal being. The existence of these worlds is of great importance from the standpoint not only of the evolution of our own world, but also of the eschatological conditions of our souls after death.

More important than the descent of the spirit into mind, life and matter is the return movement, its ascent from matter. Sri Aurobindo conceives of a double process of involution and evolution. First of all the Absolute has become involuted into lower forms by, so to speak, screwing itself down into them, and then it evolves again out of them. Evolution from our standpoint is more important than involution. The ascent from matter, life, psyche and mind, and accordingly form our physical, vital, emotional and intellectual being into the supermind of pure spirituality, is the evolution of the spirit on earth. The apparent unconsciousness of matter holds in itself darkly all that is eternally self revealed in the superconscious sphere. To reveal that in time is the aim of nature in all her processes. Each material object contains a consciousness involved or absorbed in the form and driven by an unknown and unfelt inner existence, the antaryamin of the Upanishads. In the plant this form-consciousness is still in a state of sleep, but full of nervous dreams,"always on the point of waking but never waking." Life has appeared but the plant is not metally aware of this. In the animal we have mental

awareness and consequently a higher and subtler grade of activities. When we come to man, we have a transition from vital mind to reflecting and thinking mind, and consequently a higher power of observation, invention, aesthetic creation, etc. after the human stage is reached, evolution differs from what it has been in two important respects. Firstly, it is henceforth conducting by conscious effort. Secondly, it is not confined to the progression of surface nature, for it goes inward into the secret principle of our nature and outwards into the cosmic being as well as upward towards a higher principle but the salvation of humanity lies not in simply transcending the world, but in transfiguring it as well. It is not therefore merely a question of the soul's ascent and escape, but a question of integration and transformation as well. For this purpose, the mind of man, as it is, is not enough. The supermind should descend (Aurobindo 1960 : 191-200).

There is a wide gulf between the ordinary mind and what Sri Aurobindo terms the supermind. This gulf has to be bridged by a long and laborious process of Yoga. Sri Aurobindo constantly stresses that the aim of true Yoga is not to reject nature or to escape from births and deaths but to divinize the whole man, to bring down the supermind and transform the human mind, life and body and make them assume its supermind's nature. There are, according to him, many intervening stages between the mind and the supermind. The higher Mind; Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind are grades of consciousness in between

Mind and Supermind. When all these stages are traversed and the Supermind is reached, the man becomes a superman, a Jnani or a gnostic being. Sri Aurobindo's description of a gnostic being is a restatement in modern terms of the Hindu ideal of Jivanmukta and the Buddhist ideal of Bodhisattva (Sarma 1967 : 219).

CONCLUSION

In concluding it can be stated that Aurobindo reinterpreted Hindu mysticism in the light of modern conditions. Mysticism did not mean escape from the world but divinisation of the world. It no longer meant the abandoning of the lower levels of matter, life and mind; but it involved raising them into the life divine. It is no longer an individual matter; it has cosmic and collective implications as well. It is not just reserved for a few Jivanmuktas; the evolution of supermind is potentially within the grasp of all.

The full significance of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is yet to be seen for the Hindu Weltanschaung and for philosophy and theology in general. It remains to be seen whether his influence will equal that of a Sankara or a Ramakrishna. There is little doubt that the full impact of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy has not yet been fully realized.

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THE HINDU CONCEPT OF MAN

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As a member of the biological species man necessarily exhibits many features of behaviour which may legitimately be termed universal. As a member of any given culture on the other hand, specific forms of behaviour and adaptation to environmental pressures may be noted, which mark out distinctive characteristics, and which may legitimately be utilised as defining properties of a unique cultural pattern.

With regard to Hindu culture, it must be admitted that it is somewhat difficult to deal with the concept of man, or with any other concept for that matter, solely from the religious point of view, as distinct from the philosophical standpoint. This situation obtains in Hinduism largely because the goal of the philosophical quest is often seen to be identical to that of religious endeavour.[1]

Both these approaches see man as he is, as a centre of conflict and tension, as the product of the interaction of a series of factors that underline man's imperfect status. And both these approaches are concerned with impelling man towards perfection, towards shedding his limitations, essentially by effecting a qualitative change of vision in him at the subjective level.

I do not wish to suggest that, even in the Hindu religion, religion and philosophy are mostly similar - indeed, they are not.[2] If they were, the layman singing devotional hymns would be very nearly a philosopher, and the scholar who expatiates, eg, on the conceptual and preconceptual modes of thinking,

might be accorded the rank of a saint.

Yet, the very term for philosophy, DARŚANA or insight into Truth, is precisely the same for the beatific vision following the successful traversal of the religious quest.[3] We may note the appeal for a vision of the Truth in the following mantra of the Īśā Upanisad:

> "The face of Truth, O Lord, is hidden by a golden disc; Remove it, so that I, Truth's worshipper, may see".[4]

This text is heavily laden with philosophical and religious implications, whose discussion would not be appropriate here. But it will, I hope, serve as an example of the frequent overlap of terms, often juxtaposed by design, whose philosophical treatment becomes necessary for a full appreciation of their religious significance. It will serve also to underscore the view that Hindu man is required to be rational to the core - it is for him a religious injunction that he should adopt the philosophical attitude in all matters religious, that he should not bifurcate life into a department of rational inquiry by which he may live that half, and into a second unrelated department of mere belief based on the authority of any man or book. Hindu man, if he wishes to be counted as religious, is precluded from placing his reasoning faculties in the hands of any priest, or prophet, or book, in order that he may thereafter get on with the business of religious life. The

very structure of Hindu metaphysics does not allow this.

The extent to which the Hindu is committed to the pursuit and worship of Truth finds dramatic demonstration in modern times in the life and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. That venerable man, having defined God as Truth, soon found that, that was yet too parochial and restrictive a definition, and he proceeded to reverse the terms to read "Truth is God". While the former term allows the imposition of preconceived notions of God on objective truth, the latter superbly avoids this hideous presumption on the part of man, and necessarily humbles him in the face of it. Gandhi had no fear that he would be violating the spirit of scripture, as indeed he was not. Hindu texts affirm:

> "Truth is One; sages call It variously";
> God is "Truth of all Truth", [6] etc.

I am aware that the image of man that I here propound must be seen to represent the image projected on the basis of Hindu scripture per se, and not by calling into service the name of any individual, especially of modern times. But I make no apology for this introduction of the name of Gandhi, save to explain that sadācāra or the truthful practices of great men who have found general acceptance among the people, are one of the sources of Hindu religion and practice. Nevertheless, that God is confronted in man's ceaseless search for Truth is amply demonstrated by an exquisite story in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. Naciketas. a teenage seeker after Truth, who,

being placed under an obligation to go to the God of Death, the God of Truth (Yamarāja), demonstrates in moving tones the ancient Hindu teaching that the pursuit of Truth is the gateway to immortality.[7] True to his convictions, Naciketas persists in his adventurous search for the final beatitude, shunning and casting aside all types of worldly temptations (in this greatly anticipating the theme and procedures employed in T.S. Eliot's moving play, Murder in the Cathedral), until he succeeds in eliciting from the God of Death the mystic knowledge of the Divine Reality.

That the quest for Truth is equivalent to the quest for God is the settled conviction of the Hindu. As he progresses on this holy quest, he progressively manifests his native divinity and begins to appreciate the reality of God, for, as the Atharva Veda says:

"God has Truth as the law of His being".[8]

Hindu man may therefore justifiably be defined as "A SEEKER OF TRUTH", and all the general conditions for the evaluation of truth become immediately applicable.

It will have become apparent from what has gone before, that the characterisation of god as Truth is neither confined to nor does it preclude, the affairs of the mundane world. Rather, the world is very much a part of the total Divinity of God. It will also have become apparent that, as a participant in the Divine Truth, man is more than that which he appears to be.

He is not a mere conglomeration of atoms; he is not just a compound of flesh and bones. blood and skin, brain and impulses; nor is he merely the sum of these. He is something over and above the sum of his physical and mental parts. He is essentially a spiritual being, a lordly tenant in a transitory tenement.

We may refer to the text of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad again which likens the human body to a chariot, and the soul or Ātmā within, to the master of the chariot. The text says:

> "Know the Ātmā as the Lord and the body as the chariot; know the intellect as the driver and the mind as the reins; and the senses are the horses, and the sense-objects are the paths upon which they may travel".[9]

This beautiful mantra illustrates both the Lordship and supremacy of the divine Ātmā within man, the holy spiritual essense of his being, as well as the vicissitudes of the physical and mental worlds to which he is subject.

As the product of the process of organic evolution, man's body is conditioned to respond to diverse stimuli fed into him through his sense organs. Like unbridled horses stung with the whip of desires borne of attachments, the senses drag man along, seemingly endlessly, in this multi-facetted world of sense-objects. Following the principle that one series of conditioning leads to a higher (and more secondary) stimuli-response pattern, man's situation at any given time in the

world is that he is inextricably enmeshed in a web of his own making. Thought feeds on thought, desire feeds on desire, just as the addition of fuel serves only to increase the fire, which in turn requires further fuel. The sum total of this process is that man is burdened under layer upon layer of world-liness.

Man's involvement and submergence in the world of matter is explained in the Hindu texts in terms of the concept of the Pañca Kośas or the Five Sheaths.[10] The outermost sheath is the annamaya kośa or the physical sheath, next is the prāṇamaya kośa or the sheath of the vital life force; beneath this is the manomaya kośa or the mental sheath; under this is the Vijñānamaya kośa or the sheath of discursive reasoning; and the last or subtlest layer is the ānandamaya kośa or the sheath of bliss.

These sheaths, which are figurative and convenient representations of the range of psycho-physical levels through which man enacts his role as a significant being interacting with other beings in the world ,are seen as each one covering the succeeding one, from the outermost grossest sheath to the innermost sublest or finest sheath.

Within and beyond the innermost sheath of bliss, and concealed by it, is the Ātmā, the Divine Self of man, the Pure Sprit in man. It is this spiritual reality that imparts the quality of consciousness to the psycho-physical organism that science identifies as man. The Divine Ātmā does not partake of

the nature of the five sheaths, which belong to the realm of material nature. Therefore it is only through a progressive negation of these sheaths that man can rediscover himself as a spiritual being. Rediscovery of himself as a divine being confers release from the wheel of births and deaths to which ignorant, finite, man is subject. The wheel of births and deaths is the ineluctable chain of events and counter-events, action and reaction that characterises all material, compound things. But rediscovering himself brings man into union with God the Supreme being, and he becomes transformed into a perfectly integrated personality capable of acting in the world with inner certitude and serene equipoise.[11]

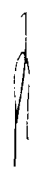
Rediscovering himself as a Divine Being man confronts God at the highest possible level and accomodates his individual divinity to the overwhelming Divinity of God. Such a perfected man, in the words of the Bhagavadgītā "worships the Lord with singlemindedness".[12]

The attainment of Self-realisation or union with God, is the result of a mysterious and indefinable blend of two factors - self-effort on the part of man, on the one hand, and the grace of God on the other. As a spiritual being man is a free agent; while the heavy weight of circumstances might appear to defeat his best laid designs, yet there exists within him the inner strength to control events. As the Ṛg Veda has it, "May we smite the power of evil, and show forth our strength".[13]

In the Gītā the Lord teaches Arjuna that spiritual regeneration can be achieved by strengthening the desire for it.

Man is structured like a dual personality - two selves interacting against each other. Man has it within himself to make one self a mere shadow or eliminate it altogether, and let the other more spiritual self wax and grow strong. When a man cultivates habits that are evil and which do not conduce to spiritual goals, his self, so to speak, becomes an obstacle in the way of such attainment. On the other hand, the cultivation of virtues and helpful habits uplifts man by enhancing the regenerative function of the self. The text says:

> "A man should lift himself by his own self, so let him not weaken this self. For this self is the friend of oneself, and this self can also be the enemy of oneself".[14]



A virtuous man grows in spiritual strength because he has brought his senses under control. But for the man who has not cultivated virtues and the habits of mind and action that go with them, his spiritual potential is suppressed and he remains at the mercy of the wayward senses.

Apart from man's self-effort, the second element in man's spiritual upliftment is the grace of God. Since man himself is inherently divine, grace may be viewed as the spontaneous urge towards perfection and spiritual realisation. The promptings in the heart of man that create in him a desire for the truth, the disquiet that disturbs him when, as a mere physical conglomeration he ought to be happy and contented in in a comfortable environment, the voice of conscience that

disturbs his peace at the tragedies that befall others, all these prod and nudge the human soul Godward. They may quite rightly be seen as the operation of grace.

The concept of grace in the stronger sense is the manifestation on the part of God, as separate from man, of concern for man in his fallen, desolate condition. In this condition man cries out for God's helping hand, and we have in the words of the Rg Veda

> "Like loving cows to the calves, O Lord
> of Bliss, turn towards us".[15]

or the more familiar cries of anguish that go forth from the hearts of beings enmeshed in an unstable and fearful world of darkness and mortality, as:

> O Lord, Lead us from untruth to Truth;
> Lead us from darkness unto Light.
> Lead us from death into Immortality".[15]

In Hinduism, the great significance as well as the very possibility of man's holy relationship with God, is supported by the fact of the Supreme Spirit assuming the accoutrements of man. In a very real sense, represented symbolically, man is shown to be made in the image of God.

In very nearly the most important hymn in the entire range of Hindu scriptures, the Rg Veda affirms that man is made of the stuff of divinity.[17] Purusa or the Supreme Reality, is represented as the source and origin, not only of the universe generally, but of the society of mankind specifically.

Significantly, too, the term Purusa has come down to us in our languages as the term for "man", albeit confined to the male gender.

In this majestic hymn the Supreme Puruṣa is represented, by way of a universal sacrificial ritual, to have been dismembered and transmuted into the four-fold pattern of human society. From the Lord's head issued the class of men called Brāhmaṇas or the priests, guides and teachers. From his arms the Kṣatriyas or military rulers, governors or administrators, and from his belly and feet sprang forth the traders and manual workers respectively.[18]

It is necessary to point out that in this entire hymn, the total unity and indivisibility of the Godhead, as well as His transcendence, is never compromised. The opening verse states that "The Lord is endowed with a thousand eyes and a thousand heads and a thousand feet; He envelops the entire universe and He also transcends it". Obviously, highly figurative language is employed. If our ancients could give us such beautiful poetry in consistent metrical patterns, they can surely calculate that a thousand heads would entail two thousand eyes, etc.! And the very next mantra states:

"The Supreme Being is all this, all
that was, and all that shall be",

emphasising the Lord's immanence in the world of becoming.[19] And the third verse states that His Transcendental Unity is not affected by the creation of the world (in which He in immanent). Hence, the idea is quite precise that the four-fold

representation of human society as having issued from Him is a figurative representation of man's divine origin and status. This pattern represents basic psycho-physical types of human being. All human beings, having their origin in One God, will partake in all the four types, though, in the real application, one type will prevail as the dominant one. The orderliness of the social order and the curbing of the instincts of greed and competitiveness seem to be the rationale behind the four-fold division. These divisions are large, fluid and mobile classes, not the rigid and petrified castes that unfortunately developed in later times in India.[20]

In terms of this vital hymn of the Puruṣa Sūktam, Hindu man finds himself in the role of a participant in the universal divine order, having its roots in the transcendant God, yet set to significant action in the world of events, and in human society specifically.

Just as the Supreme Puruṣa sacrificed Himself for the sake of the world, man is called upon to reciprocate the sacrifice and go back to Godhead. God yearns to make man his own, if only man would rise above the external trappings of the world and turn his heart's gaze towards his spiritual home. In a sense, God yearns to attain Himself in the guise of man. Man is indeed, in a sense, Puruṣa, if only at the empirical level of being. But to achieve his full spiritual stature, in order the re-establish the paternal link, man has to enter into the spirit of sacrifice or yajña.

For this, the whole of human society is the vehicle. It

is in and through interaction with his fellow men that the individual can lay claim to his Divine Patrimony. Hindu man is therefore under obligation to bear an active and sustained attitude of loving concern to all fellow men. Just as, in the words of the Ṛg Veda, "God clothes who is bare, and heals who is sick", Hindu man must, of necessity borne of his spiritual nature, bear responsibility for the condition of his fellow men. It is only in and through society that man can fully encounter the total Divinity of God. All visions are partial that are not fashioned and fulfilled in the furnace of the yajña that God's creation offers.

The Bhagavad Gītā, the distilled essence of the entire teachings of Hinduism, has for its teachings the three-fold division of rational enquiry, spiritual discipline, and communion with God - Brahmavidyā, yogaśāstra, kṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāda.

As a rational being, man is a seeker of truth. When he intellectually understands his divine status and role in the world of events, he has to engage himself totally in action in the world of men. Man is propelled along the course of action borne of his own nature, but rational man can rise spiritually by surrendering himself and the fruits of his action to God. By offering his entire being for the service of man and God, the individual, the empirical ego, is flooded with the Divine Vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Transcendental Spirit, Father and Mother of the universe, the origin and final resting place of all beings. For this must man ever strive, and in such striving he

is assured victory and prosperity. In this vein the concluding verse of the Bhagavad Gītā says:

> "Wherever there is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Yoga, and wherever there is Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, (the man of action), there is assured all prosperity, victory, power and moral goodness".[21]

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