

# RELIGION IN THE CHANGING WORLD

( THE PREDICAMENT OF MAN )

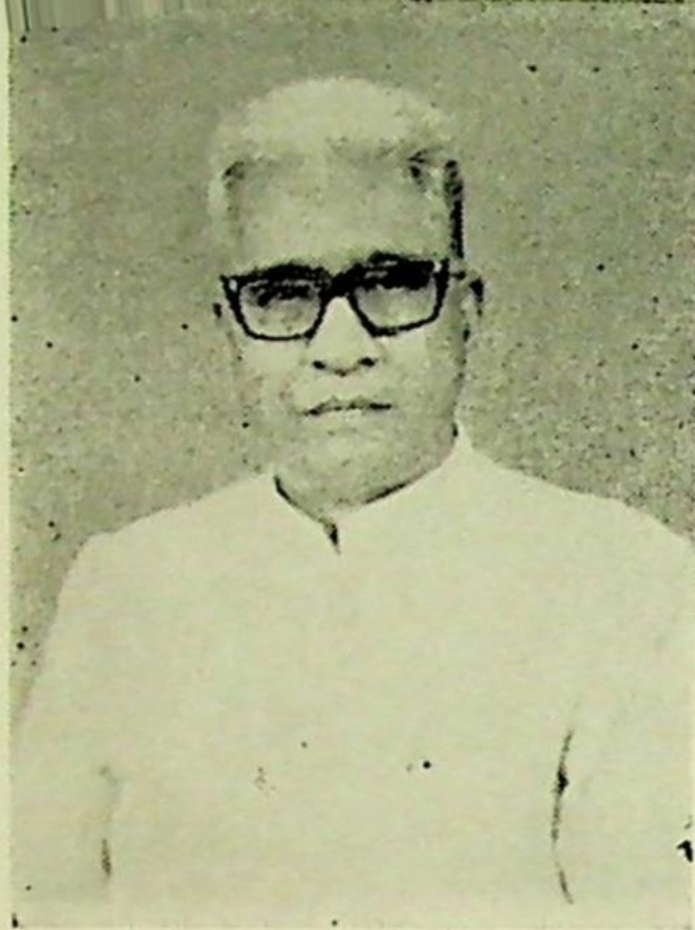
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The

Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion

BELGAUM



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# RELIGION AND THE CHANGING WORLD

(THE PREDICAMENT OF MAN)

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ACADEMY OF COMPARTIVE PHILOSOPHY  
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(Founder Gurudev Dr. R. D. Ranade)

BELGAUM.

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## FOREWORD

The following pages present the substance of "Gurudev Ranade Memorial Lectures" for 1970, delivered by Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao, Tagore Professor of Humanities, Madras University, in Belgaum in February this year.

H. E. Shri Dharma Vira, Governor of Mysore, inaugurated the lectures on 15-2-1971. He was a student of the Allahabad University when Gurudev Ranade had just joined that University as Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy.

The lectures treat about the nature, function and various aspects of Spiritual Religion from the comparative standpoint, as required by the terms of the endowment. The treatment of the subject and angle of vision adopted by the author deeply reflect Gurudev's thought and writings on Philosophy and Religion. Dr. Rao has shown us how the Vedānta Philosophy admirably suits the role of a religion for our times and answers the needs of men today. The humanistic and rational aspects of the system are high-lighted.

We have great pleasure in placing this volume in the hands of the public for their study and reflection and use. The volume is the publication of the Academy of Gomparative Philosophy and Religion, Belgaum (a Public Trust).

Belgaum,  
July 1971.

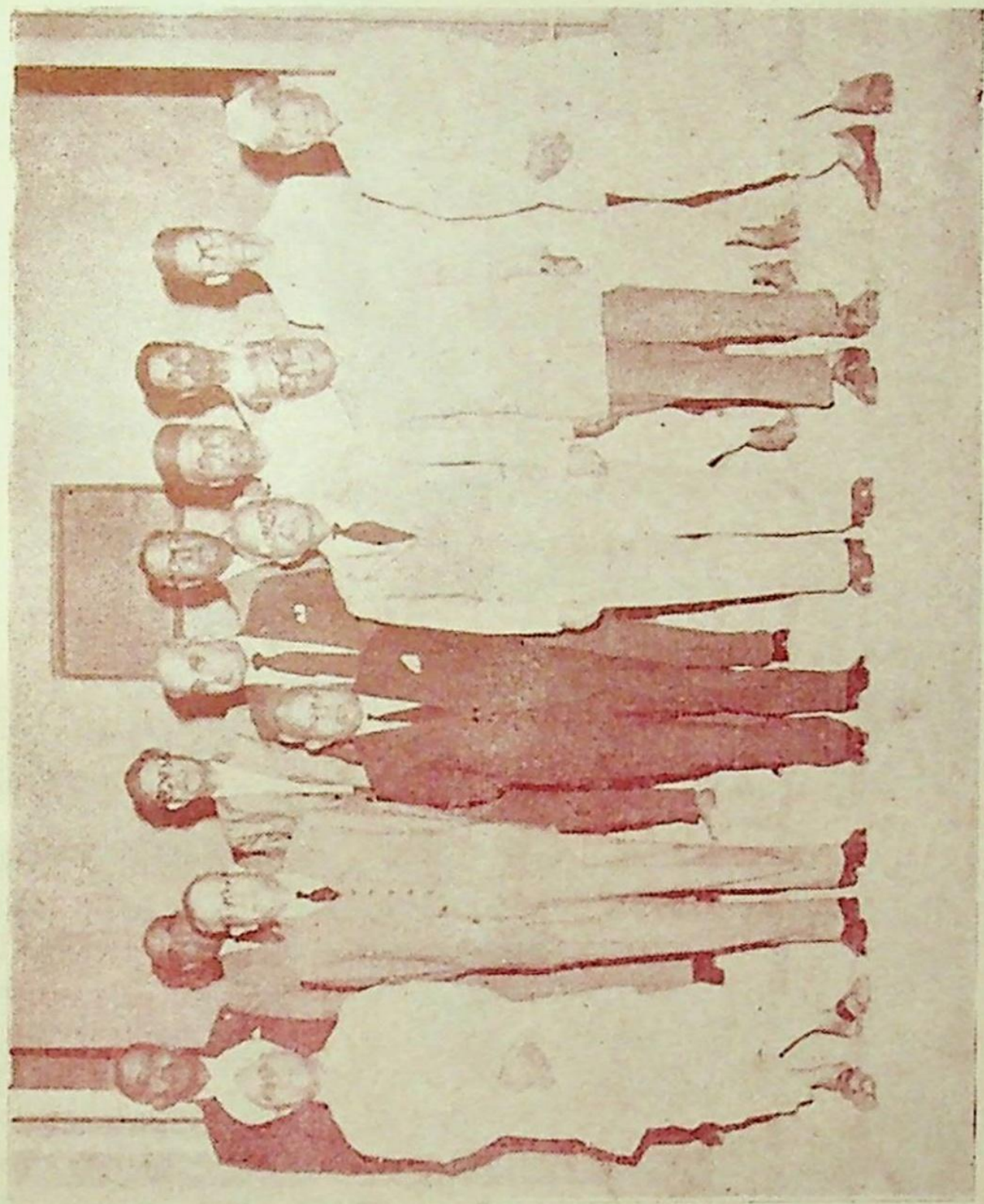
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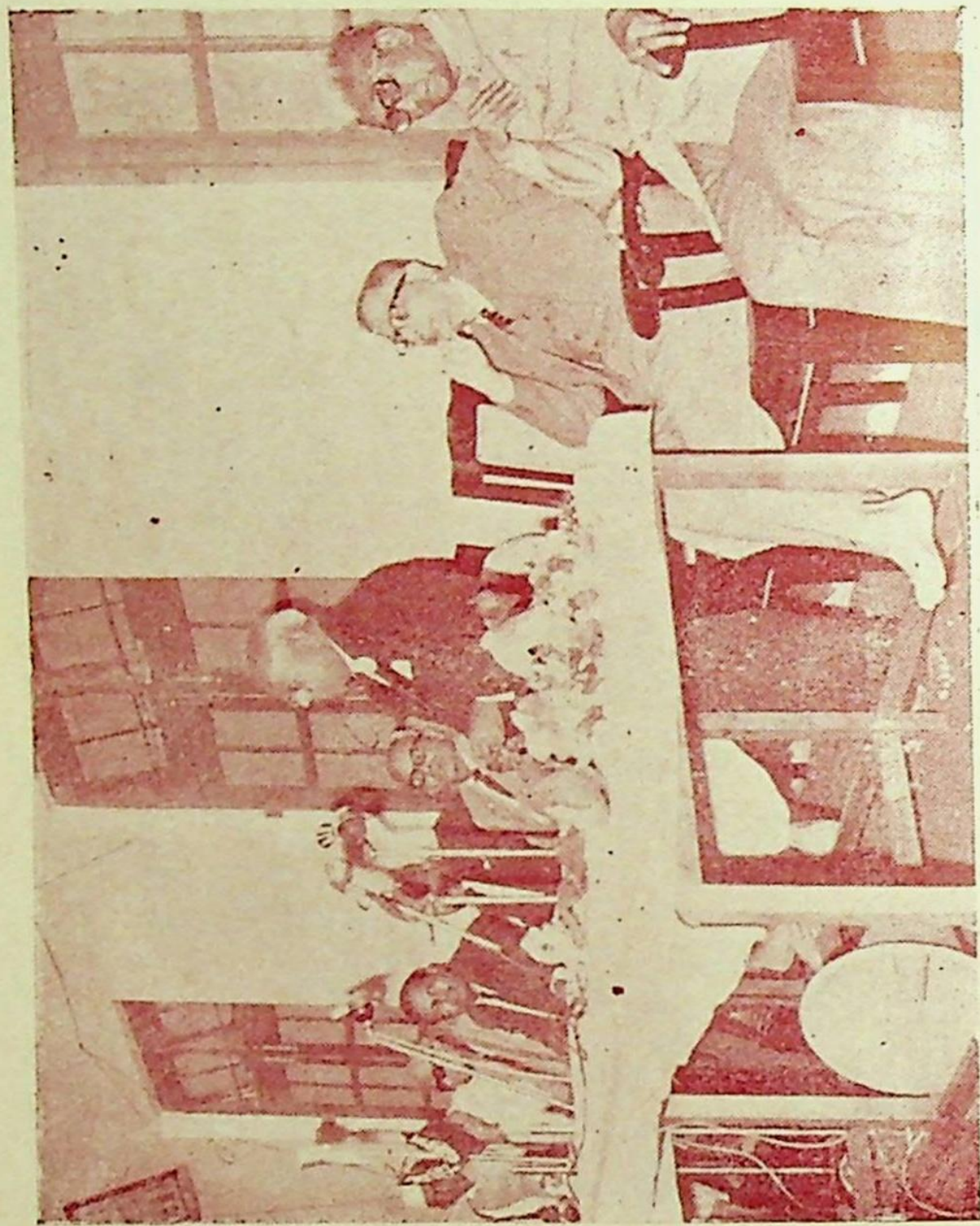
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The Governor, Dharma Vir and the Trustees



The Governor and Dr P. Nagaraja Rao the lecturer



## PREFACE

The following pages are the slightly expanded text of the Gurudev Ranade Memorial Lectures (1970) delivered to the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion (Belgaum) from 15-2-1971 to 17-2-1971. I place the book as my homage to the sacred memory of the saint Professor Ranade. The lecturers examine the modern challenge to Religion from different disciplines and current ideologies in the first chapter. The succeeding chapters describe the nature and the function of Spiritual Religion as presented by the Vedānta system. The field of investigation is vast and the literature on the subject is extensive and enormous. I have taken into account representative thinkers and their ideas.

I have presented the nature and function of religion in the faith that there is a wide area of agreement at the core of all great faiths, which is disclosed by the tenets of Vedānta. I am supported in my thesis by the great mystics of the East and the West and students of comparative Religion. I have looked upon religion as arising from the need and the fact of our being human. To give up religion is to give up our humanity. I feel that where there is no God, there is no man : man without God is no longer man. I thank all my friends senior and junior who have helped me to write this book.

Madras University, )  
15th Feb. 1971. }

P. NAGARAJA RAO.

# CONTENTS

	PAGES
1. The Predicament of Man ...	1—33
2. Science and Religion ...	33—43
3. Challenge to Religion Examined ...	44—61
4. The Nature and the Function of Religion ...	62—81
5. The Vedānta ...	81—104
6. Vedānta and Humanism ...	104—116
7. The Fruits of Religion ...	116—135
8. Devotion (Bhakti) The Supreme mode of God-realisation ...	135—163
9. Conclusion ...	163—164

# Religion in the Changing World

## The Predicament of Man

### SECTION I

May I at the outset express my cordial gratitude, heart-felt thanks and rejoicing at the privilege, the President and the Board of Trustees of the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, founded in honour of Sri Gurudev Dr. R. D. Ranade, have accorded me in electing me as the Sri Ranade Memorial lecturer for the current year? I met Professor Ranade more than four times in person and the last occasion I met him was in Dharwar when he delivered a series of lectures on 'Pathway to God' in Kannada literature.

Professor Ranade was a giant among the professors of Philosophy of his age which had a large number of celebrities and distinguished intellectuals like Radhakrishnan, Wadia Hiriyananna, Ganganath Jha, Kuppuswami Sastriar. The saint professor combined in himself intense spiritual *tāpasya*, secured by unremitting *sādhana* spread over a long period, great intellectual powers with massive scholarship not only in Sanskrit and

regional languages but also in Greek. He filled several posts with distinction, was Professor and later the Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University. He gave helpful definite lead to many spiritual aspirants in their path of religious evolution. He was the author of several books which are outstanding in their merit and are in many languages. He was the foremost writer on the Mysticism of the Indian saints in all the religions, and was the soundest student of Comparative Religion. He has given us the Indian version, of the Jamesian theme "Varieties of Religious Experience."

Above all, he was a mystic, a *jīvan-mukta*, a Karma Yogi and a *bhakta* of the *Gītā* model. He was generous and so planned his life as to share his spiritual experience *aparokṣānubhūti* in his person with the earnest band of his disciples in his spiritual home Nimbāl. That is his noble ministry besides his writings. The poet had in mind men, like him when he sang: "Through the birth of men like Ranade who are anchored in the spirit and absorbed in supreme consciousness, the family in which he took birth is sanctified and their mothers are fulfilled of desires, and the earth is purified.

कुलं पवित्रं जननी कृतार्था वसुन्धरा पुण्यवती च तेन ।

अपारसंवित्सुखसागरेऽस्मिन् लीनं परे ब्रह्मणि यस्य चेतः ॥

Uddhava in the Srimad Bhāgavata refers to a set of men and describes their impact on us. He observes 'Do not tell me of holy waters or stone images, they may clean and purify us, if they do, that after some interval of time. A saintly man purifies us at sight.

न ष्मयानि तीर्थानि न देवा मृच्छिन्नामयाः ।  
ते पुनन्त्युरुकालेन दर्शनादेव साधवः ॥

In Gurudev's presence we experienced such a transforming power. He imparted strength and light to us when we felt our resolves infirm, our wills weak and our vision dimmed and we saw darkness all round us. He was gentle but not weak, selfless and completely devoted to the Lord, determined but not aggressive, he was a spirit as clean as the fresh mountain air. He has lighted a lamp in Nimbai which will penetrate far into space and long in time and will never be put out. Spiritual saints like Ranade purify the very places which are pure :

“ भवद्विधाः भागवताः तीर्थभूताः तीर्थीकुर्यन्ति तीर्थानि ”

It is saints like Ranade that constitute the salt of the earth, who avert corruption and impart truth into life and filter down a little light into our world of total darkness. Companionship with such men helps us to keep

away from the attritions of over organised world in which we live, nerve-racked, and worry-ridden.

These saints do not merely deliver a message, but by their very looks sense the consuming heat and the kindly light of the spirit and thus create a mood and transform the individuals that come into contact with them. Like Sri Aurobindo, Gurudev was a metaphysician doubled with a Yogi. It is such men, in the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "that stamp infinity on thought, add sweetness to life and raise the stature of civilisation."

I am aware of the great honour the Academy has conferred on me. I have no illusions about my abilities. I shall endeavour to do my best to deserve in some modest measure the assignment given to me. Were I to further express my feelings, I am likely to become elaborate and perhaps tedious. So permit me to say, Sir, "a plain thank you."

There is no topic or theme dearer to Professor Ranade than the one I have chosen for the subject of my lectures, Religion. Today the term religion hangs heavy with the dust of misunderstanding and polemics concerning both its imperative need and firm denunciation and brash denial. Before examining the nature and function

of religion in human life and society, we have to get a clear picture of man and the crisis he is passing through, the reasons that have contributed to it, the nature of the malady and its dimensions.

Man today is experiencing a crisis that is disclosing a complex pattern. The cry that men are living through a crisis is an old truism. Ever since Adam and Eve came out of the garden of Eden, they have been saying we are passing through a period of transition. Ours is an age of great advance in scientific theory and enormous progress in Technology and applied Sciences. Some historians describe our age as the largest epoch in human history holding history's record for achievements. Yet, others sensitive to human suffering and moral values describe our age, as the age of anxiety. Gerald Heard draws a significant contrast "The present crisis is nowise like the collapses of Imperial Rome or Greece. The ancient civilizations experienced crisis because of the paucity and lack of adequate resources to meet the clamour of compelling needs. The reverse is our story. We do not lack in resources, but we lack the will and ability to use them wisely. There is the monstrous imbalance between our resources and our good will.

Man with his chief instrument, science, battled with Nature and Nature has given him

an intoxicating victory over forces which has made him very nearly deny all moral values and religious truth. Science has filled the modern world with comforts and it has indefinitely reduced human drudgery. "We can warm the Artics, cool the tropics, reshape continents, water the deserts, and every one can have his rocket plane for long distance travel. It has given us cheap coal and cotton and revolutionised transport; connected continents and has made the entire world a snug home to be in."

It has enabled man to fly in the air, land and step on the Moon, swim in the seas and break the atom and has enabled him to produce alarming nuclear weapons. The spectacular triumphs of technology and science have made man feel triumphant and proud. His pride has expressed itself in the denial of any force other than his intelligence and power. We have classical expressions of the mood, in our scriptures and in the literatures, East and West. The 'children of darkness' in the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the (āsuric sampat) declare in the mood of a proud, unbending, impenitent scientist: "In this world there are two kinds of beings: those whose nature tends towards the Divine, and those who have the Demonic tendencies..... Their lust can never be appeased. They are arrogant and vain, drunk with pride. They



run blindly after what is evil. The ends they work for are unclean. They are sure that life has only one purpose; gratification of the senses. They are plagued by innumerable cares till they die. Anxiety binds them with a hundred chains, delivering them over to lust and wrath. They are ceaselessly busy, piling up dishonest gains to satisfy their cravings. They say - 'I wanted this, and today I got it. I wanted that. I shall get it tomorrow'. All these riches are now mine; soon I shall have more. I have killed this enemy. I will kill all the rest. I am the ruler, I enjoy the things of this world. I am successful, strong and happy. Who is my equal? I will perform sacrifices to gods. I will give alms. I will make merry'. (XVI-6 to 15)

द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन्दैव आसुर एव च ।

दैवो विस्तरशः प्रोक्त आसुरं पार्थ मे शृणु ॥

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च जना न विदुरासुराः ।

न शौचं नापि चाचारो न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते ॥

असत्यमप्रतिष्ठं ते जगदाहुरनीश्वरम् ।

अपरस्परसंभूतं किमन्यत्कामहेतुकम् ॥

एतां दृष्टिमवष्टभ्य नष्टात्मानोऽल्पबुद्धयः ।

प्रभवन्त्युग्रकर्माणः क्षयाय जगतोऽहिताः ॥

काममाश्रित्य दुष्पूरं दम्भमानमदान्विताः ।

मोहाद्गृहीत्वासद्ग्राहान्प्रवर्तन्तेऽशुचिव्रताः ॥

चिन्तामपरिमेयां च प्रलयान्तामुपाश्रिताः ।  
कामोपभोगपरमा एतावदिति निश्चिताः ॥

आशापाशशतैर्यद्वाः कामक्रोधपरायणाः ।  
ईहन्ते कामभोगार्थमन्यायेनार्थसञ्चयान् ॥

इदमद्य मया लब्धमिमं प्राप्स्ये मनोरथम् ।  
इदमस्तीदमपि मे भविष्यति पुनर्धनम् ॥

असौ मया हतः शत्रुर्हनिष्ये चापरानपि ।  
ईश्वरोऽहमहं भोगी सिद्धोऽहं बलवान् सुखी ॥

आदयोऽभिजनवानस्मि कोऽन्योऽस्ति सदृशो मया ।  
यस्ये दास्यामि मोदिष्य इत्यज्ञानविमोहिताः ॥

Power over Nature and each successive triumph of invention makes a corresponding expansion of man's ego. They say: "Hasn't it ever struck you that with every victory over Nature won by the human spirit, a fragment of their omnipotence is wrested from the hands of the gods? The day will come when we shall no longer need to pray. The hour will strike when the heavenly potentates will be forced to capitulate, and in their turn bend the knee to us."<sup>1</sup> Scientific power and the affluence resulting from Technology have made men feel that they are gods. Power has that effect, and particularly the application of power in effecting our desired transformation in

1. L. J. Baggott Pilgrim in the Modern World; P. 88.

the lives of men and in the things around us. Knowledge has produced power. The two have been the great dispensations of New Knowledge i. e., science, power has corrupted men and it has in its turn increased the appetite for more. Lord Acton writes 'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. He also quotes approvingly Leibniz "Those who have more power are liable to sin more; no theorem in Geometry is more certain than this. Fenelon writes power is poison it corrupts the conscience, hardens the heart and confounds the understanding. Those who have power need to exercise great vigilance.

Knowledge and power are not enough. They must be grounded in love and a sense of justice. This science does not give. Inebriated with pride, the men of science make a pathetic sight in the eyes of Shakespeare :

Man, proud man

Drest in a little brief authority

Most ignorant of what he is most assured

His glassy essence, like an angry ape

Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven

As makes the angels weep.

More than knowledge and power, we must know how to use it. The question of ends is not

the task of science, we need to know the use to which we must put our power and knowledge. This, the modern man lacks. The knowledge of good and evil and God is another branch of knowledge. That such a knowledge exists and is necessary for man is denied by the unrepentent scientist.

The gifts of science and technology have glutted the modern world. But gadgetry does not assure happiness for man. The scientific view of man is incomplete, for it has not probed into the depths of human nature. It has treated man as one other physical object among the many and it seeks to manipulate him as it can. The scientific view of man has sought to interpret him after the manner of the guinea-pig and the white rabbit. It has adopted the one dimensional study of man. It has systematically sought to debunk the mystery, the ineluctable nature and the spirituality in man. His composition is explained on the basis of chemicals. He is analysed into a few pounds of carbon, sulphur and mixture of salts. His behaviour is described in terms of animal instincts, conditioning, drives, emotions, the pressure of the unconscious and working of the glands. He is described as one of the naturally selected products of evolution — not 'supernaturally elected'. The scientific outlook relies on perception, obser-

vation, experiment and seeks to explain all things in terms of quantities. It abstracts that element in man which is amenable to such a treatment. It defiantly exclaims "we have scanned heaven and found no god disclosed by our telescope and no soul revealed by our microscope. Life is a chemical process. Death is the end and soul is a gas, and there is no next world." The earth turns and spins, stars blaze forth and die; man need not waste his thought in seeking a different destiny for himself". The scientific interpretation of human personality in the name of reason has not only remained a partial picture, but has ignored his essential nature. Such a view has adverse effects on the life of man. To take the partial view as the complete ignores the essential elements which account for the unique in man. It promotes a narrow view of life and when that is translated into a way of living, it ends up in a crisis and conflict.

The conflict arises first of all from the sapping our faith in the unique spiritual nature of man. Most of the famous scientific discoveries have sought to debunk the grandiosity of man systematically. They have declared that the image of man described by the poets—"as the crown of all creation and made in God's image" are just fiction. Frued writes: "Humanity had in the

course of time to endure from the hands of science several shocks". Copernicus declared that our earth is not the centre of the universe, and by this account the primacy of our planet is dismissed. The Darwinian theory of Evolution holds that man is not born full, faultless and finished. He is one among the other complicated objects of nature and as such there is nothing special about him. Freud's discovery of the importance of the *unconscious* and its function in life have laid an axe at the root of man's freedom of will. Marx has made man the product of his economic circumstances and he states in the "*Communist Manifesto*", that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and social organisation, necessarily following from it form the basis, upon which is built up and from which can be explained the political and the intellectual history of the epoch". The Materialist interpretation of History and the anti-god doctrines of Marx have debunked the spiritual nature of religion. Engles writes: "The idea of God is the very keystone of a perverted civilization. To suppress religion which provides an illusory happiness is to establish the claims of real happiness." Marx adds: his memorable utterance—"religion is the sob of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless

world, the spirit of conditions bitterly unspiritual and the opium of the people ”.

The above discoveries of science have administered shocks to the spiritual nature of man. To them man is an observable personality, determinable every way—with no freedom. He is according to them an animal, a material fact, a plaything of several forces. He is not immortal spirit or undying eternal soul. He is just a force encased in the body, working according to certain laws. The mechanistic conception of man has its repercussion on the ethical life of man.

Materialistic atheism results in ethical relativism and lands us in moral anarchy, where we hold no definite creed and do not subscribe or observe any code of conduct. Our *achara* is governed by our instincts and selfishness determines it. The non-recognition of the limitations of science has made man feel that he is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul. He does not know that he has deep layers in him. He does not recognise that he is an immortal spirit and is not the senses, mind, or reason or his wishes; for he is that which uses them. We have to get at an adequate complete view of human nature to understand the true essence of religion and its relevance to man's destiny and society's well

being. We should not fail to see that science is only one language for questioning nature, others are there possible in the words of Bronowski.

In the course of human history, there have been repeated attacks on the concept of Religion. The attack has taken many forms and have sought to confuse, ridicule and at other times to expose its dangers to the progress of human thought and man's well being. The enemies of Religion are legion. The present day challenge to Religion is most vigorous and is sharply advanced on several counts. A look at the world today, from the point of population discloses the spectacle that a little over half the world has embraced communism of one brand or another, and the other half struggles with conflicting creeds and a rigid secularism in the name of scientific enlightenment and rationalistic outlook. A few genuine savants i. e., the creative minority, (in the phrase of Arnold Toynbee) feel that all is not lost. They believe that religion will not die and what passes for religion today is not its substance. Whatever might be the differences in the nature and function of Religion, there is a wide area of agreement behind them. They all affirm the essential core of religion. The central truths of spiritual Religion are: (1) Belief in the existence of the spiritual



unity of all beings and the universe, (2) Man's nature is (essentially spiritual) and is eternal, and Man is potentially the spirit. The clarion call of religion is to draw out and grow into the spirit of the Lord. To transform our existence into the image of divinity by the exercise of all our faculties and by the removal of all obstacles to it, is the message of Religion. It is not mere rites, nor the sweet experience of the transports of the emotions of the soul. Religion has two aspects, a withdrawal to a deeper level of one's life from the experience of Reality, and with that experience to return and integrate ourselves to the ground and the goal of our experience with each other and with all things through God. Religious experience is not merely for the liberation of the individual from his lusts and greed, but it has a social concern, namely, that one can save oneself only by saving all. There is a mutual involvement for man in the community. In the Christian language, we should not merely seek the kingdom of God within us, but also exert to build the body of Christ in the Church and in others. The spirit must give existence on earth, in the lives of men and women. It is the indifference to the human aspect of individual's life in the community that has largely accounted for the decline of men's faith in Religion.

The secular minded intellectuals in the name of Enlightenment and Reason have severely denigrated Religion and its articles of faith, God, Soul, Creation and Salvation. The categories are by their very nature not amenable to sense verification. On this count, the opponents convict the categories as non-existent and hence illusory.

Hume clinched the case for the Rationalists "If we take in our hand any volume of Divinity, let us ask: "Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or Number?" No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and experience? No. Commit it then to flames. For, it can be nothing but sophistry and illusion". The fashionable powerful school of Logical positivism convicts the religious categories as unverifiable and hence classes them as nonsensical. The intuitive method accepted as the mode for God Realisation by the religionists is not accepted by the secularists, and their reliance on revelation is decried. The intuitive method is suspected as being afraid of reason. The religions, truths, they hold fight shy of the spotlight of logic and reason.

The mood of some of our uncommitted intellectuals is one of contempt for religion. It is neatly expressed by French mystic Fenelon; "There

is practically nothing that men do not prefer to God - a tiresome detail of business, an occupation utterly pernicious to health, the employment of time in ways one dare not mention — anything rather than God". Ingersol, the unbending aesthetist exclaims against the mystics — "Why talk of God-intoxication, talk of champaign intoxication". It has become a fashion, with the smart intellects and superficial thinkers to appear indifferent and feel amused at the discussion of religious categories. They think to hold views and believe, is a mark of immaturity and bespeaks of a dull intellect. The militant rationalist has no time or interest in religion. The debunking of religion is symptomatic of our age and we see all round us the dismal decay of religious belief and the widespread decline in the performance of religious rites. Atheism is spreading like wild fire all over the world. In the materially advanced countries, irreligion is the fashion. To be religious is considered to be a mark of inferiority. They hold that the demands of permissive society can be met only if religion goes out.

Comte describes religious beliefs as the primitive stage in human civilization, destined to fade away with the growth of knowledge and the spread of

enlightenment. The psychologists decry religious categories and experience, "as forms of wish-fulfilment. It is a regression to childhood, for security. God is the 'Father Image' for the frightened souls. It is a stepping back in the evolutionary path. Religious knowledge is a form of illusion and is at best a form of *rationalisation* giving suitable reasons for what we want fondly to believe. Such a belief produces comfort for some, though it is not true. A cheerful falsehood is more welcome than a gloomy truth. Men do not want to face the bleak truth and the blank nothingness that confronts them with the onset of death. The scientific picture of the world and man's destined doom to extinction like other evolutes are not at all flattering to the minds of men. So they invent concepts like God, souls and salvation as compensation for the dread and fearful prospects of human life. The tenets of religion are branded as the inventions by some vested interests to keep the poor in their own place and to induce them to uncomplainingly work for the few rich.

Napoleon is reported to have said : "What is it that makes the poor man think it quite natural that there are fires in my palace, while he is dying of cold? That I have ten coats in my wardrobe, while he goes naked? That at each of my meals

enough is served to feed his family for a week. It is simply Religion which tells him that in another life, I shall be not only not be his equal and that he actually has more chance of being happier there than I. Yes, we must see to it that the floors of the churches are open to all and that it does not cost the poor man to have his prayers”.

Many have used religion as a very useful cloak for the exploitation of the ignorant masses and the aggrandisement and benefit of the few. This use of religion for the exploitation of the masses has angered and set many savants against it. The misery of the poor and the effort of the religions to lull the poor into a soporific mood takes the edge off their poverty and this irritates the communists most. The priests lightly sing :

“The rich man in his castle  
The poor man at his gate  
God made them high or lowly  
And ordered their estate”

Religion seeks to countenance inequality as being ordained by God in the eternal order of things. Church condemns all the subversive moods in men by preaching to them the doctrines of the transitoriness of human life and exhorts them not

to worry over the "little afflictions that mark the temporal lot of mankind". They quote scriptures —e.g., "it is easier for a camel to pass through the needle's eye than for a rich man to go to heaven". Significantly Professor Tawney has the title 'Rise of Religion and Capitalism' for his book. The communist is furious with the exploiter's use of religion. The bad practical record of the Christian religion and other faiths in their pursuit to spread the gospel is depressing reading. Witness the cruelty of the crusades, the sack of Constantinople, the Albigensian massacres and that of the Catharists, the inquisition, the wars of religion, and the burning at the stakes of men and women. What is true of Christianity is not unknown to the fanatics of other types of Fundamentalism in religion.

Wherever religion has been institutionalised in the form of powerful Churches, Maths or into other forms, we have the display of militancy. Middleton Murray in a powerful little book, 'The Betrayal of Christ by the Churches', writes: "that the Church always stood by the State and forgot its master's gospel. The Church knows its function which is that of a good wife to the State. Like a good wife, it never advises and never criticises, and when there is a row, it always stands for its

husband. And it insists on one thing, that the husband shall keep out of the kitchen". The interests of human life and the just conduct of the affairs of the state have never been the concern of the Church.

George Bernard Shaw highlights the defects of the Church and denigrates their role in the hour of crisis. "When the bishop, at first shot abandons the worship of Christ and rallies his flock round the altar of Mars, he may be acting patriotically necessarily, manfully, rightly; but that does not justify in pretending that there has been no change, and that Christ is in effect Mars.<sup>1</sup> It is the bad use to which religion is put to that makes Marx and Engels bitter about religion. It is the prospect of the millenarian expectation that attracts the masses and makes them believe in the blithe dogmatic materialistic doctrines of communism. It is in this context they challenge the religionists and declare that philosophers interpret Reality and do not change. The lessons of Freudian psychoanalysis have made a terrific dent in the armoury of religion. The concept of sin, and the significance of morality are being explained away in terms of human pathology, and as forms of disease. Sin, no longer, is a case for condemnation;

and like disease it is a case for treatment. Our so called morality is merely a convention and it is made for us by our unconscious. Psychoanalysis and Marxism together ask us to take to the broad high way of sanity, culture and civilization and give up our adherence to faith in outmoded doctrines and obsolete rituals and anti-social ways of life. Religion has spread before mankind a long list of untrue theories, subjects at best of only antiquarian interest. It is time for man to outgrow his infancy and incredible naivete. The infant science of endocrinology has turned the glands of men into Gods. Criminals and sinners are no longer consigned to hell but are turned into just and good citizens, not by the grace of God, but by the supply of iodine to the Thyroid. "Hell or heaven depends on the twist of heredity or proportion of phosphorous", as Dr. Radhakrishnan put it.

The new gospels write an eloquent commentary on the verdict of the Roman Poet Lucretius "Religion is a disease born of fear and is a source of untold misery to the human race".

The Indian materialist Cārvāka denies the truths of morality and religion, i.e. God, Soul, Salvation and Creation and the moral values :—



Dharma, virtues and morality. He sets about his task in a spirit of a scientific inquiry and admits perception, as the only instrument of knowledge. He questions the validity of the even the general scientific laws, mathematical and physical, which the positivists admit. In this he is one worse than the Logical positivists. With an astuteness, all his own, he refutes the validity of Inference. He argues that inductive generalisation, that all men are mortal, is not exhaustive and leaves out a lot. A single contradiction can throw overboard the generalisation on which inference is based. If it is argued that inference is based on the invariable relation between the two universals, he says, we do not see their pervasion (vyāpti). He reduces inference to a guess which has every chance of proving false. The system is called Lokāyata, because, it holds that this world is all and denies hell and heaven. They admit the existence of four elements—earth, water, air and fire. According to them, wealth and enjoyment are the only realities for man to live for. Hence the exhortation “to live a life of

यावज्जीवेत् सुखं जीवेत् ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत् ।

भस्मीभूतस्य देहस्य पुनः आगमनं कुतः ॥

enjoyment all the time, if need it be to borrow

and not be bothered about repayment, for once we are cremated and reduced to ashes, there is no return to the world. A reckless, immoderate, selfish round of pleasures is prescribed.

The Vedas, the sacrifices prescribed therein, are all severely criticised as inventions of cunning priests. The author of the Sarvadarśana Samgraha sums up the Cāravaka position — “There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world, nor do the acts of four castes (cāturvarnas) produce any real effect. The Agnihothrin, the three Vedas and the Ascetics, the three are frauds. The cārvaka represents the school of argued sensualism, challenging the religious truths and moral principles of religion.

क्वचित् वाणावायं क्वचिदपि च हाहेति रुद्रितं  
 क्वचित् नारी रम्या क्वचिदपि च जराजर्जरवपुः ।  
 क्वचिद्विद्वद्गोष्ठी, क्वचिदपि सुरामत्तकलहो  
 न जाने संसारः किं अमृतमयः किं त्रिषमयः ॥

Poet Bhartṛhari writes: “here the sound of Vīna, there the voice of wailing, here pretty women, there tottering withered dames, here the meeting of the learned men, there the brawal of the drunkards. I do not know whether the world is heaven or hell: Though there have been no

systematic Naturalist Philosophers in India attacking religion, the doctrine of Naturalism (Swabhāva Vāda, and the doctrine of accidentalism, i.e., Yadṛcca Vāda and atomism (paramānu vāda) together with Bhauttika Vāda (Materialism) are not unknown. They are scattered here and there and are refuted in our epics. Humanism in different forms is upheld by several of the systems of philosophy. The Mīmāṃsakās, the Buddhists, Jains and to a certain degree the Yoga system too, have held that man is not without enough resources to lift himself up unaided by the grace of God. These systems believe in the super-temporal aspects of the soul of man which is not identified with the body and senses, and their Humanism is spiritual even though they do not believe in a God. These systems make Karma the architect of man's failures and success, and thus rule out the role of God.

Further, the cosmological theories of the Indian philosophical system, have on occasions, admitted that the world is created out of the fusion of the atoms of the different classes in varying proportions. The Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṃsā do not admit a God. The Sāṅkhya states that in all there are twenty three categories the evolutes emerging from dynamic *prakṛiti*, when sighted

by puruṣa. It has an immanent teleology, i.e., affording experience and through it the emancipation of the puruṣa. The Mīmāṃsaka feels that Karma is enough and that God is a superfluous category. The world works for ever. It is and was never different from what it is like now. (na kadācit anidrśam jagat). The most important thing is the sacrifice. It generates *adr̥ṣṭa*, which gives the results of the activity. It is a systematic elaborate mechanism of exchange for the definite ends. The know-how technique is elaborately described. A question is likely to occur at this stage as to the nature and existence of several deities admitted by the school, eg., Indra, Agni, Vāyu etc. We are assured that we need not bother whether such deities exist or not. The gods are only grammatical datives, and mere adjuncts to the sacrifice.

There is a sensitive group of thinkers that feel we can live our lives without disturbing it with unnecessary inhibitions. They counsel us to be of the earth earthy, and live according to the behests of Nature, and the dictates of the warm blood that runs in us. They feel that the truths of religions and the codes of morality are unnecessary, and are a useless interference with sound and healthy life.

The Naturalists do not believe in any transempirical ideal except the process of birth, growth, decay and death. Hence, they exhort us to live the life given to us by nature uninhibited and not to vex ourselves with impossible longings and unreal ideals. They describe life as something definite and advise us to develop all our faculties to the concert pitch. They exhort us to live life spontaneously without troubling ourselves. "The twilight of Gods is upon us. Its strange ecliptic light is spreading far and wide... We are not today gulled by the creaking of a chamber door or by the thunder out of heaven. Men of science have examined the substance of matter with great precision. Our world is held tight in the clutches of calculable laws as the girders of a bridge".

Renan regards lust as Nature's gift to us all, and, the hours of its consummation are beyond all measure the most ecstatic hours of life. Hence, it is improvidence to turn aside from such facilities when opportunity offers them to us. A man's life's capital is invested in his body. Even the Stoics have advised men to live their life in accordance with Nature. Marcus Aurelius exclaims "everything harmonises with me, which is harmonious to the Universe. Nothing for me is too early nor too

late which is in due time for Thee. Everything is fruit to me which Thy seasons bring; O Nature! from Thee are all things: in Thee are all things: to Thee all things return”.

The Naturalist charge against religion is that, it needlessly and foolishly sacrifices the pleasures of present life to secure the delights of a doubtful, hereafter called the spiritual goal. It drains all zest from life and promotes indifference and encourages an utterly other wordly attitude to life and ask of us “to draw our curtains and shut our eyes to the delights of life. It encourages men to live in narrow hovels and shut themselves from all delights and beauty, and even if they see it, they cross themselves, and turn aside and retire to tell the beads and pray. They declare that beauty is a snare, the world a fleeting show, pleasure is a sin, death is the only certainty, judgement is inevitable, hell is everlasting, heaven hard to win, ignorance is acceptable to God as a proof of faith, and submission and abstinence and mortification are the only safe rules of life”.

Naturalist metaphysics sanctions the tenets of Hedonism, i.e., the one dimension theory of life, i.e., pleasure. The alarming developments of nuclear war-fare encourage in men a short term view

of life. They see the fact of death hovering round them, and find no significance in success or cause for sorrow in failure. They respond to the urgent call of Hedonism to eat, drink and be merry in a variety of ways. They are busy getting up and spending, laying waste their powers, without unduly bothering about life. It is improvident to observe the do's and dont's, nor to debate about fate and free will, and to forego the pleasures of the present life in the foolish and the doubtful hope of an unreal ever distant future.

J. S. Mill observes: "that in an age of transition, the division among the instructed nullifies their authority and the uninstructed lose their faith in them".

The Humanists strongly feel that religion has not cared for the well being of man. Man is the measure of all things.' Man need not depend on, or indent for any help from external sources for his growth and development. The intelligent human beings are entirely unequipped for ordering their affairs and conducting the business of life. They raise their voice against the monstrous inhumanity of man to man. The dismal practical record of the doings of the religionist and their avowed anti-humanism makes the Humanists

declare that religion is anti-humanistic and anti-social. Religion asks us to surrender our intellect in order to be saved. Faith, instinct and intuition are all glorified in Religion. They rob man of his dignity. and enterprise. The religions of the world have presented the grim spectacle of the art of competitive indoctrination. Some of them, the fierce dogmatic theologians, have claimed complete and exclusive disclosure of truth to their creeds. Oscar Wilde exclaimed after reading the Bible: "when I think of all the harm that book has done, I despair ever writing of anything equal to it". In the moving words of Nicholas Berdyaev: "men have set themselves to hate in the cause of love, use compulsion in the name of freedom and becoming practising materialist in the name of spiritual principles". Religious persecution and wars have made stones of men's heart, and there is a monstrous constriction in their hearts. The humanist feels that man and his welfare are neglected by religion in their stress on mokṣa and salvation. The presence of evils, suffering and a number of ills, makes man look up to humanism. It has an attraction on the very face of it. Our late lamented Prime Minister Nehru sums up the creed. He writes: "essentially I am interested in this world in this life, not in some other world or a future



life whether there is survival after death or not, I do not know, and important as these questions are, they do not trouble me in the least. They are just intellectual speculations in an unknown region about which we know next to nothing. They do not affect my life and whether they are proved right or wrong subsequently they would make little difference to me. The humanist believes in the perfectibility and educability of men. They feel that Left wing politics, Rationalism, and psychoanalysis is all that men require for their paradise. They hold that religion is responsible for the decrease in men's self-confidence, and for the pressure of the calculated indifference to the good of all. Religion according to them is a dangerous form of escapism, which spells ruin to man's powers and civilization's growth. The increase and the progress in scientific knowledge, the spectacular triumphs of technology, and man's enormous knowledge of applied science in different fields, medicine, agriculture, education have made the humanists rise Humanity to the place occupied by God and remove God from the exalted pedestal. By religion, man has brought his maker into utter disrepute, that is the verdict of humanism.

Some seek to define religion in terms of absolute faith that denigrates reason. They go to the extent of asking for the exemption for religion from rational probe. They say they believe: "because it is absurd". Barthian theology and Pascal's religion are attacked as opening the gate ways to anti rationalism, the popular source for the exploitation of men. George Eliot, the novelist declared: "Heaven help us said the old religion, the new one from the very lack of that faith teaches us to help one another." All the secular prophets see that humanity's stand to great gain from unbelief. Freud; in his book, "The Future of an Illusion", writes "The true root of liberty, equality and culture is atheism...The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of mankind is required for their real happiness. The demand is to give up the illusion..." When man is freed of religion, he has a better chance to live a normal and wholesome life."

The avowed pessimists too attack religion because of their dismal view of man. They regard men as a cunning biped, governed by appetites and growelling in their enjoyment. They see men as mean and mechanical. Some of them regard that he is unteachable and destined to ruin. These alarmists declare that we are all

the victims of fate which is blind to our interests, which furthers some of our plans without intention and thwarts others without malignity. Our wills are of no avail. In the words of Hardy: "the president of the immortals sports with us all." The pessimists regard religion as the sop for men who are weak of mind and the distressed, born of ignorance and helplessness and a desire for security and happiness.

## SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The distinguishing character of man from other evolutes of nature is his capacity for knowledge and responsible moral action (*jñāna-karmādhikāra*) in the words of Ācārya Śaṅkara. These two characteristics stem from the fact of our being human in our nature. Let us for the moment spell out Spirituality as Religion. Whitehead writes "when we consider what religion is for mankind and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relation between them. We have here the two strongest general forces (apart from the mere impulse of the various senses) which influence man, and they seem to be set one against the other—the force of religious intuition and the force of our impulse to accurate observation and logical

deduction.”<sup>1</sup> These two forces Science and Spirituality are major forces. They make for civilization and culture. They invest meaning to life, and helps man to grow into a true human being.

In the history of human civilization, there have been periods when men have envisaged a strong opposition and royal battles between the scientific view of life and the spiritual outlook. These two outlooks on life and interpretations have arraigned men into two camps, each denigrating the other as ending up in error. The scientific outlook is neatly described by Max Eastman “Science is the result of man’s gradual understanding the kind of knowledge we can rely on in action. It is neither revealed by God, nor spun out of the head of Aristotle, but is come at by observation and experiment.” Science abstracts such parts of Reality amenable to mathematical calculation and measurement in terms of quantity. It leaves out those aspects called values e. g. God, soul and Immortality and the imponderables which cannot be measured or weighed. Hence, it cannot be considered the complete truth. Scientific technique which is

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1. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*. p. 260. (1926).

described as technology is accepted as beneficial by all. It has flooded the modern world with a plethora of comforts and gadgets. The technology aspect of science is never under dispute, for it is admired and appropriated by the most vehement enemy of science, in the service of his comforts.

The scientific outlook is a definite attitude to life and it admits that our knowledge is limited and circumscribed and hedged in by several conditions. We know very little, and that too is not free from doubt and error. There is much that we do not know, and there is a great deal that we never can know. Scientific outlook has no instruments to measure the values of life. It has produced a fourth value in addition to the traditional triad—Truth, Beauty and Goodness, the Useful. The Useful is resolved in terms of the physical, biological and mental goods. It looks upon man as a psycho-biological organism with a capacity for rationality.

Science is understanding Nature and technology is controlling it. No human activity is non-value-oriented. Science seeks truth with a frame of mind closely allied and akin to the spiritual outlook. Both seek truth goaded by the desire to know. The scientific activity begins as a theoretic investigation in the beginning and later on takes to

useful manipulation. The scientific frame of mind like that of the spiritualist is unruffled whatever the circumstances. It is critical, impartial, free from likes and dislikes, disinterested, cautious, uncommitted non-assertive and tentative in its statements.<sup>1</sup>

The scientist is alert, nimble, patient, always ready to doubt, fond to observe, slow to reject, ready to reconsider. He seeks indefinitely to diminish error though he cannot totally abolish it. The *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* describes that the ideal spiritual aspirant must have a sharp intellect.<sup>1</sup> The

दृश्यते तु अग्रया बुद्ध्या

truths of spiritual life have been posited first as hypothesis from the experience of sages. *S'raṇa* is diligent study of the problem from a competent and illumined Guru. The desire arises from the importance of the issue. It results in an intense whole-hearted inquiry into Reality. The truths, the spiritualist seeks, liberates him from all limitations. Hence, his earnestness. What the student has heard has to be reflected on (*manana*). Reflection is enjoined on all. There is no room here for intellectual indolence. It is no blank acceptance or blind assent to inherited

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1. Bertrand Russal, *Scientific Outlook*, See last chapter.

authority. It is not rigid mechanical indoctrination. It is the acceptance of reasoned belief and examined thought. It is reflection that burns conviction into men's mind. What the Guru has taught is his and it becomes ours only when we examine it and appropriate it. *Manana* helps us to meet all possible objections to the truth of the scripture-taught reality.

This stage in the spiritual aspirant's journey bears a remarkable resemblance to the scientist's method. One should not become the dupe of appearances. There is no possibility for spiritual illumination if one is not critically intelligent or if one refuses to think or will not think. This is the prime significance of *jijñāsā* (inquiry).

Saṅkara has writes that a hundred scriptural declarations cannot transform a pot into a cloth nor make fire cold. One of the foremost commentators with an encyclopedic range of learning Vācaspatimiśra half in banter and half in seriousness proclaims that the characteristic of an intellectual is partiality for truth. तद्वपक्षपातो हि धियां स्वभाव । Lord Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna not to surrender his reason and be saved, but to satisfy it. He is asked to question often times and learn the truth through debates and close examination.

तद्विद्धि प्राणिपातेन परिश्रमेन सेवया ।  
 उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनः तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥  
 इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं मया ।  
 विमृश्येतदशेषेण यन्वेच्छसि तथा कुरु ॥

The methods of the spiritual religionists and the scientists are closely parallel. The acceptance of ultimate truth is vouchsafed on the authority of plenary experience. Religious experience is what the scientist calls experiment. Spiritualists have an experimental understanding of Reality. His realisation of truth is not verbal not a projection of his mental images. It is in essence an authentic bonafide discovery of ultimate reality. It is not a second hand or a 11<sup>th</sup> hand acceptance of others description.

Science is not uncommitted to any faith nor does it operate in a vacuum. It rests on the faith in the orderly nature of the Universe. It feels that the universe is a cosmos, in some aspects at least. It only discovers the order and the laws inherent in Nature and does not invent or put them into it. If there was no order or law in Nature Science cannot discover it. Prof. Whitehead observes "Science is an enterprise in which reason is based on faith which cannot justify itself by its own methods for it is faith which guides and gives



coherence to the conclusions of scientific practice .....This faith springs from direct inspection of the nature of things so disclosed in our immediate present experience.”

In the progress of man's evolution the achievements of Science makes largely for ego-inflation (*ahamkāra*). It induces a large scale vanity, as it is rightly, feared by many. A little knowledge and the marvels of modern science with which the world is glutted and glitters makes some little minds arrogant and to brag after the manner of the Oxford Professor: “I am the Master of the Balliol College and what I do not know is not knowledge” or as the Poet put it: “I am the Captain of my ship and the master of my fate.” Men of science, the first rate minds, have always acknowledged the wonder and the incomprehensible nature of reality. They have been humble and have acknowledged limitations to human knowledge. Witness the remarks of Newton, “I do not know how I appear to the world but to myself, I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore and diverting myself now and then findinig a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary while the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me.”

Henry Adams is deeply distressed at human arrogance and conceit. He exclaims: “After all,

man knows mighty little and may some day learn enough of his own ignorance to fall down and pray". The view, that the spectacle of the universe and the lives of men are just cinders and are only organized in parts, is difficult to swallow, though Russell prides upon it. Darwin is nearer the truth when he writes: "The grand sequence of events which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts at such a conclusion." 'The logic of the Infinite', observed Sri Arobindo 'is magic to the Finite.'

Albert Einstein in his book: *The World as I see it*, observes, that the scientists "religious feeling take the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work, in so far as he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desire. It is beyond question clearly akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages." (Page 29)

The German genius sums up the ideal nature of the Scientist's outlook: in two smart paradoxes:-  
 "Man must persist in his belief that the incom-

prehensible is comprehensible, otherwise he would cease to explore.....". "The highest happiness in a rational being is to have explored what is explorable and to quickly revere what is unexplorable." There is mystery in the words of Otto, at the heart of Reality. Lord Kṛṣṇa puts it neatly in the Gītā: "Mysterious is the origin of beings manifest in the intermediate stage and mysterious again is their end. Why then seek to feel dismay?"

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।

अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥

Life is the gift of nature and purposive living brings to full fruition all the human potentialities by the exercise of science and spirituality. One cannot willfully neglect science today. It is a major force in human civilization. It is one of the greatest achievements of man, the noblest activity and has given us boundless opportunities. Many of us forget the fact that science is not merely an instrument for securing man's material comfort and progress. But is also a means for understanding the nature, man and his place in the Universe. The larger aspects of science are complementary to spiritual life. Science is necessary but not sufficient. Values are not facts. They have a different dimension. They are qualitative essences

that colour life and give it nobility. They cannot be measured but only intuited and incorporated into life and in the structure of society. Science gives us the material for living; without it we would all primitive in more than one sense of the term. Spirituality gives us the wisdom to order the goods, science gives us.

Among the modern prophets, Gandhiji and Vinobhaji have sought to reconcile science, rationalism and spirituality in their concept of the Sarvodaya Society. Vinobhaji sees the failure of mankind in their inability to combine the pursuit of the two disciplines, science and spirituality. He pleads for their marriage. The central defect of the religionists is, they have sought spirituality to the exclusion of man's social well-being. They have considered individual salvation as all important and have neglected their responsibility and social concern for Humanity. This has made religion largely irrelevant to society and humanity. On the other hand, a large number of politicians and secular minded thinkers have held that social life, political enactments, economic adjustments, if they are to be effective are to be evolved in total defiance and neglect of the principles of morality. They hold that politics, sociology, Economics, statecraft, and Governments cannot be strictly moral and will have to indulge in diplomacy

sometimes and use unjust means. This also makes religion not relevant to society.

True spirituality and genuine religion blazes forth a powerful *third* alternative, viz., that religion is relevant to human life by pointing out to its involvement in all the activities of man's social life. One cannot gain ones happiness until it is won for all.

Reflective Science and self-knowledge teaches us that we must combine scientific knowledge and spiritual wisdom. The physical sciences through their discoveries have brought men together in space, spirituality seeks to join the hearts and minds of people into a common brotherhood. We need both these powerful impulses, science and spirituality for our life to avoid imbalance and secure integrity. The choice today is not *an either/or* but is a powerful assertion of *this and that*.

Religion relates to reality and to the correct perception of things. Religion deplores the bifurcation between it and life. Its relevance consists in its insistence that the political and social life should not be divorced from truth, integrity, intellectual honesty and social concerns.

## THE CHALLENGE TO RELIGION EXAMINED

The challenge to religion arises out of a perverse understanding of the nature and function of Religion. Spiritual religion is not dogmatic. The centre of gravity in religion has shifted from authority, revelation, Creeds, churches, to spiritual experience. Spiritual experience alone guarantees the truths of religion. Religion is the experimental knowledge of Reality. Till the realisation the categories of all the religions are only several hypotheses. If science says, 'repeat the experiment, you will have the result'. Religion says, 'make the experiment, you will have the realisation'. Religious experience is scientific in the fundamental sense of the term. It is a transforming experience which remakes us. It cannot be described completely in terms of rational knowledge. Hence, they resort to parables, symbols and analogies. The experience is one, its credal formulations are many. The different Faiths are the intellectual formulations of one and the same experience. Each religionist spells the experience in terms of the psychological idiom of his culture. They are all the manifestations of one Experience. There is a Fellowship of Faiths. They do not contradict one another in their

essentials. None of them is the exclusive and complete expression of the experience. It is such exclusive claims that have made dogmatic and sectarian religions quarrel all along and incriminate fellow Faiths. The dogmatic creeds imagine that "the whole sea is ladled into his own little pond." It is again the lack of catholic outlook that seeks to proselytise men of other faiths, instead of intensifying their own faith. Once we realise the experimental nature of religion, the brotherhood of Faiths and their unity becomes clear to us.

Rational reflection has a significant place and an important role to play in religion. We should separate the core from the accretions, myths, dogmas and legalism, and the local colourings of the different religions. There is a hard core, a human demand, at the back of all Faiths. "There is such a core in all religions", is the verdict of the mystics of the East and the West. That religion has been variously named the Eternal Gospel, Perennial Philosophy, शाश्वतधर्म गोष्ठा by the Gītā. The discovery of this core unites all religions.

Students of comparative religion see the stage set for it. A.N. Whitehead writes that "the decay of Christianity and Buddhism as determinative

influences in modern thought is partly due to the fact that each religion has unduly sheltered itself from others. The self-sufficient pedantry of learning and the confidence of the ignorant zealots have combined to shut up each religion in its own form of thought. Instead of looking to each other for deeper meanings they have remained self-satisfied and unfertilised." The stage is now set for the commingling of the best, the fundamental cores of all religions. Such a religion answers the challenge well and brings out the best in all. No one religion gives us the complete nature of spiritual truth.

Arnold Toynbee writes instructively: on this issue "I have come back to a belief that religion holds the key to the mystery of existence; but I have not come back to the belief that this key is in the hands of my ancestral religion exclusively" ..... "The four higher religions that are alive in our age are variations on a single theme and that if the four components of this heavenly music of the spheres could be audible on each simultaneously, and with equal clarity to one pair of human ears, the happy hearer would find himself listening not to a discord but to a harmony". (A Study of History Vol. VII P. 428).

Religions today meet on a basis of co-operation, stressing the common substratum, i.e., the



area of agreement between the different Faiths. Spiritual religion is not escapism, nor is it a sedative. It makes for realism and takes up the challenge. It is a transforming experience. It is not an intellectual adventure, nor an obedience to inherited authority. It rescues us from the fugitive, fragile, and flightly life, that is ours. It does not ask us to capitulate or compromise but to conquer and concentrate on our life's ideals. Religion, in the words of Aldous Huxley is, "a system of education by which human beings may train themselves, first to make desirable changes in their own personalities and, at one remove, in society, and, in the second place, to heighten consciousness and so establish more adequate relations between themselves and the universe of which they are parts."<sup>1</sup>

Spiritual religion is humanistic in more than one sense of the term, and the most effective instrument for social regeneration. Professor H. J. Paton writes of the essence of spiritual religion: "A religion which does not flower into moral goodness is a form of emotional indulgence. A man may assent to all the articles of a creed, he may enjoy the most edifying of emotions, he may

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1. Huxley *End and Means*, p. 225

be scrupulous in the performance of ritual actions, but if he is deliberately cruel, consistently treacherous, completely selfish and entirely unrepentant, his religion is a sham.”<sup>2</sup> The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* declares: “Not he who has not a concentrated mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach (Brahman) through knowledge.”

नाविरतः दुश्चरितात् नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।

नाशान्तमनसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैवमान्पुयात् ॥

Religion is not a mere form, but is a powerful force and a deep need of man. It helps the spirit of man to grow and does not seek to intimidate him. It is dynamic and is also the source of all inward power that helps us to overcome fear. It is revolutionary. It reinforces courage. The strength of our faith in a noble hypothesis and the courage to uplift it, in spite of weighty appearances to the contrary is given to us by spiritual experience. It is an adventure and not a passive and quiescent mood. It asks us to love our neighbour as ourselves, not because he belongs to our class, religion and country, but because of his humanity: Blake writes:

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2. H. J. Paton *The Modern Predicament*.

All must love the Human form  
 In heathen, Turk or Jew,  
 Where mercy, love and pity dwell  
 There God is dwelling too.

The essence of religion is morality and its humanism. St. John of the Cross observed, "no light can shine through dirty windows": Blake adds: 'if the doors of perception are cleansed, things will appear to man as it is infinite.' Spiritual life brings about a thorough regeneration in our ethical life. We must get rid of the feelings of possessiveness, pretensions, lust, and bitterness. We must overcome self-pity. In the Kantian language, the "thou shall" of the moral law must become the "I will". The Hindus have in a single word described the religious attitude, i. e., *Śraddhā*. It is not *ahamkāra*, i.e., feeling of self-righteousness.

The fruit of spirituality and experience result in works. "Faith without works is useless", said Saint Paul. If God is love, He cannot be a jealous God. A jealous God has no chosen people. Religious experience fills us with universal love. It is only dogmatic religions that sanctify pride, hatred and persecution, under the cloak of religion. It is such narrow cults, that call men of other

faiths unbelievers and consign them to hell and throw them on faggots and in to the fire.

Spiritual religion insists on overcoming self-centredness. In the words of William Law: "There is no possibility of turning to God, without turning from self". There is a familiar verse in the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, which states that "one who merely takes the name of the Lord and is indifferent to his duties and functions is the enemy of the Lord. For, the Lord takes birth for establishing righteousness." Jesus said "not everyone that calls "Christ" Lord, but he that does the will of the Father, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." St. Teresa writes instructively on this issue. "Jesus has no body now on earth but yours; you are the feet with which he goes about doing good: yours are the hands with which he blesses."

The concept of fear looms large in the challenge to religion. The essence of true religion is in overcoming fear. The final words of the Sage Yājñavalkya to Janaka summing up the fruit of his discourse, is to attain *abhaya*, i.e., fearlessness. The realisation of the *Fundamental Oneness* of all results in the fellowship of Faiths. Fear arises from the second. It puts doubt, tensions and strife in us. द्वितीयाद्वै भयं भवति. St. Paul declared, "He has

made us of one blood all nations, for to dwell on the face of earth.” When a Jesus talked of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, or when a Gandhiji spoke of a *Rāmarājya*, they did not mean this country, or that principality, but referred to the world community, of the men and women of all races.

Spiritual religion has stressed the divinity of and the dignity of man. It does not look upon man, as one born in sin and being tied down to a body of lust without any glimmer of divinity. Man is looked upon as the image of God. Man and God are consubstantial and are not torn away from one another. Man is not a banished stranger, nor an utter alien to God.

Spiritual religion is against the regimentation of the method (*sādhana*) men adopt. It leaves the method to the temper and kind of man that one is. Not only is Jesus true, when he says “there are many mansions in my Father’s House” but, the *Gītā* adds: there are many ways to it. Lord Kṛṣṇa declares: “Whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady”. Infinite are the ways to the Lord so long as the reverence is serious. Men grow to their best in different ways. The author of the *Gītā* declares this as a principal tenet of true

religion. No one way is superior or inferior to the other.

Some seek a father in Heaven above  
 Some seek a human image to adore  
 Some crave a spirit vast as Life and Love  
 Within thy mansion we have all and more.

Religion does not ask us to cripple our different faculties. It stands for a perfect balanced development of all the sides of man. We are not to hush them and strave them out but to harness them for spiritual purposes.

Religion does not impose a single spiritual discipline on all. It does not force all men into the Procrustean bed of a single *sādhana*. The path for God-realisation for any individual is relative to his station and duties in life. The temple of the true devotees is not confined to any chapel. It is larger than the house of worship of any sect. "Those who are driven from the Church are not necessarily driven from God."

Religious life is not opposed to a life of sound reason. The *Gītā* insists on us to resort to reason in cases of our doubts. Buddhi Yoga. It is in the competence of Buddhi, to bring under control the roving senses which distract men and dissipate all their energy. Many verses in the *Gītā* lay

great stress on the need for rational control of the senses. The discipline of the mind is absolutely necessary for the life of religion - (*ātmasamīyama*).

असतो मा सद्गमय  
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय  
मृत्यो मा अमृतं गमय

Spiritual religion is a quest for values. It is man's pilgrimage from the world of *disvalues* to the world of *values*. In the Upaniṣadic language, it a progress from "the Unreal to the Real, from Ignorance to Knowledge, from Death to Immortality." It is reiterated in Upaniṣad, in three significant words, *dama*, *dāna* and *dayā* - self control, charity and compassion.

Religion develops in us the capacity to love others and put ourselves in their place. This does not come by chance. By love the true religionist does not mean what happens when on the screen when two close-ups rapturously collide. It is not a mere instinct based on our impulses. It is the result of religious experience. It is not *eros* but is *agape*.

Human psychology discloses that all men in some form seek desperately to transcend their ego. Self-transcendence is an instinct in man. In the significant words of Huxley 'the art of self-

transcendence is effected at three levels. Some sink back to animal life to forget their selves by taking to drugs, herd-intoxication, cheap and sensational novels. They are the descending highways to infra personal life. Some others achieve self-transcendence at the horizontal level. They seek to forget themselves by taking to hobbies, running a business, research in nuclear physics, composing music and collecting stamps. Religion consists in self-transcendence in a vertical manner.<sup>1</sup> Its keynote is to give up the separatist view and consciously surrender all the aspects of our self and to be true and be in tune with the Infinite. The strong self-hood in us must melt. The supreme spiritual ideal is surrender. It is the law of living. Its essence goes beyond all creeds, religious beliefs and personal aims of conduct. It is the crowing word. It sweeps out and breaks down every limit, cannon and formula and opens out to man the vision and experience'.<sup>2</sup> "The human mind" said Pascal, "naturally loves. The inescapable mark of a religious man is his transparent sincerity. We see in him, his words match his deeds. In him his *ācāra*, *vicāra* and *pracāra* - coalise, thought word and action. If this is not so, the moral of

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1. Aldous Huxley See, *The Devils of Loudun* (Appendix.)

2. Sri Aurovindo *Essays on the Gītā*. (Last chapter).



the message of a hypocrite would never be louder than his character. In the words of Bosanquet, 'we know the kind of man who, on the whole, gets nearest to God. It is not the cleverest, it is, I think, the sincerest.'

The history of philosophic thought discloses the existence of a "wide area of agreement," on the essentials, between the different religions. There is great tolerance in the formulations of the fundamental truth, by different religions. St. Ambrose declares: "All that is true by whosoever it has been said, is from the holy ghost." Plotinus writes, "This doctrine is not new, it was professed from the most ancient times though without being explicitly developed". St. Augustine describes, "It is wisdom, uncreated the same now that it ever was, and the same to be for ever." Vedānta regards all the types of manifestations of ultimate Reality as real. Each devotee might concentrate on a particular form, but this does not mean that he abrogates other forms. Śaṅkara did not believe in a God who denied the existence of others. Hindu tradition breathes the fresh air of tolerance. Bilvamaṅgala the Śaivite writes; "undoubtedly I am a follower of Śiva. Let there be no doubt of that; nor of my devotion to the five lettered text sacred to Śiva. Nevertheless, my mind constantly

revels in recalling the picture of the beautiful face of the child Kṛṣṇa, beloved of the Gopi maidens”.

शैवा वयं न खलु तत्र विचारणीयं  
पञ्चाक्षरी जपपरा नितरां तथाऽपि ।  
चेतो मदीयमतसी कुसुमावभासं  
स्मेराननं स्मरति गोपत्रधू किशोरम् ॥

Appayya Dikṣita sings : “I do not find any difference in essence between Śiva the Lord of the world and Viṣṇu; the Lord of the spirit of the universe. Yet my devotion is given to Śiva”.

महेश्वरे वा जगतामधीश्वरे  
जनार्दने वा जगदन्तरात्मनि ।  
न वस्तु भेदप्रतिपत्तिरस्ति मे  
तथापि भक्तिः तरुणेन्दुशेखरे ॥

Not merely are all the forms of ultimate Reality regarded as the manifestations of the one and the same Reality: the different creeds are also described as having the same goal, though they are differently expounded. Puṣpadanta, in the celebrated *Śiva-Mahimna-Stotra* declares : “The Vedas, the Pāsupata and Vaiṣṇava creeds, each of them is encouraged in some place or other. Some think that this is better, or that is better owing to differences of taste, but all men reach unto you the Supreme, even as all rivers, however zig-zag their courses, reach the sea”.

त्रयी सांख्यं योगः पशुपतिमतं वेष्णवमिति  
 प्रभिन्ने प्रस्थाने परमिदमदः पथ्यमिति च ।  
 रुचीनां वैचित्र्यादजुकुटिलनानापथजुषां  
 नृणामेको गम्यः त्वमसि पयसामर्षव इव ॥

The deep spirit of Hinduism never narrowed itself down to come to hold the view of a *uni-personal*, exclusive, complete manifestation of the Lord. Hinduism believed in the multi-personal manifestations. A famous verse describes this attribute best. "May Hari, the ruler of the three worlds, worshipped by Saivants as Śiva, by the Vedāntin's as Brahman, by the Buddhists as Buddha, by the Naiyāyikas as the Chief Agent, by the Jains as the liberated, by the ritualists as the Principle of Karma, may He grant our prayer."

यं शैवाः समुपासते शिव इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनः  
 बौद्धाः बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्तेति नैयायिकाः ।  
 अहंस्त्रित्यत जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः  
 सौंस्यं नो विदध्नातु वाञ्छितफलं तैलोक्यनाथो हरिः ॥

Dr. Radhakrishnan adds :

ऋस्तवः क्रिस्तुरिति क्रियापररताः, अह्मेति माहम्मदाः

cf: Kalidasa

बहुधाप्यागमैर्भिन्नाः पन्थानः सिद्धिहेतवः ।  
 त्वय्येव निपतन्त्योधाः जान्हवीया इवार्णवे ॥

The spiritual home for this Principle of toleration is the *Bhagavad Gitā* and the *Upaniṣads*. The *Ṛg Veda* proclaims the supreme truth. "Reality is one", and immediately adds reminding us of its catholicity of outlook, "those who know call it by various ways".

Progress in the concept of religion has been in the direction of the deepening of our ethical insight and in the increase of the feeling of the oneness of humanity. The great religions of the world have tended to converge on the emphasis of tolerance. They illustrate the great truth of the statement of Symmachus, "The heart of so great a mystery (religion) cannot ever be reached by following one road only". They all proclaim the central truth that in every great religion there is a mixture of the "essential counsels and truths and non-essential practices". We need to winnow the one from the other. Professor Toynbee writes in his Gifford lectures:<sup>1</sup> "If we could imagine to ourselves a future world, in which every one of the living Higher religions had become extinct, but in which the human race was still surviving, it would be difficult to imagine human life going on without these *essential counsels and truths* to light its path and guide its steps as in the past. In fact, the counsels and truths enshrined

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1. An Historios Approach to Religion.

in higher religions would appear to have still longer lives than those higher religions themselves." They would seem, indeed, to be coeval with mankind in the sense of being intimations of a spiritual presence accompanying us on our pilgrimage as a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night—an accompaniment without which humanity would not be human." It is this deposit of the universal truths that is the core of spiritual religion. The different formulations of these universal truths have appeared as diverse because the eternal voice of truth would not be picked up by the different types of men, unless it tuned in to the wave-lengths of their receiving sets. "Thus one man's lens becomes another man's blinkers."

Progress in the sphere of religion, has taken on today the duty of stressing the necessity for tolerance. It is no longer mere indifference. Our toleration should not be a mere stroke of policy, it must be an article of our faith. Toleration is essentially positive, it is the appreciation of the good in other faiths allowing ourselves to be influenced by it. Those who affirm exclusive possession so passionately are no doubt the greater ones among them, inspired by a central conviction of the need to put first things first. But it is an error to confuse the tolerance which results from

humanity in the face of so supreme a mystery with religious latitudinarianism. Locke said long ago, tolerance is the condition of effective search for the truths of religion. Toleration does not become perfect until it transfigures into love. Religious toleration makes for peace and a sound social order. Bertrand Russell, the passionate sceptic emphatically affirms: "The root of the matter is a very simple and old fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean—please forgive me for mentioning it—it is *love*. *Christian love*, or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty. If you feel this, you have all that any body should need in the way of religion. This indeed is religion, what else can it be if it is not Christian love and compassion?" The thing Russell asks for are not the fruits of science or reason. Saint Paul gives us a list of the fruits of the spirit :—love, joy, peace, faith etc. The Upaniṣads describe it as *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam* or *ānandam*. The truth described as *Satyam* or *Sat* in the Upaniṣads is not the mere epistemic value or standard of logic. It is Reality itself. It is the ground and the goal of existence.

It is the root of all things, it sustains all that is. It is the foundation of all beings. Truth signifies the essence of Reality. When Reality is described as *jñānam*, it means that it is self-luminous, *svaprakāśa*, i.e., immediate awareness, which needs no mediation for it to be known. Such a Real is the infinite, it is bliss. The infinite alone is bliss, not the finite. The Truth of philosophy is the God of religion.

Today, there is a growing recognition that there is a large area of agreement between the different religions of the world. There is no use pounding the husk leaving the grain. The wide area of agreement provides the common substratum for all religions. It removes the antagonism between different religions and promotes fellowship among them.

Amidst all the conflict and confusion of our age, we see the emerging outlines of a true spiritual religion, the ground plan of the temple in which the entire humanity are destined to live and pray. But it is enjoined on us all as seekers to prove ourselves worthy of this high calling.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See Lawrence Hyde, *The wisdom Religion Today*.

## THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF RELIGION

The place of religion in human life has been a topic of great controversy in recent times, in the wake of the spectacular triumphs of science and technology, and the horrible practical record of the inhuman activities perpetrated in the name of religion. The unseemly competition between the different religions and the arts of propaganda to bring men to their fold and to convert men of other faiths to their own have aroused deep resentment and a feeling of disgust in sensitive minds. Added to this, we have the irrational dogmatic strain in the Fundamentalist position which brooks no rational probe into its citadel. Many a Fundamentalist surprisingly is content to reject the claims of science, and have come to regard religion as a close preserve with its own special mission of securing individual salvation. Many a faith has become utterly dogmatic and largely irrelevant by not speaking to the genuine conditions of modern man. The fact of modernity has to be reckoned with in the formulation of our creeds, and codes of conduct.

Religion is the total quest of man and it must seek to work in terms of man's deep needs, and



life in human community. It is primarily a necessary living investigation for securing a right-orientation to live well in a difficult world. It does not operate in a vacuum, and its primary significance is for human life. To realise the fact and to function as human being, one has to gain a clear perspective of human life and assess properly man's situation. Religion is life-orientation. It is not a special exclusive discipline. It is entailed in the very fact of our being human. It is not a passive inheritance from the past. It is the total quest of each man to be undertaken by himself. It is man's 'ultimate concern'. We cannot shift the quest on to others and live by proxy faith.

Faith is total, organic and integral to man. It is a 'complete commitment', not a mere 'theoretic consent', nor a passive emotional reaction. None can do the quest for us: others can show the way and we have to tread it. Each must bear the cross and each must crucify his ego for the light in him to shine. There is no room here for any proxy action नान्यः पन्था अयनाय विद्यते across the fence there is no other road. In the quest for the religious ideal, one must be critical. There is no point in our refusing to be critical about religion when we are so in respect of other disciplines. Uncritical acceptance keeps our faith at the

“kindergarten level”. The religious quest is a struggle, and it seeks to secure significant meaning and direction for personal existence. It primarily seeks to answer the questions raised by Kant: What can we know? What may we hope? What ought we do? Does the universe make sense? Are values such as Truth, Dharma, Compassion, hold good for all men and for times?

The abandonment of the quest has resulted in the lazy indifferent and formal acceptance of Faith by many. In the absence of the men’s personal earnestness, the Faiths have ceased to be operative in their workings and have become frills and decorations. We have any number of secularised religions, and convenient substitutes, which keep us half-human by fits and starts. Men come to have many concerns and no ultimate concern. It is religious commitment that discloses to us the knowledge of values derived through non-scientific modes of knowledge.

The predicament of modern-man results from of his exclusive and absolute faith in the methods of science and Reason. The scientific methods do not lend any meaning to the values of life, moral truths and spiritual experience. They leave large tracts of human existence with no explanation. The scientific writ does not run everywhere. It

confines its attention only to those facts that are measurable and are amenable to mathematical treatment and leaves out a good deal of Reality. It abstracts that portion of Reality which is apprehended by its methods. It interprets 'Experience'. It takes only sense experience in a limited sense. And leaves out all else. Rationalism makes dreadful miscalculations, and omits many ineluctable elements in human life and nature, in its proud inventory and analysis with the result that a large area of human life is unlit with meaning and left out as devoid of significance. Human values like friendship, and enjoyment of the works of art cannot be described by science. More goes into the paintings of the celebrated masters than canvas and pigment. The great musical compositions are not mere differences in sound and its wave lengths. This is the serious limitation of the scientific method. To be unaware of it is just like wearing glasses and then complaining that the world is badly illumined. Aristotle's remark is highly instructive on this issue. He writes : "It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things, just so far as the nature of the subject admits. It is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician as to demand of a rhetorician scientific proof."

In the words of Paul Tillich, religion is man's 'ultimate concern' and its claims can be existentially known and not objectively. The religious approach does not rule out the functioning of reason. The experience is the result of the total surrender. It is given to us in the degree we are willing to participate. It is the result of the play and counter play of experience and the reflection as in the Dialectic of Plato. Reflection and reason clarify our experience. Doubt is not unwelcome. It is not an alien to a growing understanding of Faith. It is required by it and it secures coherence and helps the emergence of significant experience. *Manana*, is an important activity in the form of *Pariprāśna* (i.e. examining) and is necessary for *Jigñāsā* (inquiry) *Śravaṇa*, *Manana* and *nididhyāsana* constitute the Upaniṣadic triad of *Sādhana*. It must be backed by an initial faith (*Śraddha*). The attitude of a religious aspirant must not be that of "an objective observer". We must seek knowledge about others as persons and not as objects. We must become "participant observers"<sup>1</sup>. We must not speak neutral language, We can understand other's faiths only when we share their intimacies. Personal risks and commitment of loyalties, and not merely factual enquiries and study<sup>1</sup>.

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1. W.C. Smith *The Meaning and The End of Religion* (1963).

तद्विद्वि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनः तत्रदर्शिनः (IV—34 Gītā)

The unrepentant Rationalist and rational Naturalist claim that the 'Real is the Rational'. But the authentic student of religious experience has no hesitation in declaring that there is an *unresolved* mystery in religious experience. No conceptual scheme can capture it within its rubrics. This conclusion is affirmed from the authentic record of the religious experience of the mystics of all ages. Lord Kṛṣṇa discloses the limits of human reason and describes its confines: "mysterious is the origin of things and beings, just manifest in their intermediate stage and is mysterious again in the end". The Upaniṣad describes it as the great wonder and affirms its complete incomprehensibility. As early as in the fourth century, the Roman orator and statesman Symmachus, in his debate with Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan, concerning the removal of a Pagan Shrine into the Senate building writes: "It is impossible that so great a mystery should be approached by one road only". Religion is a quest for an ultimate concern. It is not narrow indoctrination. The non-humanistic religions are at war with others. The pious feeling of some Fundamentalist religion is to believe

that it alone is in the possession of the complete and absolute truth, and that other creeds have ended up in error and are utterly in the wrong. This is responsible for the forced enlightenment, and aggressive evangelism. In their ruthless competition with others each has fought to displace the other. The recognition of the mystery and the realisation of the limits of human reason have established a liberal human attitude, in religion and have paved the way for a fruitful dialogue between the faiths of the world. It is a mistake to think that men are neutral in their serious approach to the different religions.

Everyone has some one or other ultimate concern. It is sheer folly to imagine that one can rise above all faiths and reside in the ivory tower and speak a common language the religious *Esperanto*. Every one is moving in, away from or towards some faith. Such is the nature of man. The nature of the man is in essence his faith.

श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषः यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः

“The human heart naturally loves, and the human mind naturally believes” says Pascal. ‘The age of faith is always with us ; only the objects of our faith changes, we depart from one creed only to embrace another’, says Radhakrishnan.

The importance of faith is stressed by all. The experience is the verification. The experience is self-evident. There is no need for any external criterion to judge its truth and value. It is '*svaprakāśa*', and has intrinsic validity. Simone Weil writes: "In the last resort, certainty is always of the nature of immediate and self-evident knowledge in which Reality itself is present, and is, as it once declares itself to us, and this is precisely what we mean by experience". The Kaṭha anticipates the sentiment: "The self is not realised by intellectual probity, nor by mental excellence, nor by prodigious study, but by Him whom the Lord chooses to elect and accepts

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।  
यमैवेष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः तस्यैष आत्मा वृणुते तनुं स्वाम् ॥

The fact of 'religious experience' is given to us ; it has the quality of a revelation. It is a gift laid on us. Referring to religious truth, Kierkegaard writes : "that in religious faith there comes a point where it is important to understand that one cannot understand truth further". The nature of religious experience baffles the Rationalist and educates him in the reality of his finitude." We cannot achieve dogmatic finality in any literal sense in religious knowledge. We know somethings

and know them very well, but we do not know everything and even what we know is shrouded with infinite mystery. The symbols employed in our faith represent a mixture of knowledge and ignorance, certainty and mystery. We see in the words of St, Paul 'through a glass darkly'. Religion is a loving commitment and not cold scrutiny.

Man's mighty effort to reach a basis for his self-sufficiency through the exercise of his analytic capacities, sharpened intellect, magnificent science and inspiring technology is critically portrayed by Gerald Heard and also its consequences. Man like the sandmartin driven by instinct to look sufficiently deep with his keen intellect, so that at the depth he might go on to master those exercises whereby he might become an actual experiment and manifestation of the good, the True and Beautiful. But he finds the critical boring faculty cannot be stopped and the constructive, creative integral power is never let to come into play. He proves no better than the sandmartin which exhausts her constructive impulse to drill after several attempts.

The unknown author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* writes: "The high and the best way thither is run by desires and not by feet. For, He may be



loved not thought. By love may He be begotten and holden, by thought never". The Gītā affirms that religious experience is not and cannot be confined to any one exclusive *unipersonal* description. It admits a variety of forms, for the conception of Ultimate Reality. Lord Kṛṣṇa in his compassion and catholic outlook not only welcomes all faiths as roads to his abode and also holds out that He manifests to the aspirant in the way he approaches.

The lack of mutual understanding between the different faiths arises because of the wrong approach. The problem today is how to look upon other faiths, who regard our ideas of Ultimate concern as absolute error. We need a creative way of entering into a interpersonal dialogue with other faiths, remaining faithful to our doctrines and not refusing to acknowledge the wisdom in other faiths. Earnest moral study reveals, that at the core in every religious tradition, there is a firm basis to keep the inter-faith dialogue, open for understanding. The method to study other religions is described with rare insight by the doyen of comparative Religions, Wilfred Cantfield Smith. He writes: "The traditional forms of western scholarship in the study of other men's religions was that of an *impersonal* presentation of an *It*. The first great of an innovation in recent times has been the

*Personalization* of the faiths observed, so that one finds a discussion of *They*. Presently the observer, he becomes personally involved, so that the situation is one of *We* talking about *They*. The next step on dialogue where we talk to *You*. If there is listening and mutuality, this becomes that '*We*' talk with '*You*'. The culmination of this progress is when '*We All*' are talking with each other about *Us*'.<sup>1</sup>

Religion turns out to be "a state of being grasped by Ultimate concern — a total commitment" wherein (Paul Tillich) : It is not mere intellectual assent to a passing impulse in a temporary mood of despair and desolation. It is total self-giving. It is a new birth. It is bringing our all in the participation. It is an active process. It must be practised deliberately, consciously. It is not the stayput that all initiative is with the Lord. This type of total surrender, never flags, shows the way, summons the necessary strength to tread it, leaves no corner unlit in our being. In the words of Sri Aurobindo : "It is the whole Law of living and its essence goes beyond all creeds, religious beliefs and personal aims of conduct. It is the crowning word. It is not merely the essence of what has been said on the subject. It sweeps out

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1. W. C. Smith, *Comparitive Religion: whither — and why?* p. 49 (1959).

as it were, yet further breaks down every limit and rule, reason and formula, and opens into the vivid, wide and illimitable spiritual truth".<sup>1</sup> It is the integral rejection of all that has the touch of the ego. It is complete self-opening.

Religion in the above sense is fundamental and basic to man, for men seek meaning and significance of reality. Once we grant that religion is man's quest for Ultimate Concern', many things follow. One can never be indifferent or neutral and be uncommitted to the Ultimate Concern. 'Quasi-Religions' like communism and Nationalism are surrogates. The implementation of purely political measures, legislative wisdom, constitutional enactments, and spectacular scientific technological and economic revolutions have not given man peace. They acquire meaning and gain in prescription only when there is a Ultimate Concern of man's being. In the absence of this, they cut no ice. We should not forget the fact that man is an existing spirit rather than a merely thinking being. He is a chooser, a sufferer and a struggler for significant existence. Kierkegaard marks out three stages in the knowledge of men: In the first stage, he merely observes and enjoys the objects of life; and in the second stage of his choice he becomes responsible

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1 Sri Aurovino. *Essays on the Gītā*.

participant by the of his exercise preferences, and rejections. The is the *ethical stage*, and the first is the *aesthetic stage*. The third stage is the 'faith' stage. In faith, man responds as an unique individual to God, and becomes bound by the sovereign divine will. In the words of the celebrated Danish Theologian: "faith is not a form of rational knowledge, but is an existential leap urged upwards by the full passion of the soul for its salvation, a salvation that comes not from culture, nature or reason, but from the transcendent God above".

Religion is entailed in the very fact of our being human. It is not a special propensity of men who are extremely sensitive, and experience an elevated feeling and who have instinct for making and listening to hymn singing. Religion is something that comes "from the very *ground of our being*", according to Tillich, "vertically upwards rather than from transcendent verticality. All life is grounded in God whether consciously affirmed or not. He held that without God there would be nothing at all, therefore, even the pathetic modern man has tenuous contact with Ultimate being".

The Ultimate Concern of man i.e. the religious quest is the way to grow fully human in every dimension of man's existence. This Ultimate

Concern answers to three fundamental human needs: (a) the need for roots: (b) the need for hope: and (c) the need for communication.<sup>1</sup>

The scientists and the Cārvāka claim that perception does not disclose God, as admitted by the religionists. God is a trans-empirical Reality. He cannot be seen by the direct retinal eye. Arjuna was given the divine-vision to behold Viśvarūpa.

दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम्

The scales had to fall from the eyes

for St. Paul to have the vision on the Damascus road. It is a depth experience, and is the confrontation with Ultimate Reality and it cannot be explained in empirical terms. Basic Reality makes all else intelligible, and is the presupposition of all knowledge. It needs and cannot be revealed by other modes of knowledge. We do not light a candle to see the Sun. Sun's light makes things visible to us. Religious experience burns into us the lesson and the reality of the kinship with one another and the wholeness of life. It grants in an authentic measure the assurance of the trustworthy and significant truth below the surface of existence.

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1. See John B. Magee, *Religion and Modern Man* (449—897) 1967.

The motivation for religion is not acquired desire or curiosity. It is a deep growing desire for a state of existence which puts an end to all tensions, strife and doubts. It is a state of bliss and complete knowledge.

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थि छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥

It enables us to understand all.

The concept of Mokṣa is imperative in its claim and the seekers have counted no cost in achieving it. The Gītā says, there is no gain greater than it in men's estimation. The state of Mokṣa is an unruffled state from which nothing can dislodge us. It is entering into spirit and knowing the spirit. Naciketas in *Kaṭha*, is the ideal example of the aspirant. He is not lured by any amount of worldly goods and means for an affluent life. He rejects them outright and holds that nothing can be in lieu of Ātma Vidyā. He philosophically analyses the hollowness incidental to human pleasures and demonstrates their transience and tinsel nature.

न विस्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यः

लप्स्यामहे वित्तं अद्राक्ष्म चेत् त्वा

जीत्रिष्यामो यावदीशिष्यसि त्वं

वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव ॥

श्रोभावां मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकेतत्

सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।

अपि सर्वे जीवितमल्पमेव

तथैव वाहाः तव नृत्तगीते ॥

The sense organs wear out with age and the law of diminishing return, operates also in the field of human pleasures. Patañjali, in the *Yoga-sūtra*, undertakes a devastating examination of the glittering prizes and pleasures of life.

सर्वमेव हि दुःखं विवेकिनाम् ॥

He convicts them as producing sorrow at all stages. If one gets fortune or fame or any splendid objects, in the very act of the acquisition, he exposes himself to the jealousy of others who attempted and did not get it. While he possesses it he has fear that he he has to loose it some day, and the sword of Democles hangs on him. That period is marked by anxiety. The loss of it leaves him in sorrow. In the same strain Spinoza too argues that the love of the finite necessarily entails sorrow. Hence the conclusion of the Upaniṣad that there is no joy in the small (alpa) for joy rests only in the great.

भूमेव हि सुखं, नाल्पे सुखसस्ति

Nārada, the ancient H. G. Wells, after a massive encyclopedic study of tens of disciplines making

all knowledge his province after the manner of Becon, feels that it has not given him that joy which helps one to ford across the ocean of sorrow—(tarati śokam ātma vit) and gets instruction in it from Sanat Kumāra. Maitreyi finds no use for the fiscal inheritance from her sage husband, Yāgñavalkya when he proposes to make over what he has to take sannyasa. She asks as to what use is the inheritance. Its limited use is blatantly stated by the sage.<sup>1</sup> It will help the life of sense bound existence

यथैव उपकरणवतां जीवितं तथैव ते जीवितं  
स्यात्, अमृतत्वस्य तु नाशास्ति वित्तेन

If it cannot give us that plenary experience, she declares she has no use for it and hence seeks instruction in the spiritual lore. The royal sage Janaka, in a mood for an inquiry into the modes of Ātmajñāna, offered a thousand cows, and after Yāgñavalkya's triumphant silencing the interrogators of men and women, was moved to say, O ! Sage ! I offer my entire kingdom and myself too.

‘ सोऽहं भगवते विदेहान् ददामि, मां चापि सह दास्यायेति’

Such is the glory of the ideal of religious quest. Indra was willing to undergo long penance and severe test at the hands of the guru in his attempt to get spiritual instruction. This spiritual instruction



cannot be had by self-study or intellectual probity. It has to be had at the hands of an illumined guru. The Chāndogya says : he who has a *guru* knows. Śvetāśvatara in the concluding passage observes : that he who has an adoration to the Guru similar to the one, he has for God, such alone will help us to understand the scriptures.

यस्य देवे पराभक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्येते कथिताः ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥

Sravaṇa is what one gets through the illumined guru. They teach a competent and eligible disciple after testing him. There is no easy broadcasting of the truths. He who digs gets gold. In the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, the sages have renounced their lust for progeny, property, desire for women and love of scholarship : They have become mendicants in child-like simplicity abandoning the pride of learning. No cost they have counted in the pursuit of mokṣa.

परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्रह्मणो

निर्वेदमायात् नास्त्यकृतः कृतेना ।

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्

समत्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥ (Mundaka)

एतं वै तमात्मानं विदित्वा ब्राह्मणाः

पुत्रैषणायाश्च वित्तैषणायाश्च लोकैषणायाश्च

व्युत्थाय अथ भिक्षाचर्यं चरन्ति ।

.....तस्माद्ब्राह्मणः पाण्डित्यं

निर्विद्य बाल्येन तिष्ठासेत् । बाल्यं च

पाण्डित्यं च निर्विद्य अथ मुनिः अमौनं च

मौनं च निर्विद्य अथ स ब्राह्मणः (Bṛhadaranyā) III-5-1

Religion is an unique instrument and the function it discharges can only be performed by it and by none else. It gives men a sense of meaning and security. It affirms that death is not all. Death thou are dead, says the poet Dunn. It brings coherence in man's life. It shows him the goal and the way. This makes life intelligible, and supports him in his temporary griefs. It cures and saves men from three-fold alienation in the words of Professor J. B. Magee. Men suffer from alienation from the nature of their own self and from their fellows and from the Ultimate Power that is the ground and the goal of all existence. Without a purpose and plan, success has no meaning, and failure is not important. Pleasures like health, wealth, fame, social status, satisfy only upto a point. Beyond these values there is the demand for a deeper satisfaction. The poet Bhartrhari and acharya Saṅkara have familiarised us with the eternal questions which crop up after every achievement and attainment successively.

प्राप्ता विद्या राममान्या ततः किम्  
 लब्धा संपत् प्रभवाढ्या ततः किम् ।  
 भुक्ता नारी सुन्दराङ्गी ततः किम्  
 येन स्वात्मा नैव साक्षात्कृतोऽभूत् ।

The refrain tatah kim is a hardly answerable? Life without ultimate concern is not only flat and stale, it leads finally to negation of life itself.

## THE VEDANTA

The attitude of the different faiths to their co-religionists should be that of an honest inquirer and not of an aggressive evangelist or an apologist. One should not be aggressively defensive but must be persuasively sympathetic. The basic human aspirations, the meaning and the destiny of life described by the several faiths is the same in their essence. Dogmas tend to lull us under different banners and names, the propaganda and the excitement of the fanatics daze us into the acceptance of creeds. It is the sincerity of the quest and catholicity of outlook that awakens us into the truth and the vision of Reality.

The clash of faiths and the competition among them makes a few timid souls benumbed, and they sink back into the traditional religions and accept the Fundamentalist tenets and swear

by it. They erect blinkers along their eyes and refuse to see the good in other creeds and faiths. "The best intellects lack all conviction, the worst are full of passionate intensity". They rule out the use of reason as dangerous and expect from their adherents implicit obedience. Barth's theology and Pascal's definition of faith are instances in question. "We believe because it is absurd", says Pascal. Karl Barth writes the intellect of man is the voice of the serpent: Martin Luther adds: "all the articles of the Christian Faith are, when considered rationally, impossible, mendacious and preposterous. Faith, however, is completely abreast of the situation. It grips reason by the throat and strangles the beast". Kierkegaard, pronounces "Christianity demands the crucifixion of the intellect".

The modern crisis has baffled many and driven bands of men into several dogmatic folds: Some have walked into Fundamentalist theologies: others have crept into the orthodox camp of Karl Barth, and those who are sceptical about the powers of reason have joined the fold of Neo-scholasticism represented by the philosophies of Jaques Maritan and Gilson. Yet others embrace the concepts of Existentialism and some join the fold of Logical positivism. Most of these creeds in their anxiety to preserve their faith have petrified them

and embalmed them alive. We must understand the past in a way useful to the integrative growth.

Students of comparative religion from their inter-faith dialogue have come to see that each religion represents a segment of the arc of spirituality and no religion is the sole deposit of the exclusive possession of the Truth. To interpret God-Man relation in terms of a single human theology is vain ambition and is not fair to facts, and the nature of religious experience. It is understandable to say 'Jesus is my Lord ; but to legislate that Jesus must also be the Lord of all is not fair. The shoe-maker mystic Jacob Boehme expressed the great truth of spiritual religion to the consternation of the Lutheran Pastor "a Christian belongs to no sect whatsoever". We must not apotheosis the religion in which we are born and defend when others do not accept it or force it on them. God is not to be defended, but explored and loved in action, revelation is not to be argued but revealed in the actions of our life.

We are weary of labels and tired being classified and contrasted. That which unites us is our spirit, not our diverse cultures, nor colour nor creed nor land.

Today "there is a growing recognition that mankind stems from one origin which has figured

out in several forms". It is striving towards the reconciliation of that which is split and appears as diverse. The unity in the faiths is increasingly disclosed by the large area of agreement between the different religions in their essentials. That is providing the substratum, a common platform for all religions. There is no use pounding the husk leaving the grain.

It is comforting to note that savants, and mystics see the authentic spirit of religion in Vedānta philosophy, which is the living religion of the Hindus with its tenets.

The Vedānta philosophy in its two forms, the Absolutistic and the Theistic have provided a frame work that answers to the needs of the hour and has the possibilities of standing up as the spiritual religion for mankind. It has taken up the challenge posed to religion by the different disciplines. It satisfies the demands of reason and the needs of humanity. It has considered every challenge as crisis which opens up an opportunity to adumbrate the creed of an Eternal religion. It is comprehensive in its sweep and range and wide in its outlook and full of details in its outlines. Tradition acclaims, in the language of Wilden carr 'that what is living in Indian philosophy is Vedānta in different forms'. It has

influenced Western thought in a wide spread manner in the personalities of Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Nietzsche and Keyserling in Europe. Its reflection is found in the writings of the leader of Irish Renaissance, eg., W.B. Yeats and G. W. Russell and is pronounced. American Transcendentalism in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, Christopher Isherwood, and men like Somerset Maugham are mostly influenced by the Vedāntic outlook. Romain Rolland declared: "The only religion that can have any hold on the intellectual people is the rationalistic religion of Advaita Vedānta," There is a popular couplet which states<sup>1</sup>,

तावद्गर्जन्ति शास्त्राणि जम्बुका विपिने यथा ।

न गर्जति जटाक्षेपाद्यावद्वेदान्तकेसरी ॥

like jackals in a wood the various systems of philosophy howl, so long as the line of Vedānta with mane ruffled does not roar". Speaking in praise of the greatest book of Vedānta, the Gītā, Huxley writes "It is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, its enduring value is not only for Indians but for all mankind".

The Bhagavad Gītā is the essence of the Vedānta. The reason to construe it so is

weighty. The Vedānta recognises and draws its tenets from the triple texts : *Upaniṣads*, *Gītā* and the *Vedānta sūtras*. The Upaniṣads are nailed as the 'Himalayas of the soul', and they represent the origin of the philosophic endeavour. They set the problems and reveal the solutions. They are the concluding portions of the Vedas in more than one sense. Bādarāyan's *Vedānta sūtras* seek to systematise them in highly cryptic formulae.

अल्पाक्षरमसन्दिग्धं सारवद्विश्वतोमुखत् ।

अस्तोभं अनअद्यं च सूत्रं सूत्रविदो विदुः ॥

The sūtra serves not only to illuminate the profound Upaniṣadic utterances; but also indicates aspects of affinity and conflict with known systems and possible approaches to fundamental questions. Its machless brevity has endowed every syllable with limitless dialectical potency and material arguments and counter arguments. Making use of the principles of the sūtras, the meaning of the Upaniṣads is established, and its essence is *Gītā*².

सर्वोपनिषदो गावः दोग्धा गोपालनान्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीः भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

Hence, its importance.

The fundamentals of all religions are written in their scriptures which embody the experience of the prophets, sages and originators of the



religion. In India the oldest scripture, perhaps the oldest in the world, are the Vedas. The concluding sections of the Vedas constitute the Upaniṣads. They are referred to as the ends of Vedas, i.e., Vedānta, in more than one sense of the term. They are not only *end* portions, but are also its *essence*. The Upaniṣads are in all the Vedas. They are the seeds, the foundations and the traditional props for all ancient and modern Indian Philosophical speculation and metaphysical schools of thought, not excluding Buddhism according to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The living religion of Hindu Vedānta in all its forms, draws its inspiration, finds its illuminating teaching about man, his relation to Ultimate Reality and the way for man to reach his manifest destiny, the delineation of the characteristics of the God-head, and nature of *mokṣa* experience. The Upaniṣads are described as *S'ruti*. It is regarded as one of the *triple Texts* (Prasthāna Triyī), the others being Brahma sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā. A close look points to the fact that the Upaniṣads alone are the revelations for the function of the Brahma sūtras is to coordinate Upanisidic teaching and work out lines of inter connection and set forth logical justification for the doctrines advocated. The Bhagavad Gītā sets forth the conclusions of the Upaniṣad after their submission to the critical

interpretation set forth by the sūtras. In short, we look upon the Upaniṣads as the statement of the philosophical position. i.e., the *Pratijñā*, and the sūtras give us the reasons, and Gītā the emerging conclusions.<sup>1</sup> There is the wonder, that the very Upaniṣad with the very same critical apparatus and conclusion should have served as the texts for the differing schools of Vedānta, Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita.

They are regarded as the *sanctum* - Each school of Vedānta vies with the others sedulously, seeks to interpret the texts with a load of grammatical scholarship and logical acumen, pressing into service the texts to countenance their tenets and doctrines. The traditional *ācāryas*, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva have left us their commentaries. The classical commentaries represent a great exegetical tradition built through centuries of scholarship and devotion and we cannot totally ignore them. They are the first lights thrown on the scripture which is full of difficulties for systematisation. Systematization is what they aim at. This approach has given us the several schools of vedānta.

There are several other approaches to the Upaniṣads. There is the time-honoured *indological*

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1. Professor S. S. Raghavachar.

approach, which is taken up with the examination of the authentic text the question of interpolation and the fixation of the date, the question whether the text is composite and heterogenous or composed by one or many.

A large section of spiritual savants look upon the Upaniṣads as embodying the principles of an Universal faith, an 'Eternal gospel' Perennial philosophy,' acceptable to all of us who are children of science and reason. They find in it a message divested of its mythology suitable to all ages and to the different predicaments of man. It is neither old nor new, for it is eternal and ever-topical. Modernity is not a matter of date, but of outlook. The Upaniṣads are described as *focal classics*, affirming the eternal truths and harmonising the fundamentals of all faiths. It is treated as a *forum* for the programme of the spiritual reconstruction of Humanity. This approach is characteristic of thinkers like Gandhi, Tagore, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Besant and Radhakrishnan. It seeks to disclose the relevance of the lessons of the Upaniṣads to our modern crisis. The Upaniṣads are looked upon as a *Forum*, not merely as *sanctum*. These savants regard the Upaniṣads as an important chapter in the world's philosophy of religion. Professor Mead calls them a 'world scripture'. It is the basis

of all enlightened Faith in India. Ram Mohan Roy, felt his whole life transformed when he happened to read a page of the *Īśa Upaniṣad* flying past him.

There is yet another approach to the Upaniṣads from the standpoint of mysticism. Mysticism is the core of all spiritual religion. It is the plenary, total and integral experience of the unity of the spirit of man. Such an experience transforms man and makes him Divine, and do angelic acts. The mystical approach regards the Upaniṣads as expounding the tenets of mysticism. Among the moderns, Śrī Aurobindo and Professor R. D. Ranade find the Upaniṣadic philosophy as converging towards the realisation of the mystical goal.

The term Upaniṣad is interpreted in a number of ways. It means "sitting near devotedly". It is the teaching imparted to a spiritual aspirant, who is eligible, by a competent spiritually illumined teacher after testing the pupil's earnestness. It also means 'secret doctrine'. Śaṅkara interprets the term to mean as 'that knowledge of Brahman which destroys ignorance and leads us to the Supreme goal of freedom i.e., *Mokṣa* Sureśvara derives three meanings from the root *s'ad* (1) to decay, to go and to destroy.

The Upaniṣads, at any rate, the classical and the earliest of them are pre-Buddhistic in time and are ascribed to 6th Century B.C.

Let us have a look at the opinions of scholars in the East and West on the Upaniṣads. The Spanish writer in his English translation of the scripture describes the Upaniṣads as the 'Himalayas of the Soul'. The idea is expounded by an Indian Professor: "Just as that great mountain range determines the climate, the rainfall and the physical features of the peninsula, so do these heights of wisdom determine the quality of the spiritual wisdom of the race that inhabits it". Ācharya Ādi Śaṅkara regards the passages in the Upaniṣads as the 'flowers to be woven into the garland of Vedānta',

'वेदान्तवाक्य कुसुमग्रथनार्थत्वात् सूत्राणाम्

It is intimate spiritual knowledge imparted to aspirants who has a value sense. The quest in the pupil must be genuine, and he must not count any cost much. The disciples in the Upaniṣads, eg.. a Naciketas, Nārada, Gārgi, Maitreyi, Indra, Janaka, Jansruti Pautrayan are illumining examples of the ideal spiritual aspirants. They sought first and foremost the kingdoms of Heaven, and added all other things to it afterwards. They rejected all the glittering pleasures

of the temporal life, power, position and self as nothing when compared to the spiritual truth. Their renunciation was born of a deep valuation-al process.

ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके  
तान् कामान् छन्दनः घ्राथ्वस्व  
तघेव वाहाः तव नृत्यगीते  
वरस्तु मे वरणीयः स एव

Witness Yama's offer to Naciketas in lieu of what he asked for "Take horses, gold, elephant, cattle, choose to have sons and grandsons that shall live hundred years as you desire or choose any other gift that you think equal to this, and enjoy it with wealth and long life. Be a ruler of this vast earth. I will grant you all your desires. Ask for any wish in the world of mortals, however hard to obtain. To attend on you, I will give you fair maidens with chariots and musical instruments But not ask me the secret of life." Nothing deterred the undaunted hero and he found no enticement a substitute for spiritual wisdom. He outright rejected them and earned the compliment as the ideal disciple.

यां त्वमापः सत्यधृतिः वत असि ।  
त्रादृङ्नो भूयान्नचिकेतः प्रष्टा ॥

So does Nārada with his encyclopedic knowledge

approaches Saṅat Kumāra for that instruction which fords him across all sorrows - *ātma vidyā*. He laments that his knowledge of

ऋग्वेदं भगवोऽध्येमि,  
यजुर्वेदं सामवेद माथर्यणं चतुर्थं  
इतिहासपुराणं पञ्चमं.....  
मन्त्रविदेवास्मि न त्वात्मवित्  
तरति शोकं आत्मवित्

“all sciences and scriptures Ṛg. Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda, the fourth Atharva Veda, epics and mythologies, grammar, science of ancestral worship, mathematics, science of portent, time, logic, polity, etymology, phonetics, etc. All this in humility Nārada confesses gives him only knowledge of the text and not emancipation from Saṁsāra.

The personalities that confer and engage in dialogues in the Upaniṣads are a set of colourful men and women, young and old, kings and sages who are alive with the thirst for spiritual wisdom. The aspirants are joyously willing to sell their all to attain mokṣa. They are above all the lures and temptations that beset men. The metaphysical disputant, Gargi, is not deterred from raising questions seeking instruction from Yajñavalkya, when he threatens her that her head would split into pieces. She still pursued the quest.

स हो वा च गार्गी, माऽतिप्राक्षीः मा ते  
मूर्धा व्यपसदनति प्रश्न्यां वै

Maitreyi, the adored wife of Yajñavalkya was not appeased when her husband sought to divide his material assets between her and her co-wife. She remonstrates in a quite tone as to what use the material possessions will be in securing immortality. Straight came the reply that they can only give physical comfort and not liberation. She declined it and sought spiritual instruction to the supreme satisfaction of her husband.

यथैव उपकरणवतां जीवितं तथैव ते जीवितं स्यात्,  
अमृतत्वस्य तु नाशास्ति त्रिसेन, येनाहं नामृता स्यां  
क्वमहं तेन कुर्याम्

King Janaka, Plato's Philosopher King of India, was so pleased and overwhelmed at the end of a long debate between sage Yajñavalkya and a host of philosophers in his court that declares: "Venerable Sir, I give you the empire of Vidheha and myself also to serve you :

सोऽहं भगवते विदेहान् ददामि मां  
चापि सह दास्याय इति

The Upaniṣads are very large in number; some hold the number as 108, but *ten* out of them are regarded as authoritative. They are Ī's'a,



Kena, Kaṭha, Praśnia, Muṇḍaka, Māndukya, Aitareya, Taitireya, Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka.

The Upaniṣads are all not alike. They differ in their length and methods of expositions and form. Some are only in verses and others very long. The Iṣa and Māndukya are short ; the Aitareya Bṛhadāraṇya and Chāndogya are long. Some are in verse and some in prose and yet others combine both. In style and manner they differ widely. Some Upaniṣads give us simple concrete narrative, some others subtle abstract metaphysical speculation. There are long argumentative dialogues. The tone of the Upaniṣads also fluctuates, some passages show high seriousness and others homely humour and yet others abound in innumerable parables and analogies. The dialogue method is prominent. It helps us to think systematically and progress in our thought which is not possible in the lecture-method. One has to listen to, and in the meanwhile forgets the objectives. They are countered and answered in the dialogue. It is because of this merit, Plato put his all in more than thirty dialogues. It exposes the working of our mind and opens it for our inspection the steps and the trend, the nerve of the argument. The dialogue method is the pūrva-prakaṣa-siddhānta method familiarised in Indian philosophical classics and polemical texts.

The Upaniṣads were translated into Persian in 1640 by Dara Shikoh, son of Shajahan. In Kashmir one, Le gentil a French resident of Faizabad attached to the court of Shuja Uddaula, presented the manuscript to Antequetil Duperon who rendered the Persian version into Latin. Schopenhauer used it as a text for his ablutions before going to bed. He named his Poodle – *Ātman*. He writes : “From every sentence of the Upaniṣads deep original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit. In the whole world.... there is no study.... so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upaniṣads. They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people”. In another place he writes : about the catholicity and tolerant influence of the Upaniṣads: “And Oh! how thoroughly is the mind here washed clean of all engrafted jewish superstition... In the whole world there is no study... so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upaniṣads. It has been the solace of my life and it will be the solace of my death”.

Max Muller who has translated the Upaniṣads in Sacred Books of the East series writes holding that the message of the Upaniṣads is like the light of the morning, like the pure air of the

mountains, so simple and so true if once understood".

The American savant and inspirer of Mahatma Gandhi exhorts his countrymen to read the *eternities* (meaning the Upaniṣads and not the *New York Times*). Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda have found in the Upaniṣads the call for the cultivation of rational strength, and faith in the strength of the spirit. That is the charm of the Upaniṣads. In the rough tumble of active political life, Gandhi found his entire philosophy of fearlessness, truth and Non-violence in the first verse of the Īṣa Upaniṣad. He writes :

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः मा गृधः कस्यस्त्रिद्धनम् ॥

“I have come to the final conclusion that if all the Upaniṣads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the Īṣa Upaniṣad were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever”.

Speaking about its significance, he writes on another occasion “The *mantra* described God as the Creator ‘the Ruler and the Lord. The seer to whom the *mantra* or verse was revealed was not satisfied with the very frequent statement that

God was to be found everywhere. But he went further and said: "Since God pervades everything, nothing belongs to you, not even your own body. God is the undisputed unchallengeable master of everything you possess". If it is universal brotherhood—not only the brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living things—I find it in this *mantra*. If it is unshakeable faith in the Lord and Master—and all the adjectives you can think of—I find it in this *mantra*. If it is the idea of complete surrender to God and the faith that he will supply all that I need, then again I say I find it in this *mantra*. Since he pervades every fibre of my being and of, all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical Communists. This *mantra* tells that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and that, if my life and that of all who believe in this *mantra* has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of fellow creatures".

Vivekananda thunders : "Strength, strength is what the Upaniṣads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember, it has been the one great lesson I have been taught in my life. Strength, it says, strength,

O man! be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses? says man. There are, say the Upaniṣads, but will more weakness heal them, will you try to wash dirt with dirt, will you sin to cure sin, weakness cannot cure weakness—Ay, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word ‘*abhihi*’ ‘fearlessness’ used again and again, in no other scripture in world is this adjective applied either to God or to man..... And the Upaniṣads are the great source of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world. The whole world can be vivified, made strong, energised through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable and the down-trodden of all races, all creeds, all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watch words of the Upaniṣads (VIII-237-238).

Among the orientalist, Deussen's work on the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and Vedānta are remarkable for their powers of great understanding and correct interpretation. There is no important form of Hindu thought and no saint or savant or poet or prophet who is not rooted and influenced by the Upaniṣads. Their poetry and lofty moral idealism have moved the minds of millions and

swayed the hearts of countless generation of men and women through the centuries. They bring to our consciousness the vivid sense of the spiritual, through their speculative daring, moral earnestness and intuitive realisation. "In the domain of intuitive philosophy, their achievement is stupendous. Nothing that went before them for compass or power, for suggestiveness or satisfaction can stand comparison with them. They trail the spiritual path before us in moving imagery. Their aim is not science or dry metaphysics, but right living. They bring to us the experience of truth which spells peace and freedom to troubled hearts. They combine clear vision, splendid persuasive powers of argumentation, sincere feeling and wonderful capacity for lucid expression. Their message rings in peace and harmony. They do not seek to satisfy our instinct of wonder or curiosity. They shed fearlessness and benediction on all who read them with reverence.

The Vedānta, as a religion and philosophy, has unique characteristics. The foremost characteristic of the Vedānta's religion is its universal appeal to all levels of human intelligence, and all types of human temperament. This universal appeal has been possible because of its comprehensiveness. The intellectual class who are prone to uphold

the supermacy of reason have enough in Vedānta's plenty to regale them and keep them satisfied. The doctrine that Ultimate Reality is indeterminate *nirguṇa*, the logic of it, the doctrine of *māyā*, the dialectics of the refutation of the category of Difference etc. and the *jñāna marga* as *sādhana* are amply pleasing to them.

The Vedānta in its theistic setting is highly appealing to the emotional temper, who revel in the dome of many coloured glass. They have the *guṇa kathana* and *kīrtana* of the Lord, praise of Lord's attributes, listening to His exploits Baghavan Mahimā and through them man experiences the love of the Lord in the varied forms in terms of intimate human relationship and enjoys the encounter with the Lord, putting themselves in the position of children, servant, friend, spouse etc. There is enough in Vedānta for the emotional type.

The purely contemplative type who seek to lose their consciousness of the external world and develop the extra-sensory *siddhies* (powers) through meditation, have their fare. The yoga-system and the meditation exercise as described in Rāja yoga is for them. To the extrovert who is looking out and is up and doing and action-minded, there is enough in Vedānta for him, too i. e. the round of

social duties, the *pañca-mahā yajñās*, and the discharge of the three debts, to the sages, parents and God, Pilgrimage, festivals, temple service, bhajans etc. A survey of Vedānta's plenty provides enough fare for all the four types and temperaments (1) Intellectuals: (2) Emotionals: (3) Contemplatives: and (4) Activists.

The literature in Vedānta provides the different types, varied fares suitable to their levels of intelligence. The masses have for their understanding the Epics and the Purāṇas, the Karma Yogin has Gītā, the emotional minds, the Bhāgavata, Bhakti sūtras etc. The intellectuals who are after the jñāna marga have the Upaniṣads, the Vedānta sūtras and Śāstra-treatises. The contemplatives have the Yoga-sūtra, the Yoga-vāśiṣṭa etc. The system is amazing in the scope of its comprehension. All human beings are not pressed into the same procrustean bed. There is no regimentation of beliefs, no militarization of the masses or opinion. Individuality is respected. Differences are not obliterated in the interest or for the desire, to produce uniformity. Uniformity is not unity. Nature has gone into endless diversity in its form and tastes in the course of evolution. Vedānta respects the native diversity in men and does not seek to negate them.



The Vedānta religion exhibits an exemplary catholicity of outlook and broad toleration. Toleration is not indifferentism, for the Vedānta for it has a great concern for the entire humanity. It is not a stroke of policy, but is an organic article of its faith. This catholicity is a part of its metaphysics. Ultimate Reality is not given a complete definition and brought under any one label or conceptional rubric. It is that which cannot be described in logical terms and relational moulds since there is nothing besides It to describe It with. The one Ultimate Reality is described by different religions differently. It has multi-personal manifestations, according to the description of the perceiver. Unlike semetic religions Vedānta holds on to the *multi-personal manifestation of Reality*. Its metaphysics is permissive. This trait has not only an impressive ancestry in Indian thought but has an uninterrupted continuity of authentic advocates from the time of Ṛg Veda down to our age. The sages of Ṛg Veda declare, "Reality is one, the sages call it by many names. agni, yama, Mātariśvan." The one that exists is conceived as many, the one glory manifests itself in many ways. The Vedāntin explains the fact of the differences as arising from variations in the temperaments of men.

There is an impressive ancestry in the writings of the classical poets and contemplative seers, that Ultimate Reality is being described by different men in different ways, suited to their temperaments. The credal formulations may differ, but the central experience is the same.

## VEDĀNTA AND HUMANISM

The self of man is clamant and anxious for its rights, seeks to avoid its duties and ignores its responsibilities. Religion enables a man to admit his Duties and counsels him to be modest about his Rights. It integrates duty, rights and responsibilities in a stable proportion of reciprocity with Nature, neighbours and the field of circumstances. These determine our duty. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, made up of our thoughts. Mere contemplation is not enough. Eckhart's view is helpful: "works of charity such as teaching and comforting those in need". "Are we debarred from these" Eckhart answers in two ways: "The one is perfect, the other very profitable. Mary was praised for choosing the best, and Martha's life was useful, serving Christ and his disciples... It is all the same thing. We have to root ourselves

in the ground of contemplation to make it fruitful in works, and the object of contemplation is achieved". The point that should not be lost sight of is "That contemplation is not sheer idleness. Eckhart continues: "We ought to get over amusing ourselves with such raptures for the sake of that better love, to accomplish through loving service what men most need, spiritually or socially or physically". As I have often said, if a person were in such a rapturous state as St. Paul once entered, and he knew of a sick man who wanted a cup of soup, it would be far better to withdraw from the rapture for love's sake and serve him who is in need. Jesus said "Not every one that calls 'Christ' Lord, but he that does the will of the Father, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven".

The Viṣṇupurāṇa warns us "Those who give up their duties and avocations and cry out Lord Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa are the enemies of the Lord and sinners, for the Lord has taken birth for protecting Dharma, i e., righteousness".

स्वकर्मधर्मविमुखाः कृष्ण कृष्णेति वादिनः ।

ते हरेः द्वेषिणः धर्मार्थे जन्म यद्धरेः ॥

Rantideva prays: "I do not desire from God that great state which is attended by the eight supernatural powers or even deliverance from rebirth. Let me, dwelling in the hearts of all creatures,

bear their sorrows that they may be freed from misery”.

न कामायेऽहं गतिर्माश्वरात्परां

अष्टद्वियुक्तामपुनर्भवञ्च ।

अर्नि प्रपद्येऽखिलदेहभाजां

अन्तःस्थितो येनूभवन्त्यदुःखः ॥

न त्वहं कामयेराज्यं न स्वर्गं न पुनर्भवम् ।

कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिं नाशनम् ॥

Baron Von Hugel observed that the two centralities of religion are *Vision* and *Energy*. They have to be united and not pursued in isolation. They symbolise the bow of Arjuna and the grace of Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā. We must unite work with worship. Worship purifies and enhances the efficacy of good works. The contemplative and the executive elements in us must go together. In the words of Koestler, we must combine the virtues of the *yogi* and the *commissar*: Love of God is not idle contemplation. It alone can enable us to love all. Living in the presence of God, i.e., *theocentric* existence implies love of all. We see the presence of God in all. In the Bhāgavata purāṇa, it is stated that one should worship all being with devotion in the form of service. The Lord states: “I have taken my abode in the lives of all beings,

and so love all of them and worship them with charity and respect with an outlook not other than that of a friend". One should bow to all these beings in thought with great esteem, for the Lord has entered them as digits of the souls". Service to humanity and the cultivation of altruistic virtues is necessary for the real love of God. It is not unconcern for others. Detachment is not indifference to men. The Humanism of religion is *theocentric* and not merely *secular*.

There is a close relation between the love of God and humanity. "If a man says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar: for how can he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, love God whom he has not seen".

(John 1-4-20). Jesus exclaims "Beloved, let us love one another... he that does not love does not know God"

अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ॥  
 निर्ममो निरहंकारः सम दुःख सुखः क्षमी ॥  
 संतुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।  
 मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिः यो मे भक्तः स मे प्रियः ।

(John 1-4-7). The Gītā enumerates in the 12th Chapter a number of human qualities as the mark

of a devotee : “He has no ill will to any being and is friendly, compassionate, free from egoism and self-sense (ahamkāra): He is ever content, self-controlled and firm in his determination with mind and understanding given to God. He is free from fear and agitation”. The devotee has the good of all at his heart (sarva bhūta hite rataḥ), Indian theism looks upon the human beings as the abode of the Lord. Jesus said: “Feed my lamb, feed my sheep and tend my sheep. By this shall all men know that you are my disciple, if you have love to one another” (John 13-35). The essence of the religious soul is its fearlessness (*abhaya*). They have abiding faith in the Lord’s responsibility for the worldly welfare of men. *Vairāgya* is born of *Viveka*, *bhakti* and *śradha*. Jesus says: “Therefore take no thought saying what shall we eat? or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you (Math - 6-31-33).

St. Paul writes to the Phillipians: “Have no anxiety about anything, but put everything by prayer and the supplication with thanks giving let your request be made known to God”. The Lord has given us the irrevocable promise in the *Gītā*:

“Those who worship Me meditating on Me alone, to them who ever persevere, I bring them what they have not, and security in what they have.”

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

God has not left us with animal appetites and beastly lusts and fear. He has also given us power for love and sound judgment.

The essence of religion is the faith born of the experience. It burns in us. Faith is not believing something we have not seen. It is not auto-suggestion or a make-believe. It is the bona-fide experience given to us by the grace of God. “It is the evidence of things unseen”. It is an authentic experience determined for us and produced in us by something not ourselves. Faith is a mode of primary apprehension. “The truths of religion are revealed to the eye of faith”. It is a commitment to an experience which burns conviction into us. When we get that, “there is no gaining which is greater beyond it”.

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः

We are established in it, Faith may be on trial sometimes, sometimes we go sceptical, but we

will never feel lost. Our ambition may run to ruin, our near and dear may depart, our props give away, our faculties fail, our vision grows dim our supports slip, our foot-steps falter, but faith must burn in us. Those who have faith never perish. There are times when the world's currency dismays us. The Psalmist says 'as for me my feet are almost gone, my steps are well nigh slipped - when I saw the prosperity of the wicked'. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to the men of understanding nor yet favour to the men of skill". The monstrous contrasts do not disturb the man of faith.

The faith of the religious man is not utilitarian in the lower sense of the term. He does not take to God when he is weak and forgets Him when he gets right. This is the experience of all cunning men .

“ Almost every one, when age,  
Disease or sorrow strikes for him,  
Inclines to think there is a God,  
Or something very like him'<sup>1</sup>.

A. H. CLOUGH,

When the devil was ill, the devil a saint  
would be ;



When the devil was well, the devil a saint he was :

The man of religion is a man of faith. He is not upset by the apparent contrast in things. He has a distinct vision and a transformed attitude. The man of religion has an 'illative sense' in the words of Newman. Once he has the experience, he is not troubled by calculations of logic. The humanistic aspect of religion is the essential answer to the rivilers of religion. "Every sound tree bringeth forth good fruit : but a rotten tree bringeth forth bad fruit : A sound tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, neither can a rotten tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them".<sup>1</sup> (Math 7-16-20).

The necessity for ethical excellence and ceremonial purity is always there. No religious experience is possible except through the moral way. There is no hope of by-passing morality. "The Vedas do not cleanse the unrighteous". Mortality declares the Māhābharata is the first charge on us—

आचारहीनं न पुनन्ति वेदाः ।

आचारः प्रथमो धर्मः धर्मस्य प्रभुरच्युतः ॥

The Talmud says "Would that they had forgotten

My name and done that which I commanded of them”.

St. Ambrose writes: “Not by dialectic did please the Lord to save his people. The *Kaṭha* is emphatic on the need of morality. “Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not tranquil, not he who has not a concentrated mind, not even he whose mind is not composed can reach Brahman through knowledge”.

नाविरतो दुश्चरितात् नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।  
नाशान्तमानसं वापि प्रज्ञानेनैवमाप्नुयात् ॥

The *Gitā* clearly marks the stage. “He who has faith, who absorbed in it and who has subdued his senses gains wisdom and having gained wisdom he attains quickly the supreme peace”.

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।  
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिं अचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥

Goethe remarks in *Faust*: “With the people and especially with the clergy who have his name daily upon their tongue, God becomes a phrase, a mere name, which they utter without any accompanying idea. But if they were penetrated with his greatness, they would rather be dumb for the very reverence would not dare to name Him”.

Tolstoy in his confession writes: "I read and studied the books (on Religion), and here is the feeling I have carried away from that study. If I have led my life to the irresistible necessity of faith; and if I had not seen that this faith formed the foundation of the life of men; if this feeling shattered my life had not strengthened over in my heart...if there were within me *only the faith of which theology speaks*, I, after reading all these books not only would have turned atheist, but should have become the malignant enemy of every faith because I found these doctrines non-sense".

We find that a genuine spiritual religion necessarily makes for a sound moral order, restoring the right relationship between not only Science and Technology, but in all the walks of life. Genuine Religion is the greatest force for bringing about individual regeneration and social integration. It makes for the most equitable social order, maintaining justice and helping each to grow to his best. It makes for world-peace and world community. It is global in its outlook and understanding.

Religion gives you the master plan, a sign post, which points out clearly the path. The plan has relevance to our problems and instructs us in the concrete course of action, fixed enough to be

a true guide, and flexible enough to meet the changes the problem demands.

Vedāntic religion is humanistic to the core. It believes in the divinity of man, his educability and perfectability and in the oneness of human spirit. It holds out boldly what Gandhiji said, "That there can be no happiness for any of us until it is won for all". It does not believe that men are opposed to one another. It seeks to translate the joy of spiritual equality experienced in God-realisation on to the economic, social, political and other planes. It seeks to serve the spirit in the lives of men. It looks up on all men as equal in the eyes of God. The spiritual experience makes them love all. The Vedāntin affirms, the nature of prayer, described by Coleridge:

He prayeth well, who loveth well,  
Both man, bird and beast  
He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small  
For the dear God who loveth us  
He made and loveth all.

The Vedānta conception of the soul of man is unique. Man is described not as a fallen creature, born in sin, tied down to a body of lust without any glimmer of divinity. He is described as potentially divine and spiritual. The non-divine

elements in him are the accretions that have grown round him which are dispelled with the onset of spiritual experience. No soul is intrinsically bad and lost. Spirituality is the birth right of all souls. Hence, all souls are saved and none are damned to Eternal Hell. This is the optimistic doctrine of (*sarva-mukti*) liberation for all. It is the corollary of the divine nature of man.

The Vedānta philosophy believes in the substantiality of man and God, and this makes it an optimistic gospel. None is denied spirituality, for it is native to the soul of man. The Vedānta view of life is hopeful and humanistic. It stands by the Mahābhārata declaration: "There is humanity in the most wicked: (*asāduścaiva puruṣo labate śīlam eka da* (XII-259-91). With Shakespeare, the Vedāntin exclaims in joy:

O! Wonder

How many goodly creatures are there

How beauteous mankind is, O brave

New world

That has such people in it.

—(Tempest).

Conviction flows from character, far more than from cogent reasoning. It is experience that gives us conviction. Faith ripens with experience and religion becomes a reality.

## THE FRUITS OF RELIGION

Once a young man wanted to draw up an inventory of goods that was necessary for one to be happy and enjoy life. He tried his best to make the list comprehensive. He set the goods in a reasonable order of priorities, health, love, beauty, talent, power, riches, fame together with several minor items. He held, could a man possess them all, he would be a God on earth. Showing the list to a Professor of philosophy, the young man, complacent about his wisdom, asked as what the learned professor thought of the inventory of the listed goods.

The professor looked at the list over and over again, as if he missed something there, and said: "An excellent list, but one important ingredient is lacking without which all others would be tedious torment, and the list an intolerable package". The important thing is *peace of mind*, a gift of God, the fruit of spiritual life. The fondest sign of God's love. It cannot be bought in bottles or applied like cosmetic to the surface of the skin. It is not like a tablet we can swallow or gadget we can buy. It cannot be had by enrolling for a course of three weeks meditation class.

The concept, peace of mind, is central to religion. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā is emphatic on

its importance. There is no prospect of happiness for those that have no peace of mind.<sup>1</sup> In the words of Marcus Aurelius to have it: "man must be arched and buttressed from within." It is one of the greatest things to have peace of mind.

The nature of man's mind is like a 'market place' through which thoughts and emotions of bewildering variety flit across in inconceivable rapidity, making us restless all the time. We are an animal organisation and seek constant stimulation. The mind flows out incessantly. It is difficult to control its outflow. The outflow is consequent on the desire to get at objects which the self feels enjoyable, and avoid the things which it fears as giving rise to pain, hence, it avoids. Fear and frustration are the chief reasons for the flowing out of the mind. Most of our activities are guided by our sense-bound vision, propelled by impulses, swayed and swamped by emotions and governed by the pleasure principle. Men are upset on the slightest pretext. Our repose is disturbed by a hot argument with a friend, by an office worry, by a sudden illness, by the demise of a dear and near relative, unrequited love, social disrespect etc. Anything is enough to upset us. Fear is the most degrading emotion. It destroys our mind and its

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1. aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham. (II-66).

power, and corrupts our morals under threat. Fear has more delerious imagination than courage. There is no end to the mistakes one commits when one is afraid.

No task is possible or capable of achievement without concentration and peace of mind. Peace of mind gives poise and that is the background from which activities can be undertaken successfully. The Lord of Gītā laments and despairs about the possibility of happiness for those who have no peace of mind. It is the prerequisite of all spiritual exercises and efficient activity. A distracted mind can never achieve anything worthwhile. Peace of mind alone can secure us a governable mind which in its turn makes concentration possible. The sages of India and the poets of the West and East have sung of the glory and the eulogy of peace of mind. Shakespeare's version in Hamlet is a classic utterance on the subject:

Blest are those

Whose blood and judgment are so well

commingled

That they are not a pipe for fortune's fingers

To sound what stop she pleases

Give me that man

That is not passions' slave and I will

wear him in my heart's core

Ay, in my heart of heart".



Peace of mind secures freedom from the bouts of depression which alternates between thrills and shudders. Singleness of mind or gearing oneself to a faith or purpose gives direction and meaning to life. It is not a retreat or escape from life, but is an effort to discover. It is an instrument of happiness and power.

The easiest way to attain peace of mind, according to the witness of saints is total commitment to the Lord about all our concerns. We must declare: "I accept absolutely and I doubt no more. I accord myself and recall myself no more. I obey you absolutely and dispute no more."<sup>1</sup>

Peace of mind and sensation mongering go ill together. Close psychological examination discloses and the theory of the psychoanalyst that rigid self-control and suppression of our impulses lead to surprising neurotic diseases. But it is equally true that uninhibited expression of impulses too leads us to a neurosis.

The man who has no singleness of purpose and peace of mind is described by Plato as the Democratic Man (I do not know why). "The Democratic man spends as much time and pains and money on his superfluous pleasures as on the

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1. See Charles Morgan : *The Hasting Stream*, Introduction.

necessary ones. He sets all pleasures on a footing of equality, denying none equal rights and maintenance, and allowing each in turn as it presents itself, to succeed to the government of his soul until it is satisfied. When he is told that some pleasures should be pursued and valued as arising from desires of a higher order, others chastised and enslaved, because the desires are base, he will shut the gates of the citadel against the messenger of truth, shaking his head and declaring that one appetite is as good as another, and all must have equal rights.

So he spends his days indulging the pleasures of the moment, now intoxicated with wine and music, and then taking to a spare diet and drinking nothing but water, one day in hard training, the next day doing nothing at all, the third apparently immersed in study. Every now and then, he takes part in politics and jumps to his feet to say or do whatever comes into his head or he will set out to rival some one whom he admires, a soldier perhaps, or if fancy takes him a man of business" (Republic 561).

Behind the lineaments of these portraits, we discover the disturbed tribe of the modern man who has no purpose in life, no plan for living, who has no code of conduct or manner nor any creed to live for.

A certain section of men feel that peace of mind can be obtained by drugs L.S.D., mescaline etc. They are at best mere tranquilisers.<sup>1</sup> They do not touch the psyche of men. They only inhibit the activities of the sympathetic system and do not affect the psyche. Constant use of these drugs benumbs the brain. Increased doses are necessary with every successive application. It damages the Nervous system. What appears at first sight as a spectacular triumph is really a harbinger of bad health. Drug mysticism can never induce real peace of mind. It may at best act as a dope and never is an active power.

Even comfortable living is not possible without the basic peace of mind. Happiness is the harmony of the working of the impulses. If impulses pull in different directions there is no enjoyment for the man who seeks happiness. A popular school holds that 'peace of mind' can be secured by the free indulgence of all our desires. This path is self-defeating. Oscar Wilde, the celebrated wit, has set out the course. "The best way of overcoming a temptation is yielding to it". Excess is the gateway to wisdom. The senses are our doors to perfection. The way to satisfy our desires by

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1. See Aldous Huxley: *The Doors of Perception*.

indulging in them is an impossibility. We can never satisfy the endless desires; they grow on what they feed. The ancient law giver, Manu, declared (II-94) "Desires do not get satisfied by indulgence in them. It grows like the flames when clarified butter is thrown into it.

न जातु कामः कामानामुपभोगेन शाम्यति ।

हविषा कृष्णवर्त्मव भूय एवाभिवर्धते ॥

Further, there is the Law of deminishing Returns operating in the field of sense enjoyment. A life of pleasures is determined by the mood and the sound condition of the sense organs that have necessarily to mediate them. If they are damaged, the pleasures do not accrue to us. While enjoying the pleasures, there is the anxiety that it is likely to end. The sword of Democles hangs ever marring the pleasure,...not to speak of the great certainty Death, whose onslaught is ever imminent. The enjoyment of the pleasures opens us to the jealousy and the envy of others. On any rational calculation, it is impossible to enjoy happiness by indulgence. Marcus Aurelius clinches the truth: "The desires of the senses draw us hither and thither, but when the hour is past, what do they bring us but remorse of conscience and dissipation of the spirit". He adds: "Hopedst then perhaps to subdue desires by the

power of enjoyment: but thou wilt find it impossible for the eye to be satisfied, by seeing, or the ear to be filled with hearing. If all visible Nature could pass before thee in review, what would it be but vain vision'. Salvation, happiness and enjoyment are not to be attained by this road. Peace of mind in other words is the result of the integration of the individual's life, governed by a *master-sentiment* and faith. Without a thorough integration, our body, mind and soul will never function as a unit. Integration is not possible without faith. Faith is not the mere entertaining of some beliefs and opinions. It is a total commitment of ones personality to an Ideal.<sup>1</sup> Faith is a power of the soul that stakes its all and feels its ideal as the greatest value. It strengthens one to pay any price to keep to the ideal and count no cost as dear, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend who defends the cause and shares the faith and oppose all enemies of the cause. Faith is dynamic and can move mountains. The term faith takes on many contents and it works in an unlimited manner. Our faith in our economic well-being, health, family etc. make us act in a manner to gain them. Besides these concerns about existence, food and shelter man

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1. See Paul Tillich : *Dynamics of Faith*.

when teased by reflection to account for the primordial fact of death and fear of nothingness after it, aches to get the meaning of life. Without such a plan and purpose of life, man is bewildered and remains restless. It is at this stage Faith comes in. Faith has for its content our Ultimate Concern, and seeks to attain it.

परिभ्रमसि किं मुधा क्वचन चित्र विश्राम्यतां  
स्वयं भवति यद्यथा भवति तत्रथा नान्यथा ।

“ अतीतमननुस्मरन् अपि च भाव्यसङ्कल्पयन्  
अतर्कित समागमाननुभवामि भोगानहम् ॥ (III—62)

The Poet Barṭṛhari counsels us in sage like words “Why do you waste your self by maddening distractions, anchor your mind for a while in Peace. Things happen as they should and not otherwise; forget the obsessive memory of the past events and do not plan elaborately for the future”.

In utter desolation Sitā sings the praise of the great virtue peace of mind “Verily the sages are blessed who have obtained a governable mind and are free from all stain. They have no love or hatred for the pleasant or the unpleasant, for they do not sorrow when the pleasant is lost, nor are they afraid of the unpleasant”.

धन्याः खलु महात्मानः पुरुषः त्यक्तकिल्बिषाः ।  
 जितात्मानः महाभागाः येषां न स्तः प्रियाप्रिये ॥  
 प्रियाञ्च संभवेत् दुःखं अप्रियान्नाधिकं भयम् ।  
 ताभ्यां हि ये वियुज्यन्ते नमस्तेषां महात्मनाम् ॥<sup>1</sup>

The Bhagavad Gītā clinches the issue and has the last word on the subject in a few memorable verses:

रागद्वेषविश्रुक्तेस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैः चरन् ।  
 आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥

“The man of disciplined mind who experiences the sense pleasures, keeping them fully under control free from love and hate attains peace of mind”. II—64.

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।  
 तयोर्न वशामागच्छेत् तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

“Love and hate are bound to arise towards the object of each sense. But let no man come under the sway of them, for they are his enemies”. III-34.

शक्नोति इहैव यः सोढुं प्राक्शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।  
 कामक्रोधोद्भयं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥

“He who is able to resist the forces of desire and anger even before he quits his body – he is a yogin, he is a blessed man”. V—23.

1. *Rāmāyana*, V - 29, 40-49.

Peace of mind is the inestimable gift of Religion to man. You cannot live life without it. It is the precondition of all our joys in this world and also for the attainment of liberation.

The need for religion and belief in the supremacy of the spirit is irrepressible in the very nature of man. Man can never rest or attain peace from anxiety till he is anchored in spirit. Epicurus remarked and not without reason that with a little bread and water, the wise man is the equal of Jupiter himself. Professor Gilson in his *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* argues the case, "The fact is perhaps that with a little bread and water man ought to be happy but precisely is not; and if he is not, it is not necessarily because he lacks wisdom, but simply because he is man, and because all that is deepest in him perpetually gainsays the wisdom offered...The owner of a great estate would still add field to field, the rich man would heap up more riches, the husband of a fair wife, would have another still fairer or possibly less fair would serve, provided only she were fair in some other ways...This incessant pursuit of an ever fugitive satisfaction springs from the troubled mind in human nature...The very insatiability of human desire has positive significance; it means we are attracted by a powerful goal".



Man's need for religion can never be repressed. We may try to beat this exigency down, we may starve it out, or seek to crowd it away, the thing refuses to be eradicated. There is that yawning gap inspite of all our hectic round of pleasures and glittering prizes of life. Pascal in a famous passage observes "The human mind believes naturally and human will loves naturally", consequently for the lack of real objects man attaches himself to false objects. If we knock down the Gods from their pedestal, humans spring up in their place. The human mind abhors a vacuum. Disraeli observes: "Give man nothing to worship and nothing to revere, and he will find altars and idols in his own heart and his own imagination fashioning his own divinities."

It is only faith in God that can give us the 'Peace of mind' "The discovery and the attainment would enable one to enjoy continuous supreme and unending happiness." "But love towards a thing Eternal and Infinite feeds the mind, with joy and itself unmingled with any sadness, wherefore it is greatly to be desired and sought for with all our strength. The author of *Imitation* towards the conclusion of his classic exhorts us all to have simple faith in God and not trust 'curious and unprofitable reasoning', puny reason i. e., *śuṣka tarka* and wavering uncertainty.

Pascal argues and touches our heart by his wise observations: "By yourself it is no use trying to do good, you are too simple; by yourself it is no use trying to be wise, your folly is too crass..." Fortunately, there is no need to try to live by ourselves, since there is one who will lead us and give us strength to do good and wisdom to go right." This is the commitment Religion wants us to make irrevocably, unconditionally, voluntarily and absolutely. The Lord in the *Gītā* assures us to do the rest. The *Gītā* is replete with the Lord's assurances to the effect that all the worries of men are at an end when they place them in the hands of God.

God is able to work more than man can understand. Hence all our reason and logic ought to follow faith and not go before it, nor break in upon it. Berdeyaev concludes magnificiently: "Where there is no God, there is no man: man without God is no longer man." St. Augustine's opening words in his *Confession* are: "Thou O God! has made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."

The opponents of Religion are making 'great capital' of the fact of the plurality of religions in their tirade against Religion. They argue from the fact that we have so many dissimilar and

contradictory accounts of Ultimate Reality and diversity in the modes of God realisation that there is no objective Ultimate Reality envisaged for Religion. The simple fact of the presence of a plurality of Religions is no argument against Religion or its efficacy, and man's need of it. Nature has gone into endless diversity in its evolution and patterns. Religion is the quest of the individuals for the realisation of his ultimate concern. Each is bound to differ in the mode of describing the nature and the way to realise his ultimate concern, i. e., the Goal.

Students of comparative religion have not been slow to discern a common core of spirituality in all Faiths, which unites us as human beings. The differences are external and superficial. The core of the substance is the same in all.

In the presentation of the liberal outlook, we should steer clear of two solutions. We should not plead for the adoption of a New religion setting aside the older Faiths. Nor do we plead for a syncretism and the amalgamation of the sound points in different religions nor a cheap eclecticism or hodge-podge syncreticism. What is pleaded for is an active appreciation of the positive elements in other Religions and not mere endurance. Our spirit of toleration must grow

from the depth of our feeling that the different Religions are alternate approaches to Reality. The need is to appreciate the basic unity in Faiths. What, we do today is to study it as a neutral observer and present a factual account of the doctrines of the different Faiths and criticise them from different levels. When we judge a religion we must do it at its highest level. We must take the the attitude of a participant observer and sympathetically understand the encounter the aspirant describes. Religion being a subject's thoughts and his encounter with God, it does not yield its meaning and truth to the methods of objective study. The objective method works excellently in the realm of man's relation with non-human elements. Man's relation to his fellow men and his relation to his own turbulent and rebellious unregenerate, anti-social aspirations and drives can never be objectively studied. We must participate with other religionists and establish an *interfaith dialogue* to correctly understand them.

With the onset of the reflective consciousness, man realises not only his enormous powers, and scientific and technological attainments, but also the transcendent nature of his glories. The phenomenon of death, its certainty, its presence and inevitability, set him thinking. It aches his spirit. Death inspires fear. Man's realisation of

his finitude is basic for his realisation of the intimation of the infinite. He seeks roots for his strength. He finds in the midst of life so many ups and downs, success and failures, tears and joy, shudders and ecstasies, swaying him. Some times, he realises to his utter despair, that his props have given way, his dear and near have deserted him and his surface supports have slipped away. He feels he does not know how to work the sum of life. It baffles him into almost helplessness. It is under such extremities man draws his power of being from God. He realises power, knowledge and love are His, and are in his giving. God becomes his roots, for He is not exhausted by the process of the lapse of time. He is an eternal power. He is the plentitude, that is never exhausted. He is the tower of strength. He is the root of all in the language of Chāndogya Upaniṣad. He is established in *Sat*: He proceeds from *Sat*, and He is sustained by it. He alone was in the beginning. Man, being time-bound in his existence, he needs time-transcending roots to hold him. A Christian devotee writes: "There are the everlasting arms sustaining us ever beneath us." The time-bound nature of man makes him hope for the future. If the hope for the future has no profound basis, the men who entertain the hope will have no zest in life.

Faith gives him the authentic sense of the eternal background as his roots and which is beyond the sense of our logic.<sup>1</sup>

Religion is not possible without faith. Faith is an ill-favoured word with our smart intellectual rationalist. It is a snarl word. It is sharply set in opposition to reason. In fact faith is a rational hypothesis. It is a value—judgment. ‘Faith’ Heidegger defines, ‘as one’s way of being in the world.’ In the words of Paul Tillich “Faith is a completely personal act of courageous commitment and it is also a state of being supported by reality which involves commitment.” The commitment of the aspirant to God which is total, gives rise to and builds Hope in man. *Hope* which characterises is not the rational hope suitable for dealing with a problem on the basis of evidence and programmes. It is a kind of self-assurance. It is hoping against hope. It is not rational calculation. It is a mystery. It is an attitude to life. It is life-orientation. It carries us through life and expresses itself in creative love. It is the hope of a job, a Draupadi, Prahlada and a Gajendra. It is healthy acceptance-attitude to life. We have inspired expressions of it in Eastern and Western religious scriptures.

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1. See, John B. Magee : *Religion and Modern Man* — Pp. 449-685.

Faith is a deep attitude in the Lord of our being. It is total commitment. It is not believing on insufficient evidence. It engenders high-seriousness of purpose and gives us a sense of direction when we are lost and feel perplexed. It disdains all opposition and gives us the strength to endure the suffering for the cause. The fanatic refuses all dialogue with others. He does not brook any criticism. He looks upon doubts as impious and he regards dissent as dishonour and a crime. The man of faith knows the truth of St. Paul's statement: "We cannot do anything against truth, but only for Truth" (II cor. 13-8). The man of faith knows that things seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal".<sup>1</sup>

The way to secure religious experience is by the way of withdrawal from the objective world. Radhakrishna has described the process "when the individual withdraws his soul from all outward events, gathers himself together inwardly and strives with concentration, there breaks upon him an experience, secret, and wonderful and completely divesting him of all that is not his eternal essence, quickens within him and discloses his consubstantiality with Ultimate Reality. He

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1. Paul Tillich: *Dynamics of faith* — Pp. 30-41.

realises that he is no banished stranger in an alien universe, that he is Brahman – ‘*tat tvam asi*’ as the majestic utterance declares”.

The ultimate truth of religion is authenticated to us by our experience “Man can abstract from his body and flesh, from his feelings and desires, even from thoughts which rise like waves on the surface of his mind, and reach a pure awareness, the naked condition of his pure self-hood. By steady discipline, he can be led back to pure being, the subject that reflects and reaches the state of immediacy and unity in which all chaos disappears. When we break through the ring of smoke round the self, unwarp the sheaths which cover it, we achieve here and now in flesh and blood our destiny”.<sup>1</sup>

Armed with this experience which totally transforms us, the man acquires angelic powers and goes out and does good to men. The philosopher returns to the cave to share his vision. He gives all his compassion and he sets right men. It is not blind leading the blind, but the man of vision. He imparts light to men in darkness. That is the active role of the mystic. The great ācāryas

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1. S. Radhakrishnan *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* P. 38.



and mystics bear testimony to this. All work is God's work for them.

The fullness of religious experience and its joy, expresses itself in the effort to share and communicate it to others. He feels he must do it. It eggs on others to have the vision and get transformed.

Religion helps men to discover their roots to draw their power, to sustain them. It enables men to hope fruitfully and satisfies their desire to communicate the joy to others.

## DEVOTION (BHAKTI) THE SUPREME MODE OF GOD-REALISATION

The supreme sovereign mode of God realisation, practised by millions, within the reach of the low and lost, natural to the human heart, is broadly described as devotion (*bhakti*). The nature of devotion is akin to the most powerful, enjoyable universal human motion *love*. In the service of this emotion, men count no cost too much and dread no trouble. Devotion is the universal simple *sādhana* opened to all men in their quest for the Lord.

The nature and function of bhakti is dealt with elaborately in a wide range of writings not

only in Sanskrit but also in the regional languages of India. The literature on Devotion is present in all the forms of literature, *Sūtras*, *poetry*, *drama*, *epics*, *puranas*, *stotras*, the writings of the mystics in the East and West and the songs of Saint singers. It would be too ambitious to cover the entire literature.

Tradition is a great master, and it is something that is precious to all and it is concrete. We will rely on the approved classics on the subject and draw matter from them. *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is the treasure house for *bhakti*. The circumstances that led to its composition is an eloquent commentary on the efficiency and excellence of *Bhakti*. The great sage Veda-Vyāsa, found it difficult to rest on his oars, even after composing several purāṇas and the great Mahābhārata, described as the Fifth Veda and named as Victory-Jaya. The sage was listless. He did not attain *alambuddhi*. Nārada the great Inspirer of all sages, beginning with Vālmiki goes to Vyāsa to inspire him to write a work exclusively describing the efficiency of devotion to the Lord.

Ever since the reflective and the imaginative faculties in men began to grow in a healthy harmonious way, man keenly desired to understand the great mystery of life and sought strenuously to

know his place in the universe and the meaning of life and his destiny. Man hungers to get at the hang of Reality. The Greeks spelt the mystery of life in terms of the "Law of Reason", and described all things governed as steered through reason. This trend in Greek thought has given us Plato's vision of the World of Ideas and his conception of the 'Idea of Good' in his celebrated dialogue 'The Republic'. The Hebrew saw the mystery, in the supreme strong righteous God, demanding implicit obedience from disciples for his stern commands, and visiting them with inexorable punishment for any transgression of the law. The Chinese say in the mystery, in the working of the Tao, the principle of Harmony.

It was given to the Hindus and the Christian devotee to describe the mystery in terms of a Supreme Personality—a loving father of mankind. The Hindu looks upon ultimate Reality in terms of several relations. Some have tried to apprehend the mystery in terms of the concepts of the mind and the images of senses. Others have declared in the words of the Upaniṣads,

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते, अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।  
आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान्, न विभेति कुतश्चनेति ॥

that it is not attainable by them, but still God is the great Bliss, By Love the Lord can be obtained

and not by pace of feet or thought as the author of the "Cloud of Unknowing" put it. The inscrutable and unscaleable heights of the glory of the Lord can be known only if He reveals it, as He did it to Arjuna on the battle field or to Paul on the road to Damascus. To see the vision of the Lord, one has to possess divine sight not mere retinal sight. All that we have to do is to have an intense stretch of longing for Him and patiently wait on Him. We have cut ourselves from the centre. The human soul cannot love a neutral abstraction, however sublime and logical such a concept may be. The human mind thinks in terms of analogies. Symbolism is organic to human life. Professor-Whitehead observes "that Symbolism is not idle fancy or corrupt degeneration. It is inherent in the very textures of human life. Language itself is symbolism." Symbol is the only way opened to mankind to express its conceptions of ultimate Reality which are beyond the power of words and the reach of logical thought. In the words of Swami Vivekananda "man can only think of divine things in his own human way. To us the Absolute can only be expressed in our relative language. The whole universe is to us the writing of the Infinite in the language of the Finite".

In man's conception of Ultimate Reality there is what Huston Smith has described 'layered thought'. The Vedānta has never hesitated to commend to persons at different levels of understanding different concepts of God ranging from graven images to absolute formless Nirguṇa Brahman. There is no duplicity in the activity and the doctrine of *eligibility* (*adhikāra bheda*) for it is a basic fact of human nature. The intellectual sophistication of man and his culture have a knack of making spiritual wisdom available to the simple and to the unlearned undergo a curious reversal as to be only understood by the expert. The Gītā asks us "not to unsettle the minds of the ignorant who are attached to crude concepts."<sup>1</sup> There is a 'layered scale of truths' in the scheme of religious worship. Plato in his *Republic* allows the rulers for the good state, to introduce certain myths designed to suit the varying levels of man's understanding. He calls it the *royal lie*.

Hence, it is no use, in the name of rationality to drive away and dry up all the springs of religious life, by breaking down all the ridge poles and burke away the rituals. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, we cannot get at the juice of the fruit all at once. We have to take the full

fruit, its pulp, its essence, its outer skin and all. If we destroy all the emotional springs of religion, we will be left with only an empty shell contentless. It is this grave truth that makes men resort to Bhakti. Nārada recommended it to Vyāsa. The glorified singing and exposition of the Lord's diverse exploits help us to get over our listlessness. Vyāsa by the grand composition of the Bhāgavata purāṇa overcame his grief. Nārada recommended it on the strength of his personal experience of prior lives which enabled him to acquire spiritual birth in the person as Nārada. Vyāsa acclaims in the Bhāgavata the story of Nārada who is not only the great exponent of Bhakti-marga, but is the enduring preserver of it all his life, and the all the time in his life with joy and bliss. "The Devariṣi is the luckiest of all beings. He sings the glory of the Lord. Song intensifies emotion and emotion intensifies song. He removes the sorrows of life and converts by his devotional song sorrow into bliss".

The tenth book of the Bāghavata covers a third of the entire purāṇa. It is the source book of Bhakti in all its forms. Next to the Bhāgavata, the locus-classics on the subject are the Sūtras of Nārada and Śāṅḍilya. In eightyfour sūtras Nārada gives us his mature reflections on the nature of Bhakti, its philosophy and practice, the

fruits of Bhakti and the marks of a perfected Bhakta. The *sūtra* form has great significance and is inexhaustible in its apperceptive information and suggestive evocation, for, as a literary form, it is the very opposite of dissertation and declamation. It combines wisdom and logic in one. I am of the humble opinion that the Bhakti Sūtras of Nārada deserves to be looked upon with the similar respect, accorded by the orthodox to the *Brahma Sūtras of Bādarāyana*, *Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali*, and the *Mīmāṃsa-Sūtras of Jaimini*.

Bakthi is defined by Nārada as intense love of God and His glorification: Śaṅḍilya defines it as supreme attachment to the Lord. That emotion is born of not any one faculty of man. It is a total commitment where the intellect will and feelings, in man do not work piece-meal or in separation. It is an integral complete identification with the Supreme. It is like the experience of the sweet tasted by a dumb person who can enjoy to his heart's content and cannot describe it to others. It is very subtle and so is indescribable. It is (*anubhavarupam*) nature of an intense experience. It is not the desire for the ordinary. After attaining it, the sūtras describe, man does not desire anything, laments nothing, revels in nothing, strives for nothing, becomes quiet, full of joy and finds complete bliss in himself”.

*Bhakti* implies complete attachment to God. The very intensity of the attachment releases us from the love of worldly bonds. (*anurāgāt Virāgaḥ*). The *bakta* realises that he is completely helpless and he can get at nothing without the Lord's help. He realises his *ākiñcanya*. Along with it he resolves to seek refuge from none else except the Lord: i.e., *ananyagatitvam* or *eka śaranatvam*. In all his acts he aims at *Īśvara priti* and dedicates them to Him, *tadarpitākhilācarat*, and the devotee sees all his pleasure in God's pleasure, i.e., (*tat sukhas sukhitam*). The spring of all the actions for the devotee is not self-pleasure but the happiness of the Lord whom he regards as his beloved. *Bhakti* is constant, uninterrupted thought of the Lord (*dhruva anusmaraṇam*). The essence of *bhakti* in the language of the *Bhagāvatam* is spelt in two words. It is *ahaitukī* and not inspired by any consideration. Hence, it is spontaneous. The *Bhāgavata* records that even the released souls who have no desire continue to do *bhakti* to the Lord. "Self realised sages, even if they have no bonds of attachment, yet love the Lord and seek no reward. Such is the glory of the Lord". Not only is the devotee spontaneous in his *Bhakti*, he is single minded in the object of his worship. He permits none others to take the place of his love.



*Bakti* is regarded not as a mere method for attaining the Lord. It is itself considered the end (*phala*) *svayam phala rupam*). It is not caused by something else. It is self caused, perfect and limitless. It is not stimulated by the knowledge of the benefits or advantages. It is compared to nectar (*amṛta*). It implies total and exclusive dependence on God. It is intensified by *Satsangh* (company of holy men), by worship, by listening to God's nam by *Nāma samkīrtana*, *japa* and grace of the devotees, i.e., *Bhāgavata*. 'The method of *Bhakti*' in the *Gītā* is referred to as "*the Raja Vidyā* and *Rāja Guhya* - (king of spiritual sciences and the supreme secret), and purifier, it is easily understood, is in harmony with *dharma* easily practised and confers eternal rest.'"

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।

प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥ <sup>1</sup>

The creed is that nothing by way of human effort is the direct and self-sacrificing means for attaining God-vision. The devotee who seeks the Lord's grace has to discharge all the duties laid down. He has to live the good life and be vigilant against the proneness of commission or omission. In addition to the discharge of his duties, he has to cultivate *ātmaguṇas* eg., control of the mind,

control of the senses, austerity, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, discrimination as to what is to be feared and what not, compassion and non-injury. Practising the remembrance of God steadily leads to intensity. The devotee manifests his love of God in various ways, hearing the glory of the Lord, singing His praise in the company of fellow-devotees, remembers Him always, serving and clinging to His eternal feet, worshipping Him, bowing before Him, serving Him and lastly completely surrenders himself to the Lord.

मच्चित्ता मदगतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।  
 कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥  
 तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्यकम् ।  
 ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन ममुपयान्ति ते ॥  
 तेषामेवामुकभ्यार्थं अहं अज्ञानजं तमः ।  
 नाशायाम्यात्मभावस्थः ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥<sup>1</sup>

Many feel practising *bakthi* as laid down in the scriptures is hard, because of its rigour and demands on men. Men adopt the essential basic factor in *bakti*, namely completely surrendering to the Lord. This is called *śaraṇāgati* and *prapatti* in *Viśistādvaita*. The great follower of Rāmānuja's school Vedānta Deśika developed this doctrine of *prapatti* to its final perfection and has explained its

1. *Gita X*, 9 to 11.

efficacy contrasting it with bakthi in his *Rahasya-traya Sāra*. The doctrine of (*prapatti*) total self-surrender marks the acme of the passion for God. The ego has to crack here and one must completely deplete his ego sense and feel happily that he counts for nothing. He should give up the feeling that the clever manipulations of his own intelligence and ability are of no avail. He should know that man minus God is nothing. The only thing I can do myself unaided is sin. *S'araṇāgati* is surrender to the supreme. It involves the slaying of the ego. The *prapanna* feels that he belongs essentially to God. This is described as *svarūpa samarpaṇa*. One has to dedicate the fruits of ones work and endeavour to God. This is *phalasarpaṇa*. The last important act is the transfer of one's responsibility in the matter of spiritual advance into the hands of God. This means the surrender of the sense of the doer and the offering of the doership to God. This is called *bharan nyāsa*. My friend Professor S. S. Raghavachar's remarks on this theme are instructive and significant.<sup>1</sup> "Such a surrender truly perfects the progress of the spirit for then, the progress does not depend upon the finite resources of the devotee. All care is at an end and superfluous when one has taken the care to throw all his cares at the feet of the Lord. Life is at its best when it is

placed in the hands of the best. The total self—surrender is in essence the culmination of bhakti. It is the attempt not to keep anything from God. It is complete and unqualified, unconditional and joyful self-effacement. In a moving verse ācārya Śankara describes the nature and the amazing extent to which *bhakti* is carried to the life of a barbarian devotee. Lord Śiva wanted to show the extent to which the love of a *bhakta* can go. Kannappar the great devotee, who was a hunter came to worship Śiva in a shrine in the mountainous region of Kālahasti. He saw to his horror blood dripping from the eye of the image. He was touched to the soul, and without a moment's hesitation or thought he plucked out his eyes and placed it in idol's eye. The other eye of the idol too began to bleed. The devotee placed one of his toes, a little below the injured eye in order that it may serve as a mark and prepared to sacrifice

मार्गावर्तितपादुका पशुपतेरङ्गस्य क्चयते

गण्डूपाभ्रुनिषेचनं पुररिपोर्दिव्याभिषेकायते ।

किञ्चिद्धक्षितमांसशेषकवलं नव्योपहारायते

भक्तिः किं न करोत्यहो वनचरो भक्तावतंसायते ॥

the other eye also. Śiva recognised the genuine adoration of the devotee and gave His darśan, and he is known as the beloved eye *Kannappar*. Śankara

sings of the *bhakta* “The worn out shoes of the hunter served as the mark between the two eyes of the Lord of the souls, and the mouth full water carried by him served for the sacred bath of the Lord, the conqueror of cities, the handful of meat left over after eating turned out to be fresh food offered for *naivedya*. What is not possible for bhakti to attain? The hunter became the best of the devotees.”<sup>1</sup>

In the life of the devotees and saints, trials and turmoils assail them often, there are moments in their lives, and in all of us when our ambitions are in ruin, when our dear and near depart from us, or let us down, the props on which we lean, give way, the surface supports on which we rest slip, and we are face to face with just absolute helplessness. It is in such extremities we realise that all our powers, our genius, our strength are of no avail. We call on for succour. William James writes man's extremity is God's opportunity. Many have turned devotees in the crisis of their lives.

The surrender of the devotee is not the throwing away of the sponge in despair and despondency.

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1. *Sivānandalahari*, V. 63. Dr T. M. P. Mahadevan's translation, P. 199, *Hymns of Śankara*.

It is not submission or resignation to a dark, unknown and unknowable fate as Hardy put it, over which we have no control and whose ways are inscrutable. It is a joyous spirit of the acceptance of a power for good that shapes our ends. It is no blind ignorance and it is sheer egoism that recoils us from surrendering willingly to the Lord and that relies on our mere intellectual probity and seeking to attain our goals by the self-directed manipulation of our mind and abilities.

There is a familiar verse in Bhakti literature that describes how the Lord in His grand compassion and complete love rescues different devotees. "Out of tender affection (*vātsalya*) He rescued *Prahlāda* the boy devotee from the persecution of his father who questioned constantly the very existence of the Lord. To affirm His existence in the mode asserted by His devotee Prahlada, the Lord, in the words of *Bhāgavata* appeared as *Nṛsimha*. "In order to substantiate the words of His devotee, the Lord appeared in the pillar of the court, assuming a queer form which was neither a beast nor the form of a man".

सत्यं विधातुं निजभृत्यभाषितं  
व्याप्तिं च भूतेष्वखिलेषु चात्मनः ।

अदृश्यतात्यद्भुतरूपमुद्रहन्  
स्तम्भे सभायां न मृगं न मानुषम् ॥

The Lord rescued without a moment's suspense the devotee who sought refuge in Him in his hour of distress and despondency, The great example in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the *śaraṇāgati* of Vibhiṣaṇa. He sought refuge in the camp of Śrī Rāmacandra with a resolve to lay down his life at the feet of Rama. Rama accepted him, proclaiming the 'charter of refuge' in the celebrated words. "This is the law of my ruling to give refuge and security to all beings; who say once "you are my refuge". He continued, "be it Vibhiṣaṇa or Ravana himself".

विभीषणो वा सुग्रीव यदि वा रावणः स्वयम् ।

आनयैनं हरिश्रेष्ठ दत्तमस्याभयं मया ॥

सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते ।

अभयं <sup>1</sup>सर्वदा तस्मै ददाभ्येतद्भ्रतं मम ॥

Giving Refuge is the Lord's answer to the shrill call of the bhakta in anguish. He accorded refuge to Draupadi in her hour of absolute distress, when her husbands staked her at the gamble table, and when she cried aloud, "I have no husbands, no sons, no kinsmen, no brothers, no father, not even you! O! Kṛṣṇa.

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1. Śaṅkara commenting on the name *sumukha* in the Viṣṇusahasranama adopts this reading in his citation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* verse.

The Lord's granting of refuge is not only confined to our hour of distress but it relieves us of our wants and anxiety. The boy devotee Dhruva sought to have Lord's vision at the instance suggested by his step mother. The Lord gave him his vision and also kingdom. He made the indigent class-fellow Kucela an affluent person. He rescued the life of the elephant chief, when all his kith and kin left him in distress. He cleansed Ahalya, the wife of Gautama, of her sins and restored her to life from her petrified state. The list is long and it continues. The concept of God comprehends two distinct sets of attributes. His *majestic power* (*māhātmya*) and His *easy accessibility* (*saulabhya*). The second is in operation whenever a devotee seeks Him in distress. The Lord admits the possibility of repentance for a sinner. The Lord of the Gītā enumerates four types of devotees that seek him.

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां नराः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।

भक्तो जिज्ञासुरथार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥

“Four types of men purified of good deeds, worship me, the world weary, the indigent, the seeker of knowledge, and the man of spiritual discrimination. The man of discrimination is the highest. He is continuously united with me. He devotes



himself to me always and to no others. I am dear to that man and he is dear to me'' The supreme *sādhana*, *bhakti*, insists on no qualification except self surrender. It does not bother about the profession of man or the age of the man or his caste, or his prowess, or his beauty of form, or his wealth.

The poet asks: "What are the good practices of Vyadha, what was the age of Dhruva, what was the erudition of Gajendra, what was the prowess of Ugrasena, what was the beauty of Kubja? What was the wealth of Sudama? The Lord who is the lover of devotion, is pleased with devotion and does not bother about other merits''.

व्याधस्याचरणं ध्रुवस्य च वयो विद्या गजेन्द्रस्य का  
का जातिर्विदुरस्य, यादवपतेर्यस्य किं पौरुषम् ।  
कुब्जायाः कमनीयरूपमधिकं किं तत् सुधाम्नो धनं  
भक्त्या तुप्यति केवलं न तु गुणैः भक्तिप्रियो माधवः ॥

The popular view is that *bhakti* is easy and is meant for the ignorant and it is achieved through passive virtues and sheer do-nothingism. It is not that easy. The submission and surrender of ones self unconditionally, joyfully, is not so easy as men think. Self-hood and self-love are hard to crack. It comes to one only in the full realisation of the love of God. Men are prepared to die in protest of their selves than surrender.

The promethian spirit in man dies hard. It grows sometimes to devilish dimensions in the face of danger and suffering. Milton's Satan typifies it. He said: "Evil be Thou my God". He thought like all unbending materialists. 'It is better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven'. The mind in its own place can make a Heaven of Hell and a Hell of Heaven."

The Bhagavad Gītā is pervasively the book advocating self-surrender to the Lord. The glory of the path, its supremacy its ways and functions are described. In the second chapter, while describing the characteristics of the *S'thithaparajña*, the Lord does not omit to point out that, the aspirant is not a mere stoic who exercises a perfect self-control over his senses by his stern discipline of *atmasamyama*. That is not enough though necessary. He adds that the *Sthitaprajñā* (II in verse 61) *Yukta āsita matparaḥ*. He should control the senses and remain steadfast and *devoted to me*. Gandhiji in his comment on this verse observes: "This means that without devotion and consequent grace of God, man's endeavour is vain."<sup>1</sup>

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन व चेज्यया ।  
शक्य एयंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ॥

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1. Mahadev Desai: *The Gītā according to Gandhi*.

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहं एवंविधोऽर्जुन ।  
 ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परन्तप ॥

The author of the *Gitā*, in more than one place, proclaims the supremacy of the path of *bhakti*. He declares to Arjuna, after the disclosure of the cosmic vision (*Viśvarūpa*): "It is very hard to see this form of Mine which thou hast seen. Even the Gods are ever eager to see this form. Neither by Vedas nor by austerity, nor by alms giving, nor yet by sacrifice, can I be seen in the form in which thou hast seen me now. But by devotion to Me alone may I thus be known, truly seen, and entered into, O! Dreaded Arjuna!" (XI. 53-54). Towards the end of the chapter, the Lord speaks out his mind: "To love me is to know Me, My innermost nature. The truth that I am, through this one enters into My being. All that he does is offered to Me in utter surrender. My grace is upon him and he reaches me by grace, the eternal abode. Fix thy thought on Me, then thou shalt surmount every difficulty by My grace: But if from self conceit thou wilt not listen to Me, thou shalt utterly perish". (XVIII. 55-56-58). Prefacing His great message and drawing Arjuna's pointed attention to His words, the Lord speaks: "Listen again to My supreme word, the most secret of all. Thou art beloved to me, I will tell you what is good for you.

Fix thy mind on me, be devoted to me, prostrate thyself before me, so shalt thou come to me. I promise thee truly for thou art dear to Me. Surrender all duties, Come to Me for shelter. Do not grieve for I shall release thee from all sins". (XVIII—64, 65, 66).

In the ninth chapter, the Lord has given, (in the words of Gandhiji) his irrevocable promise, Lord says: "those who worship me and meditate on Me and no other and who are ever devoted to me — I shall give all their needs and protect them

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

To a reader of the Gītā, it is clear, the Lord is idealising the spiritual man in the personality of the devotee. He says that "That supreme being in whom all things abide, and by whom all this is provided can be reached, *only by exclusive devotion* (VIII-22) (bakthya labhyatvananya) — this phrase is repeated again in the 11th chapter—54). Describing the devotees, he says, "Their minds are fixed on me, their lives are given up to Me, they for ever converse about me enlightening one another. They are delighted and contented. To those that are constantly devoted to me, and worship me in

Love, I bestow (jnāna) understanding by which they come to me. Out of compassion for them, I dwell in their hearts, and dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of wisdom". (X-9, 10, 11).

In enumerating the four types of bhaktas, he brings in the *jñāni* as the best type in the classification. The Lord again and again in each chapter insists on the importance of devotion and complete self-surrender to him "Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou givest away and whatsoever austerities thou practice — do that, O son of Kunti! as an offering to me". Even if the most sinful man worships me without worshipping any other, he must be regarded as righteous, for he has decided aright". (IX – 27 and 30). The imperative of the Gītā is not the apparent command: "Thou shalt fight: *tasmāt yuddhasva*: though it is repeated five times. Its grand imperatives are: "Therefore at all times, think on Me and fight with thy mind and understanding fixed on Me thou shalt certainly come to me" (VIII-6). Therefore be thou steadfast in yoga.

The ideal man of the Gītā is not the mere *Sthithaprajña*, nor the *gunātīta* or the *Yogārūḍhaḥ*:

but one who has an ideal love of God, *bhakta*. The ideal character of the *bhakta* is described in the XII chapter as possessed of all desirable ethical qualities and social concern and responsibilities. Reading the *Gītā* as a general world-scripture avoiding to fit it in the frame of any of three schools of Vedānta, we get the certain feeling that God-love is the pervasive religion it preaches, which is within the reach of all.

There are two problems closely related to the concept of *bhakti* and self-surrender that merit our attention and understanding. The great theisms of the world, of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, Vallabha, Judiasm and Islam, have all insisted that *bhakti* must be born of understanding the truths of religion and the practice of morality. It is a perverse and erroneous view to describe *bhakti* as a pure emotional expression of one's helplessness and the confession that it is impossible for man to reform himself. So they hold that God absolves man of all his unregenerate nature and infirm will, and irresolute life and saves him. *Bhakti* does not put a premium on indolence and spiritual ineptitude. It does involve a certain attitude of mind. It is in this connection we have to examine its relation to morality on the one hand and *jñāna* on the other hand.

All the religions of the world speak high of *bhakti* as a mode of God-realisation. To love God in the real and full sense of the term, one needs to cultivate singleness of mind. To concentrate and love an object to the exclusion of all others, one must be more than certain of its excellence and its unexcellable qualities in relation to the benefactions one can receive from it. All this implies *jñāna*. In the absence of such a knowledge the deep attachment one has for an object or person is described as *moha* or infatuation which is bound to wear out and get dispelled when the person comes into the true knowledge of the object or person of his love. *Bhakti* is not *moha*, for it is the love and trust in a person who is infinitely lovable and is perfect in himself. Trust in Him is justified by the excellence of His disposition, power and deeds. It is knowledged love, *jñānamīśrita bhakti*. It is love resulting from the faith in the majesty and the all loving nature of the Lord. It is a *bonafide* trust. The faith grows with the increase in *bhakti*. God's love cannot come to any one who has no faith in Him. To acquire it fully and completely, one has to fight other loves, love of the things, of the world, persons, self, etc. One must have not only known how trifle these are in comparison with God, and must have also the necessary dispassion to set them aside and love

God. These acts imply *jñāna* and morality in full. *Bhakti* is not a confused longing of God arising from some temporary set back. *Bhakti* is not a negative approach. When the men of the world are asked to forswear their foolish ways of life, it cannot be directly done. To give up the hard-settled habits which give delight, is not easy. The wrench is unbearable. It is in such a context the devotee because of his firm faith and clear knowledge, places God in the place of his earthly objects of Love. To effect this change, knowledge or *jñāna* of the Lord and his *māhātmya* and *saṁlabhya* are absolutely necessary. That alone will not do, for, to merely say that I should love God is not to love God. Hell is paved with good intentions. Hence the need for morality. We cannot love God or surrender to Him when we are in the grip of our worldly lusts and desires. To love God we must overcome all obstacles. Hence the need for *Vairāgya*. The Upaniṣads and the Gītā acclaim that the cleansing of the self and the cracking of the ego are preconditions to the surrender to the Lord. There must be self-emptying before we have divine-filling. That is not possible without morality.

When *bhakti* is cultivated without reference to *jñāna*, *karma* or morality, it tends to grow into a form of emotional indulgence. The excessive



emotionalism of Bhakti has come in, rightly, for a good deal of criticism at the hands of the opponents. *Bhakti* should not be cultivated at the expense of the intellect or in utter disregard of morality.

The merely emotional type mistakes bhakti for a slush of violent emotion manifesting itself in dance, music and songs, neglecting their ordinary duties of life to the annoyance and discomfort of their dependents. Sound *bhakti* is not imbalance, it is a happy and sincere blend of all the faculties in a healthy life.

Without a moral check-up, bhakti or God-love is likely to be dangerous and reverse the process of divine love into gross animalism and sex. *Prema* then degenerates into *kāma*, Carnal love or *Kāma* is the love of the beloved's body and her flesh. The greatest danger to which Premabhakti is exposed to, is the design of those who masquerade sentimentality as spirituality. It should never serve as a cloak for immorality.

The devotee seeks to realise God in all the forms and degrees of human relationship. Christianity looks upon God as Father. The Hindu conceives God in many relations. God can be loved as the father

or mother, as a master, as a friend and as a child, as the beloved or lover. It is this powerful human emotion that fills the human heart with joy. The concept of God as the beloved is glorified into a mighty theme by the Gopis of Brindavan who exemplify best the love of the Lord as their beloved. The Rāsa Līla of the Bhagavata is the *locus classicus* on the subject. They all remembered nothing and cared for nothing except Kṛṣṇa. They gave themselves upto Him in body, soul and in their totality. They were mad after Him. Their entire activity was Kṛṣṇa prema. Madhusūdana Sarasvati in his *Bakti-Rasāyana* holds the view (II-31) that the Gopis loved the Lord in a four fold manner. They were enamoured of His beauty and are transfixed into a mood of infatuation by His very sight and the call of His flute. They loved to sport with Him and felt the separation from Him - Hell. When the Lord disappeared with a certain Gopi, they grew jealous that He favoured one. The love that they exhibit in the form of jealousy is also present. On occasions, the Gopis looked upon the Lord as child and gave Him *Vātsalya*, indulgence. All along they loved to be treated as His beloved servants (Priyo Bhava). Their love for the Lord was not selfish in any sense of the term. The Gītā classification of the nature of the four-fold bhaktas does not cover

them, because they are *niṣkāma-bhakta*, for they want nothing except and less than the Lord.

*Prema-bhakti*, Sri Chaitanya contends, is Bhakti unmixed by *jñāna* and *karma*. It is described as *suddha*, but even this *bhakti* pre-supposes the bliss - nature or the *Rasa* value of the Lord. It is not an infatuation in that in so far it is anchored in the Lord, it has its metaphysics of *rasa*. The author of *Gītā*, in unambiguous terms states that the Lord can be attained by

*mayi ca ananyayogena bhaktir ayabhicārini*

The devotion of the Gopis of Brindāvan has been extolled by all including Swami Vivekananda. In the *Bhāgavata*, Uddhava exclaims: "May I be born as a humble shrub in some neglected corner of Brindavan, which is blest with the dust from the feet of the Gopis. They are the persons who by relinquishing the unshakeable path of social and moral life have adopted the path of Kṛṣṇa that is persistently searched for by the hermits (X-26-20).

The love of the Gopis has nothing carnal in it. One has to read carefully with a clean mind that portion of the *Bhagavata*. The Gopis, when bereft of the company of the Lord, ran after Him feeling jealous that He has walked with one.

They fret and fume and alight at a stage. They say “The Lord must have lifted His Lady love whose delicate soles were pricked with the sharp blades of grass. Behold the foot prints sunk deep apparently weighed down by the heavy load of carrying this sweet-heart. At a place the Gopis burst out, that the Lord must have sat down doing the hair of His beloved in a love stricken mood”.

रेमे तथा च आत्मक्रीडः आत्मारामोऽप्यखण्डितः ।

दर्शयन् कामिनां देन्यं स्त्रीणां चैव दुरात्मताम् ॥ (इति शुकोक्तिः)

At this juncture Śukācārya found it difficult not pronounce in a significant remark. The great commentator, Śrīdharaśvami, draws our attention to the significant contextual comment of śuka. Śuka remarks: “The Lord who is ever delighted in Himself and sports with His own self remained unaffected by the charms of lovely women Śrī Kṛṣṇa toyed with the lady in order to disclose and describe the wretched plight to which love-stricken men land themselves and to describe the evil mindedness and cruelty of women. The whole episode is the remarkable symbol of total giving up and complete surrender to the Lord which has no parallel in its intensity. Writing about the Gopis’ love for Krishna, Vivekananda exclaims:

“Ah! that most marvellous passage in his life, the most difficult to understand, and which one ought not attempt to understand until he has become perfectly chaste and pure, that the most marvellous expression of love, allegorised and expressed in that beautiful play at *Brindāvan* which none can understand, but he who has become mad with love, drunk deep of the cup of love, who can understand the throes of the love of the Gopis—the very ideal of love, the Love that wants nothing, Love that does not care for heaven: Love that does not care for anything in this world or the world to come”.

## CONCLUSION

It has been my effort to fret out the unity principles in different faiths, and I have done so in the faith that the different religions are possible alternative approaches to Reality, and the soundness of each faith rests not on the impossibility of refutation from others but from their appeal to varied men with different temperaments. I conclude the book with a passage which brings out the essence of true religion.

“The way is to penetrate into the depth of ones own religion, in devotion, thought and

action. In the depth of every living religion there is a point at which the religion loses its importance, and to that which it points to breaks through its particularity, elevating it to the spiritual freedom and with it to a vision of the spiritual presence in other expressions of the ultimate meaning of man's existence".



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

The present book is a study of the nature and the function of Spiritual Religion. The author examines the case against Religion presented by the contemporary ideologies and different disciplines. He finds in Vedānta the Principles, tenets of a religion that answered to the needs of Humanity and satisfied the demands of reason. The author brings to bear wide learning and sympathetic understanding of the systems. The Humanist element in Religion is high-lighted. The topics discussed are : *The Predicament of Man ; Science and Religion ; Vedāntā and Humanism ; The Nature of Bhakti.*

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