Vedanta and Communal Harmony
Lectures on Vedanta and Communal Harmony

His Holiness Swami Maheshanand Giri
Mahamandaleshwar
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture II</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture III</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture IV</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture V</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
India has been the golden eagle for the whole world. Since
Manu enunciated that the life and character of the inhabi-
tants of India is attractive to the whole world, Indians have
been practising that art. Long before Alexander, the Arabs,
Greeks, Scythians, Chinese, etc. have been visiting India to
drink deep at its fountain the elixir of immortality. Vyasa says
that whatever is found anywhere else in literature can be
found in the Mahabharata. One may paraphrase it to assert
that all the different communities, nationalities, can be
found in India. All their communities brought their wisdom
along with them. Indians have a knack of absorbing all the
contributions and making it part and parcel of the Indian
wisdom. India has never destroyed any community or its
wisdom. Parsis have survived only in India since 1100 years.
Jews came here during the exodus. It absorbed their wisdom
and turned it into a higher wisdom. Even the so-called ab-
original thoughts and languages were preserved here until
this century. When the storm of western egoism made us
realise that we have not tried to develop them, therefore we
started reforming the backward communities. Thus the con-
cept of national mainstream came into being. If one is asked
to define this backwardness one is left with the stark mate-
rialistic standards. They are backward because they lack
cement houses or nylon blouses. We are advanced because
we have radios and five star hotels. It is of no importance that
they are honest, truth-speaking, kind people and we are dis-
honest, steeped in lying and cruel people. The west has
defined developed nations, developing nations and underdeveloped nations in stark materialistic or economic terms, and Indians have swallowed this definition, being hypnotised by the wily witch of asuras. Independence may or may not have brought us political independence, but it has certainly brought philosophical and ethical slavery. Thus we have lost our golden eagle character bestowed by Manu.

At the time of partition, Sri Sampurnananda wrote an article. He raised the question that India was always divided into many states, why are people so disturbed if we have two states of India and Pakistan? He himself answered that it was not a question of two states that was disturbing. It was a fundamental question because for the first time Pakistan had decided to look for a different cultural identity. The Indian ethos of harmony was being renounced and semitic ethos of superiority was being made the foundation of the new nation. Until 1947, many foreign invaders came to India. But soon they renounced the culture of conflict and accepted the culture of harmony. All the Muslim rulers followed this pattern. Akbar was its shining example. But this time a new chapter was being added, where the harmonious Indians were renouncing this harmony on the alter of conflicting superiority. At the time of partition the residual India decided to follow the path of harmony. But it lost its way, because the persons who headed this state became attracted to the western model in which haves and have-nots, majority and minority, different communities are always in conflict and the state must protect one group or the other. Thus the state became the proverbial monkey to distribute the loaf of the two cats. Since politicians control the state apparatus, harmony ceased to be cultural living. It became instead a political weapon. Unfortunately, the fear of losing economic gains made some of our best national leaders accept English as the link language of India. English books were easily available. Thus the post-independence generation was fed on the literature of conflict. The whole of North America is built on the debris of the American Indian nation. And this culture of conflict, of competition, of conquest, of exploita-


tion was presented to the new generation as the ideal to be followed, for they were the developed nations. National languages of India were neglected as being underdeveloped. Sanskrit was all but dropped in the dustbin. And this present generation of Hindu youth is the result of these policies. Since India renounced harmony, communal conflicts are bound to increase in the times to come. But to those of us who are conscious of the great heritage of Vedânta, it is a painful experience. This series of lectures is dedicated to bring into focus the contribution that the deeper understanding of Vedânta is able to contribute. It is our deep conviction that only the understanding of different religions in the light provided by the great masters like Yajñavâlkya, Vâsiṣṭha, Vyasa, Narada, Gaudapâda, Saṅkara, Sureswara, Vidyâranya, Madhusudan, and Appayya can bring harmony in all the communities of India, rather than neglect of religion as has been practised by the Republic of India. We have mainly based this series on the teachings of Gaudapâda as recorded in the Vaitathya chapter of Karikas based on Mândukya Upanisad.

Bharatiya Sanskriti Samaj should be congratulated for its courage to hold these lectures in the charged atmosphere of communalism in the wake of V.P. Singh’s mandalisation of the Indian community and redundant Ayodhya controversy. May Gaudapâda bless its workers with inner harmony.
LECTURE ONE

We had earlier discussed the ultimate aim or goal which is unitary consciousness. We had also discussed the means to attain it that is mental culture. We will now discuss how it benefits the social surroundings in which an aspirant lives, breathes and sustains. Before we begin, let me wish you a happy new year because it is new year according to the Hindu calendar. According to the Hindu tradition the universe started on this particular day, that is, the month of *Caitra*, the bright fortnight and the first day of that bright fortnight. In a sense, even this concept of the new year has a message of harmony for us.

As we know, there are two types of calendars, the lunar calendar and the solar calendar. The Muslim calendar follows the lunar cycle, that is, the position of the moon. The Christians follow the solar calendar, that is, they follow a month in which the sun moves from one zodiac sign to another. But both these calendars have certain incongruities. On the basis of the lunar calendar, Id, Ramzan and other festivals with sometimes be in winter, sometimes in summer and sometimes during the monsoon. In short, there is absolutely no harmony of seasons with the lunar calendar. The incongruity in the solar calendar is that though it follows a month, the term month actually means that which is connected with the moon. It is an Indo-European word. In Sanskrit there is a word *chandramā*. *Chandra* means that which gives joy. For instance, a person named Satyabhāmā could also be called Bhāmā or Satyā. Similarly, we may use the term *mā* when we are talking about *chandramā*. The Indo-European root *mā* means that which measures out. From *mā* we have both the
moon and the month. But the solar calendar has absolutely no relationship with the situation of the moon. The first day of a month may fall on a full moon day, the following year it may fall on a new moon day. Even though the solar calendar has no relationship with the position of the moon, yet it is divided into months. On the other hand the lunar calendar has no certainty about the season in which a month will fall.

In contrast to the Muslim and Christian calendars, there is harmony in the Hindu calendar. All Hindu festivals, all important events, not only fall in the same season but also correspond to the position of the moon. This is what we mean by harmony. This is the viewpoint of Vedanta, which synchronises all the diverse viewpoints into one whole. It does not merely put together certain parts. It is more than the sum of the different parts. The names of the months in the Hindu calendar are not arbitrary, as in the case of other calendars. The names of months are linked with the stars and the higher ideal. For instance, the month of Caitra means that full moon will fall on the day of the Citra star. Or, the month of Vasakha, when full moon will be on the Visakha nakṣatra. The Hindu calendar can be determined from the position of the stars, the sun, and the moon. Harmony in the Hindu calendar stems from the fact that it is imbedded in nature. All superimpositions are arbitrary, but that harmony is in nature. Vedanta insists that all truth must be derived either from the internal nature of the human being or from the external nature, it cannot be superimposed. As already mentioned even the names of months are not determined arbitrarily but depend on the point where a particular star and the position of the moon coincide. Astronomy will take us thus far, but Vedanta leads us to a greater harmony. Even the names of months convey definite spiritual development.

The first month is Caitra. The word citra means a painting. In Sanskrit it means variegated, or different hues, different shades. In Hindi too, there is a word citra vichitra which means variegated. Hence, the universe is a variegated picture. In one of the Vedantic texts, Pancadasī, there is a chapter entitled Citra-dīpa-prakarana which deals with the world picture. The whole universe is a picture. Before a picture is drawn there is merely a piece of cloth or paper. We can draw anything on it. Similarly, before the universe was created the Upanisad says: ‘There was only unitary consciousness and nothing else’. There was nothing which differentiated it in any way. The Rgveda says: There was neither a cause nor an effect. The conception of cause presupposes an existing effect. If there is no effect, we cannot talk about a cause. Na-asadāsī — no cause existed. There was neither which could be called the effect. In that state a picture came into being, what we may grossly call the mind of that Supreme Consciousness. The mind of the Supreme Consciousness is known as his power, his śakti. The idea of a painting came into his mind: I am one, alone, unitary. May I manifest myself with the help of my power in the infinitely variegated universe. Thus, the beginning of creation is when God wills to express the infinite power imbedded in Him. Once God decided to create the universe, the second month was called Vasakha.

Sākha means branch, many types of branches. Once God manifested Himself in many ways, the creation of the five elements took place because the whole universe is made up of five elements. I had pointed out earlier that when we talk about elements we are talking about psychological elements. Human beings are endowed with five senses, when we psychologically divide the world we find that there are only five ways of cognition — seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting or smelling. Hence there are only five elements which we can receive from the external universe. The whole universe is divided into these five elements. These five elements are combined together in various ways out of which the whole universe comes into being, including the apparatus mind, the cognitive senses, the ādīn vital, the life force and all that can be acted upon, and the organs of action. This is branching off. Once this apparatus was created, we enter the month of Jyeṣṭha.
Jyestha means the eldest, that is, abam or the jiva, the soul principle. Once the apparatus was created, consciousness identified itself with it and the individual soul came into being. It is the eldest living entity, because organs and other things created before that were not living entities. They did not have a separate identity of their own. 'I am' is the basic thing. Once we identify ourselves as an individual consciousness then only we become actors, we become cognizers. The whole cycle of the universe starts once the soul comes into being, that is why it is called the eldest, Jyestha. Once the abam, the soul principle came into being then we enter Āśādha.

In Sanskrit, the word Āśādha denotes that which punishes, that which is held in the hand as a symbol of punishment. The king holds it because he can punish anyone who does a wrong act. A sannyāsin also holds a danda because he will punish any of his sense organs or his mind if they misbehave. Similarly, God also holds a danda, which will be active only when we have identified ourselves with the body-mind complex. When we enter Āśādha, we suffer the miseries of the universe. For example, if we heat a piece of copper or a piece of iron to melting point, there is no suffering. But we feel the heat even if the temperature is 35°C because we are living entities. We feel the pain and just as we feel pain we feel pleasure also. No matter how much sugar we add in the rasagullā, the rasagullā does not experience the joy of that sweetness. It is the living soul, the individual who feels pleasure and pain. Because the individual feels, he can also learn. He learns to move towards whatever is pleasurable and to avoid whatever is painful. When we enter Āśādha, we learn what is pleasure and what is pain. The word Āśādha in Hindi has been distorted as akhādā. The mūrdhanya sa in Hindi is changed into kha to the extent that even a Vedic mantra like purusa evadam sarvam will be pronounced by people in certain areas as Purukha evadam sarvam. Sa becomes kha, so Āśādha becomes akhādā. In an akhādā a person is trained, is put through schooling. Even in Greece, schools were earlier known as Gymnasiums, where training was imparted. Once we have learnt what pleasure and pain are, we want to avoid pain. How do we avoid pain? How do we know what will keep us away from pain? From Āśādha we enter Śrāvana.

Śrāvana is listening to the knowledge derived by tradition. Man learns what is right and what is wrong. We learn what ought to be done and what ought to be avoided, we learn about sin and virtue. Unless we have experienced Āśādha, the danda, the pain, we do not have the desire to know about what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. That is why only after Āśādha we can enter the month of Śrāvana. Then we become interested in knowing, in listening, in finding out the experiences of the wise. Once we have heard and understood this, we want to follow it and so we enter Bhāadrāpada.

Pada means feet, bhadra means good. So Bhāadrāpada means feet on the good path. When we start following it, slowly our mind begins to discriminate. After Bhāadrāpada comes the month of Āsvina.

Āsvinaḥ aśvatā or aśvatā anayoh stab sadāsvārūḍhavatvāḥ. Because the Āsvinis are always associated with a horse, or are always riding on the horse, they are called Āsvinis. Discrimination is called the horse. Ācārya Śaṅkara says: One who rides on the horse of discrimination can never be vanquished. Even in the Upanisads there are two types of horses, one which takes us to the highest goal, and the other which takes us to the lowest nadir. Only after having practiced discipline in his life, can a person develop this discrimination and ride on the horse of discrimination. No matter how hard we try to teach a person viveka, i.e., discrimination, it will not change his life pattern, if he has not followed Bhāadrāpada. The ability to discriminate develops — Sadāsvārūḍhavatvāḥ — only when we are discriminating all the time. There are times when everyone discriminates. For instance, when one goes to the cremation ground, at that moment even the most worldly person starts thinking that this is the way of the world, everyone has to come here one
day leaving everything behind. This discrimination lasts for an hour or a half. As soon as we go to office, we forget all about it and are once again caught in the mire of the world. The month of Āśvina is Sadāsvāriṇḍhavatī, when we are continuously practising discrimination between right and wrong, between truth and untruth, between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. A person who continuously discriminates all the time enters the month of Āśvina. This is followed by the month of Kārtika.

Kārtika derives from kṛtyate kṛtih that which cuts away, kṛtyate is that which cuts. In Hindi, there is a word kārtikā which means to cut. So when we enter the month of Kārtika, we are able to sever all attachment and develop dispassion. Once we realise, we discriminate and we know what is right, what is true, what ought to be done, we cut off all that which ought not to be done, all that which is false and we enter the month of Kārtika. This is followed by the month of Mārgaśīrṣa.

Mārga means the way. The Vedas have described in detail the ways which tell us what ought to be done and what is real. In other words, they show us the way, that is the mārga. The last portion of the Vedas are called sīrṣa, the top. Aīhavāśīrṣa or the last portion of Aīhavā Veda. For this reason the very last chapter of the Aīhavā Veda is called the Aīhavāśīrṣopanisad. There is also a historical reason which explains why the word sīrṣa is used in this sense. Earlier, books were put in such a way that the last page was always on the top, hence it was called sīrṣa. Sīrṣa also means head or the final thing which tells us about the Supreme Godhead. This is Vedānta. We are able to enter Mārgaśīrṣa, that is, Vedānta or the final portion of the Vedas, the supreme path of realisation, only after we have developed dispassion. As long as we remain attached to material things, as long as we are not able to discriminate and be dispassionate, Vedānta will not appeal to us, it will not become a part of our life, because we perceive everything in terms of pound, shilling and pence. It must be remembered that Vedānta does not tell us how to earn money. These last passages of the Vedas tell us about the final truth. Once we have heard the truth, we enter the month of Pauṣa.

Pus means to nourish, to strengthen. What we have heard about the final ideal must be strengthened, must be nourished by removing doubts, by analysing, by understanding or what is called manana, meditative analysis. We try to find the reasons why this final ideal is the only correct view. For example, when we cultivate wheat we do not let it grow wild, we also take out the weeds from the field. If we allow the weeds to grow, the crops will be destroyed. Similarly, when the mind grasps the knowledge of the Supreme Reality, weeds of doubt arise and unless those doubts are removed, that knowledge will not become a thing of realisation as far as we are concerned. That is why so much importance is given to manana, doubts have to be removed. When we have heard the final truth, that is, śravana, when we have cleared all the doubts and have strengthened it by manana, then we enter the month of Māgha.

Māgha means joy, happiness. Indra is called Maghavan Maghavā. It is only then that we are able to attain bliss or happiness which is found not in the objective world but in our inner chamber, in our innermost being. We get absorbed in it, which is technically called nididhyāsana. Our mind is continuously absorbed in the joy of being absolutely merged into God-consciousness. When we are absorbed into the Supreme Self who is Śiva then automatically it leads us to Phālguna.

Pahālgu means that which is useless, which has no meaning. Phalati iti pahālgu: So once we are absorbed and set in the nididhyāsana, in the joy of the Supreme Consciousness, that realisation is liberation. The whole universe loses its sting, we are no longer affected by misery or joy because they have become meaningless, useless. Let us consider an example to understand this better. When a small child fights with his friends for cheap glass marbles, we can only laugh because we find that those marbles have no meaning, no
purpose. This is not only seen among children. I have seen adults playing cards for the sake of joy, and getting so worked up about the game that they start tearing off the playing cards and start fighting, because they attach value to it. They are still children even though they are old enough to pass off as adults. Just as a person who knows that playing cards are for playing, marbles are for playing, and are of no permanent use, a person who has attained this state knows that the greatest gains of the world, the greatest losses of the world, the greatest misery, the greatest pain, the greatest joy, are all merely for playing. God began this universe as a painting, we play our game well but without getting involved in it. This is the twelfth month, the whole cycle is complete.

This is what we mean by harmony. Though we are talking about months, about the year, about astronomy, the position of the stars, the position of the zodiac, yet through the very names of the months we are able to reveal to a person the whole path of spiritual discipline. So harmony is not a mere combination of different parts. Many people think that harmony will come into being by taking certain aspects from different religions or sects. This is exactly what Akbar had tried in his Din-i-Ilahi. He tried to combine, what he considered, the best aspects of the different religions. His Commander-in-Chief Maharaja Mansingh of Jaipur was a Hindu. Akbar asked him what he thought of his Din-i-Ilahi. Maharaja Mansingh was a very shrewd politician, he said, 'I am a Hindu and I have great respect for Islam. But prophets are born and not made. Religions are not started by kings. You are a king, you are meant to rule, not to preach about religion. So do not think that I am going to follow your Din-i-Ilahi.' As long as Akbar was on the throne there were many sycophants who told him how great Din-i-Ilahi was. But after his death nothing was left of this religion. Similarly, even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there have been attempts to develop religious merely by taking what was considered the best aspects of certain existing religions.

Religion, it must be remembered, cannot be developed like this, harmony cannot be fostered in this way. Harmony is more than a mere combination of parts, it is framing a pleasing orderly whole. All parts must fit in an orderly manner and they must be pleasing. They must be pleasing not to the eyes, but to the Divine Being, to nature which is the manifestation of the Divine Being in the universe. This implies that there must be consensus on feelings, actions and ideas. Most of the time we talk about harmony without ever defining it. The word harmony comes from the Greek word harmonia which is from the root harmon, which means fitting. Things must fit together. We see this even in music. There is harmony in music when different notes are produced in a pleasing and orderly way.

When we talk about harmony, including communal harmony, most of the time there is an attempt to merely talk about unity in diversity. Most people in India talk about unity in diversity which they believe India is. The moment they are asked to describe their conception of unity, to paint a picture of that unity, more often than not they draw a blank. There is no answer. Some of them may say that unity is manifest and anybody can see it. I often tell such people that if they can see that unity then let them describe that unity which they are able to see. As far as diversity is concerned, it is observed *prima facie*, as soon as we see different things, all their differences are perceived by our senses. We must be able to articulate the unity and not merely name it. Diversity we can all see but we have to be trained to perceive unity. Each house is different from the other, this is a fact that even a dog, a cow can observe and do observe. For example, if a person sells his cow to another person, for a number of days the cow keeps returning to the old house, because it recognises that particular house. Similarly, when we see different individuals we can see the variety very clearly, *prima facie*, every individual is different. But if we want to see the underlying unity in all these individuals, we have to be trained and we must understand what we mean by unity. For this reason the followers of Gautama, the great Naiyyaika, believed that recognition of unity requires training of the mind. They talk about *jati* or that common element which is present in all individ-
ual entities. For example, in all the pots or ghataṣ the ghataṭva jāti or potness will be present. We have to learn what we mean by potness and this training will enable us to use the word potness in completely different situations.

There was once a Mahatma from Bihar, whenever he used to go to the market to buy vegetables, he would say that he was taking a pot or bartan with him. After hearing this a couple of times, I asked him, 'Why do you take a pot and not a bag?' He explained that that exactly is what he carried with him. I told him that what he took along with him was a bag, a cotton bag. But he insisted that it was the same thing, a pot made from cotton. As far as he was concerned all things which contained something were pots. There may be other people who will not even consider a tumbler as a pot. They may think that only big vessels are pots. So the concept of potness has to be understood, we have to be trained to perceive it, and that is why the Naiyāyikas says that jāti is naturally present in an entity from the moment that it has been created. It must be pointed out here that though it can be perceived only through training, yet it existed earlier. But a thing may have several jātis or categories. We have to be clear about which particular category in a particular context we are talking about. In the beginning we feel that category or jāti is that which is imposed by the intellectual faculty or emotive faculty. In fact, most of the modern philosophers try to assert that jāti is superimposed by the intellectual or emotive faculty. But the great Gautama has pointed out that if it did not exist earlier and was superimposed, it would not be a reality. If it is not a reality in that particular context, how are we going to talk about the consciousness present everywhere? Is it that the differences are real? Is it that individuals are really different and we superimpose an unreal unity on them. If it were so, then unity would be an illusion, a false apprehension, and it would not lead to the final realisation because it is not true. Whereas if unity is true and diversity is only a manifestation of that unity, then by observing unity we are not superimposing it on the particular thing. If we say that we have unity in diversity in India, we have to be clear:
Lecture Two

We had started discussing Vedanta and communal harmony. We were discussing the year as representative of harmony because the Upanisads have given the Samvatsara, that is, the year, as representing the Supreme Being. The year represents a dynamic harmony and not merely a static harmony. The year is one unit and yet it has all the possible contradictions that can exist in the time factor. In the year, day and night both exist simultaneously and are more or less equal in duration. There are as many days as nights in a year. Even if we think in terms of hours it is true that nights are longer in winters, but it is equally true that days are longer in summers. The total duration of day and night even in terms of hours is more or less same and is harmonised in the year. Then we have the contradiction of the bright fortnight and the dark fortnight. Both are harmonised, though they are contradictory. Seasons, summer and winter, are harmonised in the year. All the different seasons are seen in the year as a harmonious whole. The sun moves towards the south, and it moves towards the north. At least it appears to be — Uttarayana and Dakshinayana. There is perfect harmony as half the number of days fall in Uttarayana and the other half in Dakshinayana. All these contradictions exist simultaneously: in the year without any one of them disturbing the harmony, this is the reason the year is called Samvatsara. In Sanskrit vasti is that in which everything exists, lives in it in a harmonious way. It is true that there is harmony even in a painting. Or, a dish may taste salt and sweet at the same time. These two contradictory sensations exist in harmony giving a special taste. However, the harmony we see in a painting or in a dish is static harmony.

When we are dealing with society, that is, communal harmony, we are not talking in terms of a static harmony, we are dealing with dynamic harmony. In a harmonic motion the restoring force has to be proportionate to the displacement force. The harmonic motion is a vibration around a straight line. If the force present in the straight line is not proportionate to the displacement force, it will no longer be a harmonic motion. In the year we see this peculiar harmonic motion because summer and winter and all the different contradictions are resolved by the restoring force. One of the best illustrations of communal harmony is the example of the year. As mentioned earlier even the Upanisads have emphasised Samvatsara as a manifestation of the universal consciousness. When we are dealing with harmony we must remember that in any harmonic presentation there are various notes. Whenever several musicians are practising together again and again we have to tell them to come back to the original note. If all the musicians sing on different notes, there will be no harmony. Again and again, the restoring force has to be introduced; only then can we have a harmonious presentation. The same is true of any society, any social organisation, which represents dynamic harmony. There will be displacements in any society but the restoring force along the straight line must be proportionate to the displacement force so that harmony is restored. This straight line, to use a mathematical illustration, is what we will mean by unity. The force of displacement is diversity. When we see, for example, ripples in a pool of water, the ripples move up and down. We can see the upward and the downward motion of the water, but we are not able to see that straight line around which this displacement occurs. Similarly, a person who is not trained can see the displacements in society, in the social units, without being conscious of the underlying unity. Because of this it is essential that we should be able to define that unity. Earlier I had pointed out that many of us talk about unity without defining it. The important point in harmonic motion is to trace and find out what the straight line is, what the unity is. When we define something,
what is it that we do? We make it finite, we assert what the unity is. In the social context, we have to define what we mean by unity. What is not imbedded in unity, in that the displacement can take place. But if the restoring force is proportionate to the displacement force then harmony will be the result.

Now we will discuss communal harmony. Having somewhat explored what we mean by harmony, dynamic harmony, harmonic motion, let us see what we mean by communal harmony.

First of all, I must point out here that the word communal is used in a very peculiar sense in India. Basically, communal means that which belongs to a commune. Or, in other words, belongs to a community which is more or less self-sufficient, which more or less enjoys virtual autonomy. The words communism and communalism have the same root and are more or less similar in their meaning. The word common comes from the same source comm and mei, that is, to exchange. Social groups were called communes when they exchanged whatever they had between themselves making it a complete unit. Unfortunately in India, the word is used to denote religion. Thus, when we talk about communal flare up we do not mean two communes fighting among themselves, for example, Hindus fighting with Muslims. Therefore, communal harmony will be used by us in this particular context in which it is used in India, that is, religious harmony. The question remains: Why is this peculiar usage only in the Indian context? If we check the word communal in any English dictionary we will find that it is not used in this peculiar sense. There is a historical reason for this. Christians do not regard heathens as having a religion. Either a person has a religion, that is, he is a Christian or he is a heathen. It is a simple division. So when Christians came to India they found Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and several other groups living here whom they referred to as different communities, that is, different groups of people living together as a smaller social unit. They could not think of them as communes with similar feelings, interests and beliefs. Instead of calling them different religious groups, they labelled them different communal groups, for instance, Hindus belonged to Hindu community. They found that economically, politically and socially, Hindus and Muslims did not form different communities. They interacted economically, politically and socially. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and other groups had common interests, common feelings and common beliefs which they shared among themselves and hence the Christians called them communities. Any conflict between these different communities was labelled a communal conflict. Since the British used the term communal conflict we followed suit and adopted the term to describe any conflict between communities. This is more or less similar to the way we adopted the verb 'vernacular'. Vernacular means a speech which is not a language but what the home born slaves talk amongst themselves. Hence, Hindi, Telugu, Bengali were not languages because they were not literary as far as the British were concerned. There was no literary tradition, that is what the British thought or presumed. Therefore these languages were called vernacular. English and Russian were languages but Hindi and Tamil were not. We adopted the term vernacular and there were any number of Anglo-vernacular schools. Though we were proud of our literature yet we accepted the word vernacular, in the same way we accepted the word communal.

Unfortunately, the word makes a person think. Once we start using a word in the wrong sense, eventually the real meaning is lost sight of. So once we adopted the word communal, we forgot the real underlying meaning. We forgot that we are using it only as a pseudonym for religion. When we talked of communal harmony, no attempt was made to bring harmony in different religions. Whenever there was a communal flare up, we perceived it as a local phenomenon, merely some people fighting for personal reasons or individual problems. Individual problems may even be the problems of the locality, but we never tried to think that there is
some disharmony in the notes of our religions which needs to be rectified. Therefore, we were not dealing with religion but we were dealing with just religious communities. We forgot that the particular community is held together by the particular religion and unless we are able to solve the problem of the religion, the problem of the community will not be solved. So we left religion untouched. We did not try to analyse the basic reasons of the conflict and that is the main reason that we have not been able to solve the communal problem. We started with a wrong assumption. We felt that the British being foreigners were the cause of communal flare up. Even today we blame others for our problems. We will blame Pakistan, we will blame American interests, because we do not want to solve the problem. We do not want to face the problem. The problem is that there is certain religious disharmony and unless the restoring force is made potent enough we will not be able to bring harmony. There will only be a superficial peace for a certain period of time. Whenever the incidence of communal conflicts becomes less we think that the communal problem has been solved. We are not able to see that there is definitely something in the minds of the people and unless we can uproot it from there, permanent harmony will never come into being.

Vedānta is derived from the word vid, which is akin to the Latin word videre, meaning to see. Veda is that which we see, that which we can experience ourselves. The English word wise is derived from the same root. So Veda means wisdom. In the particular context it means the final wisdom or the final vision. It is this final vision of unity which alone can restore harmony. So when we talk about Vedānta and communal harmony, what we are trying to find out is that cohesive force, that restorative force, that particular line which can neutralise all these disturbances. These disturbances cannot be stopped because in any society there will always be motion or movement. But the forces of displacement can be neutralised by the force of restoration. This is the final vision of unity which we propose to discuss in detail. After experiencing this final vision nothing remains to be seen.

The Chāndogya Upanisad in the Sāmaveda tells us about the life of Uddālakārṇu who had a son named Śvetaketu. Uddālakārṇu himself was a great sage but he found that he was not able to train his own child for the simple reason that the mother loved the child very much. No true education can be imparted unless a person goes through the disciplinary method. That is why the Indian tradition says: sukṣmaṁ kuto vidyā, a person who is after enjoyment can never acquire any knowledge. This is particularly true today. People send their children to institutions where they have to spend thousands of rupees a month on their education. If that is the standard of living of a child, how can we expect him to learn anything. He may learn what is written in books but he may not be able to learn what life is. Holding a degree means nothing. Because once we enter life, only if we are able to face problems then only we are educated: taj jñānam praśamakāram yadindriyānām. Knowledge is that which calms down our senses. No matter how many doctoral degrees we have, if our senses have not been calmed down, we are not educated. Uddālakārṇu found that the moment he started disciplining his son, the mother interfered. Gradually Śvetaketu became twelve years old. Uddālakārṇu was highly disturbed. One day he called Śvetaketu and told him that there had been no brāhmaṇa-bandhu in their family. Brāhmaṇa-bandhu means a person who is not a brahmin but he is called a brahmin because some relative of his is a brahmin. Acārya Śāṅkara says, brāhmaṇānāma-pasadāh: The one who is so low that he brings a bad name to the brahmin community because he is not a brahmin himself. He is merely a brahmin because some of his relatives are brahmans. So Uddālakārṇu told his son that in their family there had been no brāhmaṇa-bandhu, and everyone was a brahmin in his own right. He wanted to send Śvetaketu to a proper gurukūla to receive education. Though the mother did not agree initially but somehow she was convinced and Śvetaketu was sent to the gurukūla. Being the son of Uddālakārṇu, that particular gurukūla treated him quite well. He learnt all the sciences, all the arts, but was not yet disciplined. The teacher at the gurukūla could not be harsh with
him. Over the course of time his education was completed. The teacher decided that he had learnt whatever there was to learn and the rest could be learnt from his own father. So he told Svētakētu that his education was over and he could go home.

Svētakētu became very proud of himself and thought: 'My father could not be a great scholar, otherwise he would not have sent me here to get educated. And the teacher has himself told me that I am completely educated. I did not ask for Samāvartana. I did not say that I want to go home. So I am a perfectly educated person whereas my father is not.' He came back home but he did not make proper obeisance to his father because he was proud of his knowledge. Uddālakāṛuṇi observed this and said, 'Welcome home. Did you learn the particular knowledge by knowing which everything else becomes known? What you have heard you have heard but what you have not heard also becomes heard. What you have tasted you have tasted but what you have not tasted also becomes tasted. Have you learnt that by knowing which everything else is known? By experiencing which everything else becomes experienced.' Svētakētu had not attained that realisation of unitary consciousness through education. He told his father, 'I have not learnt that, why do you not teach it to me.' Uddālakāṛuṇi loved his son and found that being humbled he was ready to receive that knowledge. So he gave him the knowledge by knowing which everything becomes known. Once we acquire that knowledge, the divine knowledge, we are able to see that unity, and diversity will never confound us. We have to know that unity, we have to see it.

In any society as long as there are seers who can see the underlying unity, they are able to bring back the restoring force in a society. But if we are not able to see the unity which is present then society cannot be brought back to the straight line to which it must return after all displacements. This harmony is not merely a social phenomenon. This unity has a practical value in life. A family is a community. In a family there are certain unitary conceptions. If we are able to perceive that unity then there will be no generation gap. Displacements are bound to be present but the restoring force will neutralise them. If that restoring force is not present, if that unity is not perceived, is not realised, the fissiparous tendencies in the family will break down the structure of the family. Why is it that only fifty years ago we had large joint families, three or four or even five generations living together peacefully? Why is it that today even brothers are not able to live together under the same roof? The reason is that the unity is not being perceived, the unity is not being experienced. Because of the fissiparous tendencies, dissipating tendencies, the displacement force is much stronger than the restoring force. Why is it that more people are becoming schizophrenic today? A few days ago, a person in charge of a nursing home told me that the maximum number of patients in his clinic sought the services of a psychiatrist. We did not have this problem earlier. The increasing incidence of psychiatric disorders is due to the fact that the cushion of the family, the cushion of religion is not present. Earlier, the family was held together by that experience of unity. There was unity in all its diversity. In life there will always be dissipating tendencies, there will always be displacement, but if we know our individual unitary consciousness, we will be able to come back to it. The restorative force will be equal to the displacement. But we find today that this restorative force is no longer strong enough to bring back an individual to that straight line. Slowly the displacements go on increasing. The topic that we are discussing is not merely on a national level it is also on a very practical level because as I said earlier, a family is a community. Even an individual is a community of different emotions. Earlier, we had discussed how to bring about integration at the individual level. The importance was attached to the integration of the individual leading to the integration of society.

This is neither a theoretical problem nor is it a rhetorical problem, it is a practical problem. We have to discover that
unity which can bring harmony not merely in two or three religions but in the entire variety of the universe. When we talk about communal harmony, we must remember that we are not confining ourselves only to the Indian context though it is true that we will emphasise it. The important point is to bring harmony in the whole universe, because everything in the universe always has something anti to it, to the extent that modern physics tells us that there is an anti-matter. Just as there are material particles, there is a reflection of it somewhere which contains identical anti-matter. But there are definite reasons for physicists’ belief that when matter and anti-matter come together both are annihilated. So in the social context, in the whole universe, there is always a positive entity and a negative entity. If we are able to see the unity then both positive and negative are harmonised. I had earlier referred to the ripples in a pool of water. A ripple, we have noticed, goes as high as it goes low. It is not merely an upward movement, there is both an upward and a downward movement. The upward movement is almost equal to the downward movement. In the whole universe the motion of displacement either here or somewhere else is of equal positive and negative value. If we are able to harmonise it then we are able to bring harmony in the entire variety of this universe. A person who does not see this harmony, this unity, will always think in terms of those things being contrary to each other. That is why we had discussed the year. Should we have only summers, should we have only nights? Should we have only the bright fortnight or should we have only the dark fortnight? The unity of the year tells us that both are equally important. Similarly, insult and honour, virtue and sin are necessary for the development of life. All contradictions have to be harmonised. A person who can see this unity can bring real communal harmony. Vedānta is the most ancient religion of the world. Historically no other religious text available is older than the Veda. And Vedānta is that which is contained in the Veda. So this is the oldest known, existing or living religion. But in ancient times, it was not presented in a philosophical way. The dialectics was not used, only the unity, the restorative force was enunciated, laid down. But they did not discuss philosophically, metaphysically, logically how these forces interact with each other.

The earliest attempt was made by the great Rsis Yajñavalkya and Vasistha. But even in their case importance was attached to the experiential aspect of this unitary force and, therefore, they described the raw experience giving the information without trying to logically build its theory. Reason to them was secondary to revelation. They revealed the truth. Revelation alone was important. They wanted people to understand what reality is, not why, but what. That was enough as long as the human mind was in its state of innocence. An innocent child needs no argument. An innocent child is told by his mother that this is a pot and he accepts it as a pot. He is told that she is your sister, he accepts her as his sister. It is enough to tell him what it is. Now, if a five year old child is told 'she is your sister', his immediate problem is: how is she my sister? So we have to explain as she is his mother's sister's child, this particular relationship makes him her brother. It is only after this much reasoning that a five year old child is able to accept some information given to him. When he was just six months old, he did not have any problems. Similarly as long as there is innocence, it is enough to say what is unity instead of describing how or why of it. Like the child growing up, society also develops.

Buddha was one of the greatest masters of logic. He questioned everything that was enunciated in its raw form. He rejected most of it. The followers of tradition had to reformulate, had to give it out not merely as a raw experience but in the language of dialectics, in the language of logic. It was imperative to prevent the Vedas from going into oblivion. There was an attempt to present them in the language of logic, metaphysics, which could be comprehended by people who had lost their innocence. The earliest work that is available to us of that period is Açārya Gaudapāda's Karikā on the Māndukya Upanisad. Our discussions will be based
on that text, particularly the portions in the Vaitātya- 
prakārana which deal with this harmony, harmony of this 
higher integral approach. Harmony is not putting different 
elements together, but putting them together in such a way 
that they fit so well that it becomes a whole. If we remove 
any part of it, it loses its wholeness. It is this unity, this 
higher integral approach that we are going to talk about. The key 
verse asserts that all superimpositions play their game of 
hide and seek on the non-dual Śiva. He asserts that the unity 
is always present. It is the pāramārtika satya, that is, the 
supremely real. And all the diversity, all the variety is only 
superimposed on it.

Let us consider an illustration. A man is sitting. Another 
man comes and sits down near him. How many men are 
sitting there? The answer is two men are sitting. If the ques-
tion was asked earlier, the answer would have been that one 
man is sitting. If we are asked, is one person sitting there? 
The answer is no, two people are sitting there. But in reality, 
have they lost their unitary aspect? In spite of the fact that 
they have become two they are one at the same time. There 
may be any number of people, the one is always present in 
all of them, other things are relative. We say two persons 
relative to each other, or three persons relative to each other. 
This relation may change. Five people are sitting, one is a 
Brahmin, another is a Ksatriya, the third is a Vaiṣya, one is a 
Muslim, and the fifth is a Christian. If we are asked, are five 
Brahmins sitting there, the answer is no. One is a Brahmin 
sitting there and the other four are non-Brahmins. Or, if we 
are asked, are five Muslims sitting there, the answer will be 
no, there is only one Muslim, the other four are non-
Muslims. So the word five is in relation to something. But 
when we say one person is sitting there and if we are asked, 
is one Brahmin sitting there, we will either say one Brahmin 
is sitting there or a Brahmin is not sitting there. All other 
numbers are relative. One is not relative to anything, it is in 
its own right. Gaudapāda points out that the non-dual Śiva is 
the pāramārtika satya, the really real.14 All the dualities, all 
the varieties that come out of it, are relative to it and once the 

relation is changed, it subsides but one continuously 
remains: teśāmūbhaya tādāvāt. Others are only think-
ing of relations. They are never thinking of that unity. There-
fore Vedānta has no fight, no difference of opinion with 
them. Because we are not talking about the higher portion 
of the wave or the lower portion of the wave. We are talking 
about that straight line which is not seen by ordinary people 
but it is that straight line which is keeping the upper crest 
and the lower trough in its place. Similarly, ordinary people 
are unconscious of this unity. They only see the variety. So a 
person who talks about varieties, crests and troughs, is not 
disputed by the person who sees the straight line. Because 
the variety, as I pointed out previously, is present prima 
facie. We do not have to think about the differences. As soon 
as we observe a thing, differences are there. Training is 
needed to find out the straight line, to see the non-dual base 
out of which all these relations have come into being. The 
game of actor, acting and directing lasts. God is the director, 
the individual soul, the jiva, is the actor and the whole 
universe is the place where the play is being staged. As long 
as this actor lasts, the director will also last. As long as the 
director lasts, acting will also last. So as long as this triad 
of actor, acting and directing lasts, we have to consciously bring 
back the whole motion towards the restorative force. Once 
the play is over, there are no three things. Then we do not 
have to move toward the restorative force because there are 
no crests and troughs. If the pool of water is absolutely still, 
we do not have to think of the unitary force, the straight line 
along which the motion takes place. We will discuss this in 
detail. But we may point out that when we are in deep sleep, 
there is absolutely no disharmony. There is no disharmony 
as an individual in us. We are no more schizophrenic. There 
is no disharmony of the family when we are in deep sleep, 
there is no social disharmony, there is no communal dishar-
mony because this actor, director and acting is not present 
there. Now if we can achieve that state then the restorative 
force will not be necessary. But until such time it will be 
necessary. How this drama goes on we will discuss further.
LECTURE THREE

We started by defining what we mean by the terms harmony and communal harmony. We found that communities are living entities. Even a religious community is not a dead entity. They are living entities and every living being is always in a state of continuous flux. So when we talk of communal harmony, that harmony cannot be a static harmony. It has to be a dynamic harmony. It is somewhat akin to harmonic motion. There is a restorative force. There are crests and troughs but the restorative force brings it back to the straight line and this force is absolutely different from the changes that are taking place, that is, the crests and troughs. All the changes take place in the drama which involves an actor, a director as well as acting. That restorative force is beyond the actor, the director, and acting. The harmony that we are talking about here is not the substitution of one crest by another crest or by a trough. People who do not understand the phenomenon of social change try to bring about this type of harmony, or what is known as conversion. For example, we convert a person to our viewpoint. This means that we are involved in the process of actor, acting and directing and we try to bring others to our point of view. It must be pointed out here that we are not talking about harmony which can be brought about through conversion, by changing society to a particular mode. We are talking of crests and troughs being present, but there is a restoring force which keeps them towards the straight line. This is the reason why when we discuss Vedānta and communal harmony, we are not thinking of what might be considered a non-communal approach in the sense that we do not have a viewpoint. When

most people talk about communal harmony they think of airtight compartments. Their approach is that you are right in your community, and I am right in my own community without interacting with each other. I do not interfere with you and you do not interfere with me. If there is no interference, no interchange between the two communities, then there is no question of harmony. Different communities will continue to exist as separate entities.

The Vedas proclaim: As long as another community exists, it is bound to create fear in the mind of some other community members. This is what we are witnessing today. The majority community feels that it is being discriminated against and the minority community feels equally discriminated. The reason is that we have tried to keep the different communities apart. We have not tried to establish real harmony between them. So when we talk about this harmony, we talk about that which transcends the triad of actor, acting and directing. That which transcends it alone can keep it along the straight line in spite of the crests and troughs, in spite of all the diversities. It is neither non-interference, nor is it conversion. We try to understand each other, and bridge all the differences that are between us. It is through this dynamic harmony that a society can become truly harmonious. This cannot be achieved by building different castles without any meaningful communication apart from just living together in a particular political situation or in a particular country. Until there is a continuous exchange of ideas, thoughts, emotions, we will not be dealing with real harmony.

That particular straight path, as I pointed out earlier, is not easily visible. Vedānta has tried to maintain that particular viewpoint, what I called the really real and not the relational real. Relational real will be in conflict with each other. That which is non-relational real, the absolute real, that alone will allow all the variety to exist and not come into conflict either with it or with anything else. This is a very subtle phenomenon. In spite of being the most ancient religion in the
world, Vedānta has never been a popular religion because it does not have the props that is demanded of popularity. Vedānta does not ever strive to be popular, because the moment it wants to be popular, it will have to develop the props which will be only relational. It will lose that balancing force which it has to provide.

Arnold Toynbee's History of the World makes an important point. Society, according to him, is kept on the right path by the dominant minority. Most of us think that it is only the majority that counts. But this is not true. In any society the thinkers will always form the minority group. Because they are rich in wisdom they provide direction to society. Vedānta, in the Indian context, provides that dominant minority aspect as it has been providing in the past. And that is why in spite of the fact that the ordinary Indian masses, for all practical purposes, rely on the props of religion, even superstition, to conduct their day-to-day religious life, they have held dear to their bosom the great truth of Vedānta. As I said, it is not possible for Vedānta to be popular in the sense that majority of the people will follow it, as they need certain props, certain crutches to live. Majority of the people cannot live without props. In our daily existence we have to depend on certain crutches, even superstitions.

It is true that in other societies also there have been such attempts. For example, the mystic traditions in Europe, St. John of the Cross and several others strived to bring in this concept — that which transcends religion. So, a Master Eckhart can say, 'I renounce God for God's sake.' He can say, 'This is Master Eckhart from whom God hid nothing.' Sufism in Islam tried to emphasise that particular viewpoint which can bring in harmony. But not through conversion. The fact remains that mysticism in Christianity or Sufism in Islam never became a living faith of the masses in those countries. In comparison, Indians come out with flying colours. Mysticism or Sufism in Europe or the Arab countries had but a marginal effect and only a transitional one at that.

But in India it has been a permanent feature. And that is why in spite of all the variety, we never find the type of inquisitions that existed and exist even now to a great extent in other countries. We do not have what can be termed as religious martyrs. We are continuously in the process of a dialogue with each other. A person may hold any viewpoint, but he is in dialogue with another person who has a contradictory viewpoint. An Advaitin and a Dvaitin sit together and have a dialogue. They share their ideas. They do not fight with each other to convert because they are convinced that through conversion a person does not become better. It is only through understanding that we are able to achieve this. That is why Ācārya Gaudapāda describes that by which we are able to stick to this.¹⁶

Ācārya Gaudapāda points out that whatever is revealed by a teacher or by a book, or by an incident or by a friend — someone in whose experience we have faith — is identified by us as the Supreme Reality. It be any name, any form. Once we adhere to it, we identify with that form or with that name as our soul. This identification protects us. It is what we consider to be the supremely real that protects us. Commenting on the particular verse, Ācārya Anubhūtisvarāūpa points out that the soul of the aspirant itself protects him by taking that form or name. Just as in the case of any experience, we always have the experience of the mental modification of that object. Let us try to understand this in another way. What is the colour of an object? What is the shape of an object? There is absolutely no way of finding out the colour of an object. Though we see all the colours, yet the colour of an object depends on the colour of the light in which it is perceived. It is common consensus that whatever is perceived in the sunlight is considered as the real colour. If we were living somewhere near Mars, where the light would be naturally red, then what we see would be an entirely different phenomenon and we would consider that as normal. The sun's light happens to be white, and whatever we see in the white light we accept as the real colour. It is only arbitrary. We cannot be sure of the colour of a thing because it
depends on our apparatus of observation or on the light which falls on it.

Similarly, we do not know the shape of a thing. If we had X-ray vision, then we would be seeing things entirely differently. We would perceive people merely as bones and if someone told us that human beings have flesh on their body, we would probably laugh at him and say that everybody in the world knows that human beings are made of bones, because our eyes would be able to see what is seen in a X-ray photograph. We cannot be sure of the shape of a particular object. I know a person in Jodhpur who has the ability to observe very minute objects. He is even able to write on a grain of rice, complete verses containing 64 letters, without the help of a microscope. But he is unable to eat curds or yogurt because he is able to see the microscopic living organisms which change milk into curd, what are known as lactobacilli. Being a pure vegetarian he cannot eat it. This may seem very abnormal but that is his normal vision. Similarly, whatever object we observe through our mind, our mind takes the shape of that particular object. Just as light covers the object, the mind also covers the object. Technically, by the process of epistemology we say that it is the modification of the mind that is observed by our consciousness. It is common consensus that whatever is seen by mental modification is considered as the normal thing. But how can we be sure that the mind is taking the shape of the object as it is. Just as we have accepted that whatever is seen in white light will be considered as the normal vision, similarly we have accepted that whatever is seen by the mind we will consider as the real observation.

Anubhūtisvarūpacārya says that whatever is considered by the mind as real is held on to by the individual. That can be considered as direct perception or as indirect perception, parokṣa or aparokṣa. There are some people who believe that the Supreme Reality will always remain an indirect perception whereas others believe that it is a direct perception. Indirectness and directness are absolutely contradictory. But what is it that Vedānta tries to point out? It maintains that whether it is direct or indirect, in both cases it is perception. The emphasis is on the perception, not whether it is indirect or direct. As Ācārya Śaṅkara points out: If we see God directly, how can we say that God cannot be seen. Whatever is perceived by us is true for us. Some people say that God can never be seen. Vedānta asserts that whether He can be seen or cannot be seen, the fact that He cannot be seen is also a perception. The fact is that He is always aparokṣa. He is directly known in our perception. It is the perception which is that fine line.

In South India near Cape Comorin, Kannakumari, there is a pilgrimage centre called Śucindram. In ancient times it was called Jñānārāyaṇa and the great sage Atri and his wife Anasūyā lived there. They were continuously performing severe austerities. Anasūyā regularly worshipped her husband’s feet and served him in every way. As far as she was concerned, Atri was God himself. Once there was no rainfall for three years. So Atri decided to do something for the good of the whole area and performed a particular sacrifice. Eventually Lord Brahmā appeared before him and asked what he wanted. Atri told the Lord that people were suffering because there was no rain and wanted to know the reason for this so that he could do something to improve the situation. Brahmā told him that he could not help him in this. Atri continued the yajña. Lord Visnū appeared and asked him the same question. Lord Visnū told him that Devarāja Indra was the one who controlled the rain. He advised him to go to the Himalayas and perform a particular yajña to please Indra. Once Indra was pleased, he would reveal the reason for the drought and also help in bringing rain. Atri decided to go to the Himalayas but there was one problem. Who would look after Anasūyā? He did not want to leave her alone. When Anasūyā learnt about this, she told him not to worry about her. She told him to go as it would benefit the whole populace. She asked him for his pāḍatirība, that is, the water made holy by washing his feet. That pāḍatirība would protect her, she told him. Atri was very happy hearing this. He left for the Himalayas and began to perform the yajña.
For some reason, Indra did not want it to rain in Jñanaranya. So as usual Indra asked Nārada to help him and somehow or other to dissuade Atri from completing the *yajña*. Nārada told him that it was very difficult and he could not do it. Nārada said that he could do this only if the trinity, that is, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara cooperated with him. Indra approached the trinity and requested them to help. They agreed to help in every way. Nārada thought of all the possible ways in which he could dissuade Atri from completing the *yajña* and decided that this could only be done by disturbing Atri. The only thing which could disturb Atri was some information about Anasūyā. So he prepared an elaborate plan. He got gram shaped pieces of iron, small balls of iron, and took them to the consort of the trinity, that is, Laksni, Saraswati and Pārvatī and asked them to boil those balls. They told Nārada that it was impossible to boil iron balls. In many of our *yajñas* iron pieces are boiled. Boiling in Sanskrit implies that whatever is boiled must become soft, only then will it be considered as boiled. Since human beings cannot do this, the iron pieces only have to be boiled, even though they cannot become soft. When Laksni, Saraswati and Pārvatī told Nārada that it was impossible and no one could boil them, Nārada asked them that he knew some one who could do this. He asked them to come with him so that they could see the miracle. So he took them to Anasūyā. He showed those iron balls to Anasūyā and asked her to boil them. Anasūyā told him that it was impossible. Hearing this, Nārada told her that nothing was impossible for her. He added that Laksni, Saraswati and Pārvatī had come to see how these iron balls could be boiled. When challenged, Anasūyā decided that she would be able to do this with the help of the *pādatīrtha* of Atri. She put the iron balls in the *pādatīrtha* and uttered Atri’s name and started boiling them. Soon the iron balls became soft and sweet. Laksni, Saraswati and Pārvatī tasted those balls and were taken aback. They told Nārada that it had been proved that they were no longer supreme. They only considered themselves to be so. They asked him to find out ways and means so that they could become supreme. They added that Anasūyā should not be superior to them. She was able to do what they were unable to do in spite of the fact that they were the consorts of the trinity. Hearing this, Nārada told them that they should appeal to the trinity for help. Being the supreme lords, they only could help them. The three requested Nārada to help them.

Nārada agreed to help on the condition that the trinity would cooperate with him. The three cajoled and convinced Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara to cooperate and ensure that the superiority of Anasūyā was somehow or the other disrupted. Initially, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara tried to reason with their consorts and told them not to be jealous of Anasūyā but eventually they gave in. Nārada asked them to take the form of *yatis*, *sannyāsin*, and he also assumed the form of a *sannyāsin* and then they went to Anasūyā. They looked old, tired and hungry. Anasūyā in the normal course asked them if they would have food. They agreed to have food. She told them that while they bathed and said their prayers, she would prepare food for them. When they came back, they found the food was ready and laid out on plantain leaves. Seeing the food, they said that they had taken one vow: who ever served them food had to be without clothes, stark naked, only then would they eat food. Hearing this, Anasūyā was completely aghast. No chaste woman will appear naked before other people. She asked if there was anything else which she could do. They told her that this was their only condition, otherwise they would not eat. It is wrong to appear naked before other people but it is a greater sin to let a person, who has sat down to eat food which has been served, go hungry. So Anasūyā was in a fix. Immediately she thought of the *pādatīrtha* of Atri. She went inside and brought it in a conchshell and chanting Atri’s name she wished that let them all become children. She sprinkled the water on them and they became small children. She fed them with her own milk and she became so fond of them that she got a cradle from somewhere and put them in the cradle.
In the meantime, Nārada went off to see Atri. When he saw Atri he told him that while he was busy performing the sacrifice, Anasūyā in his ashram was playing with small children. Before Atri could say anything, Nārada disappeared. Atri was furious because Nārada had not given him all the information. Atri stopped the yajña. Nārada had achieved what he had set out to accomplish. Atri reached Jñānāranya and saw with his own eyes that in a cradle there were small children. He was wild with rage. He asked Anasūyā to explain. Anasūyā told him the entire story.

In the meantime, Nārada went to see Lakṣmī, Saraswati and Pārvatī and told them that their husbands had become small children. Hearing this they were agitated. Nārada asked them to come with him and ask for māṅgalya-bhikṣā, i.e., to beg their husbands from Anasūyā, so that they could get back to them. Atri was surprised seeing them and wanted to know the purpose of their visit. The three told him that they wanted māṅgalya-bhikṣā from Anasūyā. Atri realized that what Anasūyā had told him was not a mere story. She was not aware that the three children were the trinity. She had not thought they were just sannyāsin, sāttas. Anasūyā told Lakṣmī, Pārvatī and Saraswati that their husbands were in the cradle. Anguished by the long separation from their husbands, they picked up the children. While they were still playing with the children thinking that they were their husbands, Anasūyā brought the pāda-tīrtha and chanting Atri’s name, she wished them back to their original form. She sprinkled water on them and behold, Lakṣmī, Pārvatī and Saraswati found that they had misapprehended their spouses. Lakṣmī was playing with Brahmā, Pārvatī was embracing Visnū and Śiva was embracing Saraswati. They were quite ashamed of themselves as they had failed to recognize their own husbands. Atri told the Tridevas that his yajña had been disrupted. The trinity had all assumed their own forms. He requested them to bring rain and give happiness to the people. The Tridevas requested Indra and rains came.

Now this is not an ordinary story. It conveys a fundamental message. Atri and Anasūyā were staying in Jñānāranya, the forest of knowledge. This jñāna is what keeps Atri and Anasūyā together. Tri means three. The whole universe is composed of three qualities, sattva, rajas and tamas, i.e., activity, knowledge and inertia. The whole universe consists only of these three gunas or three qualities. Atri is the one who transcends the three gunas and Atri alone stays with Anasūyā.

Amarasimha asserts that to find fault in anything is what we mean by asūyā.19 Ācārya Śankara says that only a person who leads his life for the sake of Atri, that is a person who is constantly striving to go beyond the three qualities, he alone can reach a stage where he will not find fault with anything or anyone. As long as we are in the trigunas, it is impossible not to find fault because we perceive a thing from a particular relative angle. Anasūyā is completely wedded to Atri. Most of the time we live in the three qualities, in the three gunas, and yet we pretend as if we do not see any fault. This is not possible. In Jñānāranya, Atri and Anasūyā live together. Their importance has to be revealed. Indra withholds the rains to tell people that they have reached that stage, Nārada takes the iron balls to be boiled. Most people have hearts of iron, they do not melt no matter how much we tell them about God, about the good things of life. God does not enter their life, because unless the heart melts God will not enter. Only Anasūyā is able to see no fault in the other person. If we are able to love, if we are able to see no fault in the other person, that eventually melts the iron heart. If we want to bring God into our life, then this cannot be achieved merely by words. It can be achieved only through that love which never finds fault with the other person. For example, a mother loves her child. She never sees any fault in her child. This is natural to her. Other people may feel that the child’s face is not beautiful, the shape of the ears is not perfect but the mother does not think so. So it is Anasūyā alone who is able to melt the iron balls. Though Lakṣmī, Saraswati and Pārvatī are very
powerful, and their husbands — the trinity — are the most powerful, yet they approach Anasūyā as paupers. They approach her as yatis. That means a person who has really served Atri becomes Anasūyā. Even the most powerful will appear before him as a pauper and he is able to transform them into babies. Only when they are transformed into babies that the milk of love is sucked by them. Even PĀVATI, LAKŚMI and SARASWATI misapprehend their husbands. This misapprehension is always possible, no matter how intelligent, how powerful we are.

This realisation that misapprehension is possible maintains harmony. One thing which keeps communalism alive is the fanatic belief that ‘I alone am right’. Unless we are able to overcome this misapprehension, unless we realise that even the best has some weak spot, only then does our heart open out. Fanaticism exists because we do not have that humility in us. If we want to bring harmony in society, it is important that every community overcomes this misapprehension: that what it adheres to is really true. Whatever is conceived by our mind is always a relative phenomenon and, therefore, only when we are able to transcend it, only then we are able to bring that straight line which Vedānta tries to assert. It is this humility which is needed to establish communal harmony.

While discussing the problem of communal harmony, we have seen that in any community, in any society, it is the dominant minority which provides guidance to society. If that dominant minority possesses transcendental wisdom, which was illustrated by the story of Atri, and as we saw transcendental wisdom is always wedded to Anasūyā or love which finds no fault, then communal harmony can be ushered in. The moment a society is guided by people who do not possess this transcendental wisdom, who do not have this love which sees no fault, communal harmony will always be disrupted. Vedānta says that it is not expected of ordinary people not to be influenced by things of mundane nature in life. Only those few who have seen the light have to guide society. That is why it has been repeatedly emphasised that Vedānta cannot provide any prop or crutch to the common people to suspend their faith. If we cling to some props we will never be able to transcend those props. Unless and until we are able to transcend them, we cannot bring in harmony. Vedānta is basically the science of reality, it wants every aspirant to stand on his own feet. Unless we are able to change our viewpoint from what the other experiences to what we experience, unless we are able to introduce this transcendental vision in our life, unless we are able to stand on our own feet and not depend on a certain text, we can never have that transcendental vision. And if we do not have that transcendental vision we will always depend on certain texts, since texts are different they will lead to disharmony. In any society there will always be ordinary people who misunder-
stand things and produce disharmony but it is that dominant minority which guides society and brings it back to that straight line. That straight line will always be present in spite of the crests and troughs. Society is a living entity. Harmony is not static, it is dynamic. As long as there are people who can bring back society to that straight line, disharmony will continue to increase. Vedānta asserts that the only thing about which we are always sure is our own self. Unless we have complete faith in ourselves, we can never have that transcendental vision because once we have that vision we are merged into it. That vision becomes our second nature. For this reason Vedānta does not try to become the religion of the masses. It may sound somewhat strange but the fact is that because it does not become the religion of the masses it can provide that restorative force, that straight line which will bring harmony in society.

This is something like the Sanskrit language. Sanskrit has a perfect grammar and because of this it is not possible to make it the language of the common people. Whenever there is a talk that Sanskrit should become the language of the common people, the immediate reaction is that we must simplify it. The moment we try to simplify it, it will no longer be Sanskrit. It will become a Prākrit language. Simplification of Sanskrit has given rise to all our provincial languages. The very fact that it is a perfect language enables it to provide the foundation for all the Indian languages, the Indo-European languages including Latin, Greek and all the other modern European languages. Max Muller and several others discovered the science of comparative language or philology, once they studied Sanskrit grammar. How words are found and formed, the whole science of languages was opened up before them and it provided for the second Renaissance by the rediscovery of linguistics. Similarly, Vedānta can lead to the Renaissance, the rediscovery of the science of comparative religions. It is only when this science becomes a part and parcel of our thinking that real communal harmony can be seen. As long as the compartments remain compartments, real harmony cannot become a reality. Those scholars who are rooted in the Vedantic tradition like President Radhakrishnan and Aldous Huxley, are able to throw light on comparative religion. They are able to see how different religions actually point to the same goal though the expressions used are different. It is not merely an accident that people like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Ramapriya who were absolutely rooted in Vedānta were able to experiment with different religious formulations, followed to perfection and draw out the essence of those religions, rediscover their final goal and analyse them throwing a light of higher rationale on all of them. In the history of religions in India, whenever different sects have arisen, whenever different religions, different viewpoints have emerged, we have tried to analyse them, experiment with them and not merely compartmentalised them and we were able to integrate them into one harmonious whole. This was possible because we realised that the different texts are necessary for ordinary people but they are not the reality of any religion.

Basically, there are three main legs on which all modern religions are based. First, there is a book. Every religion depends on a particular text which has a miraculous hold on the masses. This is absolutely necessary for the sustenance of any religion. The text may even have a hypnotic power on people. It hypnotises the mind into believing that we have grasped the final truth. Human beings are attracted towards words. When we see a form we start wondering whether the painter or the sculptor has painted an image which is actually the image of God. But, when we see something in words, we feel that it is really true. A doubt does not arise in our mind that just as the form is an expression of a sculptor or a painter, these words are also an expression of a particular human being. Words have a typical hypnotic effect on us and that is why every religion has its own book. It may be the Bible, or the Koran, or the Granth Sahib. It is the centre around which the allegiance of the masses gather. No religion has managed to survive long if it did not have a book. No matter how much we talk about rationality and logical investigation, humanity still clings to the book for faith. Most people need a book to
have faith in it. This is not only true of religion but is seen in everyday life as well. Supposing we read a particular word and are not sure of its meaning, we consult a dictionary and we are immediately sure that the word is right. Or, if we want to solve a mathematical problem we may use log tables and even if there is a misprint in the log table we do not doubt its accuracy. If a person gives us some information we may doubt it but the moment we see it in print or even written by hand, it immediately holds our attention. The same is true of scientific reference books. Many of them may include inaccurate information, yet we have complete faith in them. This is also true of newspapers. While reading the newspaper people find that some of the information given about a specific incident is inaccurate, particularly if they know the truth about it. Yet if they are unaware about a particular issue, they will rely on newspapers for information and believe it to be correct.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa used to narrate a story. Someone came and told him that he had seen the house of a particular person destroyed by a fire. Another person who heard this said that he would verify whether or not this information was correct by checking the newspapers. The word has a hold even in our everyday life. It is far more in the case of religion because in religion we deal with topics of transcendental nature, which are not directly observed by us. There have been several attempts in the world to establish sects without depending upon a book. All such attempts have been successful initially because the people who started them had a charismatic personality. But after these individuals die only a microscopic minority adheres to those views. The whole movement comes to an end. For example, in the west, Unitarian Church was established. In India, people like Bhagwan Das launched a movement but it did not survive long after the demise of the person who initiated it. Initially, it appears that these dynamic people will be able to do wonders without the help of a book. In comparison those who have a book, for example, the Jews though driven from pillar to post everywhere in the world yet it is their book which has kept them together. Similarly, there are barely 100,000 Parsis in the world. But what is keeping them together, what is keeping them alive as a religion? It is their book. Even though a book is so important for ordinary people, yet it can never reveal the final truth. A person who has realised the final truth can only reveal it through the book. The difficulty is not in his experience, the difficulty is in his expression. He has a particular body-mind complex, certain educational and moral standards. The moment he tries to reveal the truth which is his experience, it is limited by the apparatus that he has.

A book is like a photograph. Supposing we take photographs of the sun from varying distances, even though they are all photographs of the sun yet they vary in their details. The difference in the photographs is due to the distance from which the photographs are taken, the angle from which they are taken. The sun can never be photographed as such. There has to be some minimal distance to enable us to take a photograph. Similarly, all the authoritative books present the truth but only from a particular angle and, therefore, they can never present reality as it is.

The second leg is personality. Ordinary people need to venerate some person. People always want to hold on to someone who will help them out, he may be a teacher, an incarnation, or a Prophet. Even in a communist set-up, people need a Lenin, or a Stalin, or a Mao or even a Gorbachev. Someone who fits the slot. This becomes a problem because an individual is always born in a particular time frame, in a particular space context, in a particular social context. No matter how great his experience of transcendental vision, he will represent that truth within the limits of space, time and the social context. Can we say that Buddha would use the same dialectic today that he used at that time? Would he give the same message that he gave at that time? It must be remembered that society and everything else has changed since Buddha's time. What happens when we hold on to such a personality? The universe is in a continuous flux. It
goes on changing and we try to adhere to a static object, whether we call him a Prophet or a teacher, makes very little difference. That is why Vedanta tradition does not emphasise on any particular individual. Vedanta, as mentioned earlier, does not have a revealed book. Similarly, it does not have a teacher. Risis were those people who had seen the final truth. They revealed it to their disciples. These risis merely guided their disciples. The disciples in turn incorporated this truth in their lives. Having lived the truth, they passed it on to the next generation. For instance, some one objected to a particular teacher’s lifestyle and told him that he was not like his guru and did not follow him. The teacher replied that he followed his guru perfectly. His guru did what he considered right and he is doing what he considers right. It must be remembered that following is not merely imitation. Imitation can only be done by a computer. A living being will always live in his own style, in his own way. The teacher or guru passes on whatever he has experienced. He is the direct fountain from which we drink the knowledge even though that knowledge may have been handed down by risis.

The third requisite is the dogmatic belief that our own faith is the only true one. To be strong and sure of itself as far as ordinary people are concerned, a religion must have the doctrine that it alone has the final truth. Otherwise it can never be popular. A person wants to be sure because dogmatism is characterised by a peculiar feeling of belonging, it delimits the faith. The moment we are dogmatic, we can feel that we are different from others. We cannot have a group unless the group feels that it is different from others. This sense of belonging to a special group may be either by birth, being born in a Brahmmin family, or, it may be by baptism or the triple refuge. The self-centredness of the group energises the group to move towards a goal in unison.

Once a commander told me that since he has to command different groups of people it becomes very difficult. When he has to command a group of Brahmmins, he provokes them to perform better by appealing to their sense of brahmanhood.

Once they are aroused, they march with greater intensity. If, however, the group comprises Thakurs or Rajputs, he tells the group that they must move ahead of these Brahmmins. Hence, it is this idea of delimitation, this feeling of self-centredness in a particular group, this dogmatism which energises the group to attain greater heights.

Liberalism can never arouse fanaticism in the human mind. The fact is that hatred has a greater power on the ordinary human mind than love. I am not talking about those who have developed their moral fibre. Liberalism can never lead to hatred for anything. Why is it that nationalism today assumes such a prominent place? The moment we feel that we belong to a nation, immediately that feeling of belonging to a group arises. It is not a desirable trait of human beings, but it is a fact which we have to accept. This finiteness is necessary as hatred is more dynamic than love. Capitalism and communism are opposed to each other. Communism is based on the premise that one is able to love all people. Capitalism on the other hand works very easily, for it is based on selfishness and hatred toward others. Because that is what competition really means. After sixty or seventy years of experimentation the communist countries have concluded that love does not work. So they have decided to join hands with the capitalists in their pursuit of hatred, self-centredness.

Liberalism can never arouse fanaticism and Vedanta will not use any lever to arouse fanaticism. Therefore Vedanta can only influence a small number of people. Liberalism attempts to make us unselfish, it wants us to become cosmocentric and not ego-centric. But we do not see any immediate gain by becoming unselfish. On the other hand we gain by being a fanatic. It is for this primary reason that Vedanta can never appeal to ordinary people, to the ordinary masses. If we examine the history of different religions, we see that a Prophet emerges, promises all kinds of rewards to those who follow him, here and hereafter, whereas eternal damnation and all kinds of punishment and hell lie in store for those
who do not follow him. Who will reject him? Hence his ideas spread. It is this which lies at the root of communal disharmony. All the existing religions which have spread rapidly are incredibly fanatic. The more a religion professes to hate others, the greater is its success and the larger is the crowd which is embraced in its fold. Even though this is undesirable yet these three props—a book, an individual and fanaticism or dogmatism—are seen in most religions.

Vedānta refuses to accept any of these props of popular religion. It does not accept any written book as the final authority. It appeals to experience. Ācārya Śaṅkara says that even hundreds of Vedic verses cannot make a fire cold. In the first place, the Vedas will not say such a thing. If, however, the Vedas do mention this, it would have some other meaning as the Vedas cannot contradict experience. When there is a contradiction with experience, it is the experience which is more important than any written word. Experience to a follower of Vedānta is the final court of appeal. Intuitive experience is also an experience. One must experience the truth. It has to be a realisation within us. We must perceive it directly only then can the truth save us. That is why the Vedas say that once we attain that final truth, we find that all scriptures including the Vedas become secondary. They lose their power of imparting knowledge since we already know the truth. We are able to see where the weakness lies. Book knowledge is necessary, nobody denies that, but it is not sufficient. Experience is something which can never be denied. The only knowledge which is immediate and indubitable is self-knowledge or what is technically called the knowledge of the form of the self. That is what we mean by ātmāsākṣaṣṭikāra or ātmānubhāti, the intuitive experience. The final experience is not split into the triad of the experiencer, the experienced and the process of experience. Why is this final intuitive experience authoritative? The answer is that every experience apart from this is always relative to the experiencer, the experienced and the process of experience—pramātā, pramāṇa and prameya. In the final ātmāsākṣaṣṭikāra this triad is transcended. Therefore, it is not a relative experience, it is an absolute experience. It is consciousness per se and that is why it is the most authoritative experience of reality.

Whatever is relative can never be final, because relational knowledge is always dependent on those particular relations. Authoritative scriptures, whether they are the Itihāsas Nīgams, smṛitis or Purāṇas, are the testimonials or the authoritative records of rṣis. These scriptures give the real experience to those who are pure in heart. However, those who are not pure in heart and have not purified their mind, will never grasp the real meaning of these words no matter how hard they try. It is for this reason that Vedānta emphasises that after we have prepared the apparatus of our mind to understand, to comprehend, only then will the Vedas reveal their message of the highest truth. This is not merely grammatical knowledge; consulting a dictionary will not help us to understand this message.

Let us consider an example to understand this better. A person who does not know anything about culinary art finds himself in a situation where he has to cook. He buys a cook book, reads it and prepares a dish. Though he follows all the instructions carefully, yet the dish tastes awful. The reason is that what is written in the book cannot convey to a person who has no knowledge of cooking what it would convey to a person who knows something about cooking. Similarly, unless we have been practising purity of heart, the very words which convey the highest truth to an aspirant will not reveal the same to us.

As we proceed further, texts guide us only as a travel guide but we have to practise to really know. For instance, a student of science must learn with śraddhā the scientific theory as formulated by the master minds in the field. Every student of science has to go through those fundamentals, but eventually the arbiters of theory are not those books but the experimental facts which have to be verified in the library of nature. Only after we have verified it in the library of nature that we are absolutely certain about the theory. If we find that
the theory does not correspond to nature, we modify the theory. The same applies to the science of reality, the spiritual sciences. Even though we have faith in books, unless we experiment and are able to verify what we have read in our own life through our own experience, we cannot say that we have reached the point where we can assert that this is the truth. Ācārya Śaṅkara says that anubbavavasanan ca brahmaśavaśayanam. The experience, the supreme experience of the absolute, is not merely a mental imagination or a faith in some one else’s word. It must be transformed into experience.21

Experience is the final test. If an experience cannot be repeated, it ceases to be a scientific fact. It is a known fact that many medical researches are being published today which are not authoritative. How do we find out? The experiment is replicated. If the experiment cannot be repeated, questions are raised: were some variables included in the original investigations which were not included in the replication? If, however, the person who conducted the original research is unable to repeat the experiment himself, then we conclude that either he had made a mistake or has fabricated the results. So, if an experience cannot be repeated, it ceases to be a scientific fact. If this is true of science, it has to be true of the science of reality.

If the experience of a Mohammad or a Jesus cannot be repeated by us, can we consider it to be factual? The moment it is said that Jesus is the only begotten son of God, the moment we say that Mohammad is the only Prophet and no else can become the Prophet, then we are no longer appealing to the fact of experience.

As far as Vedānta is concerned, faith in guru and the Vedas has but a methodological value. Just as a student of science learns the theory, it has a methodological value, but unless it can be tested and verified, it cannot be accepted as the final truth. We have to study, we have to learn but then we must experience it ourselves. The sole purpose is the realisation of the intuitive experience. Gaudapāda asserts that a person who has seen the absolute directly face to face, never has any doubt. He can immediately say what the scriptures mean.22 Only after that beatific realisation is he free to interpret the scriptures. Anubhūtisvarūpācārya, commenting on this Kārikā of Gaudapāda says, a person who has realised it is no longer a slave to the Vedic passage: Kintū sa sar vacarthaṃ brute. Whatever is the purport of the Vedas, he will speak out,23 even in a local dialect. Ācārya Śaṅkara says that the he may speak in Sanskrit, or in a local language, but what he utters will always be śrutisirah.24 Whatever he says is out of the final experience. Anubhūtisvarūpācārya says that whatever he says is really the purpose, the meaning of the Vedas. The great Manu himself asserts that a person who is not adhyātmavīti, who has not realised the absolute in his life, he cannot really know what the Vedas are trying to convey.25

Until self-realisation dawns, mere scholarship cannot lead to an understanding of the real meaning of the scriptures. This is where the difference arises. A person who holds on to books asserts vācyārtha and not lakṣyārtha. Vedānta on the other hand maintains that vācyārtha is for the purpose of indicating the lakṣyārtha. It is lakṣyārtha which is important, the purport which is important, not the word which conveys. Thus a book, an incarnation or a Prophet cannot be the test provided by Vedānta. All books or Prophets must be verified in the crucible of one’s own direct vision.

Once that is attained, the aspirant himself becomes the Prophet and his own words become the books. That is why veneration of an individual personality is impossible in Vedānta. Though Yājñasvalya, Vaśistha and others of that stature could have easily declared themselves as the Prophet but they did not do so. Pandit Nehru has pointed out at one place that when Śaṅkara rejuvenated Saṅkara Dharma, he could have easily declared himself as the Prophet. Some western scholars have even called him the founder of neo-Hinduism or the present day Hinduism.

Vedānta and the entire Vedic tradition is an impersonal tradition. The moment we make a tradition personal, we
bring in emotions. Once emotion comes in, we cease to think in a rational way. In science we may talk of Newton's second law of thermodynamics, but we know that the law is not Newton's, he merely discovered it. Similarly, for every Vedic mantra we know who the rṣi was who first discovered it. But that knowledge is embedded in the very structure of the universe, the rṣis only discovered it. That is why Vedānta is the only religion that is not rooted in any person. Rṣis impart the impersonal knowledge which can and must be acquired by us. It is not the other person's experience that saves us but our own, that is what Vedānta tries to emphasise. So there is no vicarious atonement as, for instance, in Christianity. Christ suffered for the sins committed by others, so that they could be saved. Similarly in many other sects it is the teacher who is responsible for his disciples when the day of judgement dawns.

Vedānta asserts that we are responsible for ourselves. We must experience it ourselves. Books, etc. are props which help a person. We cannot continue to earn black money, to smoke, to drink if we want enlightenment. Most people want to remain pāsus, or pet dogs who have a particular number on their collar. Vedānta does not take that attitude and that is why it does not become popular because most people what to remain like dogs.

How does Vedānta go about it? How does it discover and convey the final truth? All these questions we will discuss later.

**LECTURE FIVE**

While discussing communal harmony we realised that it is not static harmony but dynamic harmony. Now, what is that straight line of harmonic motion? How do we arrive at that unity? How do we go about it? By explaining the ultimate truth, we can bring that straight line, but how do we make every person realise and understand this ultimate reality. We have to depend entirely on experience. Unless we are able to experience ourselves, we will not be able to convince those who do not agree with us, those who have a contradictory viewpoint. Fortunately, Śiva has endowed us with three distinct experiences. Unfortunately, most of the time metaphysics and the modern sciences depend and deal with only one stage of our experience.

The three types of experiences are the waking state, dream state, and the state of deep sleep. In the waking state, we are able to observe the universe outside. Philosophically speaking, that is the time when we perceive. We are able to perceive and contact the external world through our senses. The importance of this state lies in the fact that we are able to contact the cosmic in this state. Even though it is the most important state, yet it is not the only state of our experience.

The dream state is that in which we have conception. Though there is no perception, yet there is conception. We conceive the whole phenomenon that we experience in the dream state. Since all our experiences are in the waking state, the dream also presents itself as the waking state. Dreams are always confused with the waking state so long as we are in the dream state. As mentioned earlier, it always presents itself as the waking state. A Chinese sage says in one of his
poems. Tonight I dreamt that I was a butterfly, flying all around. Now I have got up as a human being. I wonder whether I am a butterfly dreaming myself to be a human being or I am a human being who dreamt himself to be a butterfly. Both dream and waking present themselves as the waking state.

Importance is attached to this state because in the dream state we are able to find out how a conscious mind, a conscious entity, a conscious being is able to create. Our understanding about creation is confused because during the waking state we are able to see creations which are not produced from purely a conscious being. A potter or a weaver always has something apart from himself, something inert, which he uses to create a pot or weave cloth. Great thinkers have tried to interpret creation in this way. Some are of the opinion that the earth existed and God fashioned human beings out of clay. Others believe that He used atoms which were already existing for creation. Yet others assert that He used nature for creation. In all this thinking, there is an underlying false belief that God is not the complete creator. If atoms existed without any one creating them then even this world can exist without being created. If nature, prakṛti, existed without being created, so can the universe. If these were not created by God and were already existing, then He cannot be the only creator. The confusion surrounding creation lies in the fact that we try to interpret creation in terms of the waking state.

Siva endowed us with the state of dreaming and we are able to create in this state without the help of any material object. During the dream state there is no matter which can be used to create. Whatever is being created in the dream state is totally created by the dreamer, because he is the conscious being who is conceiving it. This gives us a clue as to how the Divine Being created the universe. He has created the universe without using any material object. In other words, He is the total creator. Though it is true that one cannot be certain at any given moment whether one is awake or one is dreaming, yet it is during the waking state that one remembers the dream state. Therefore, we are able to cancel it out. During the dream state, the waking state does not present itself as waking apart from the dream itself being the waking. The waking state may not be present during the dream but it is not cancelled out. We do not have the feeling that what we saw in the waking state is not true. During the waking state, we remember the dream as a dream and hence it is cancelled out. What we dreamt was not really there and this is what differentiates it because the present moment will always project itself as the waking state. Even in the dream state, the state of dreaming presents itself only as the waking state.

This gives us another clue about creation. How are we able to create in the dream state? Because we are no longer apprehending the reality as it is. It is true that even in the waking state we may close our eyes and try to conceive things. We may even feel that things are in front of our mental eye but at no stage do we get the feeling that all this exists apart from us. In the dream state, as long as we are in that state, we are conscious of the fact that the dream world exists apart from us. So, there must be inapprehension, incomprehension or lack of apprehension before there can be misapprehension, because the dream world is not real apprehension, it is misapprehension. It is mental, it is conceptual but it presents itself as material, as perceptual. Gaudapāda says that these are the two secrets that we learn when we analyse the waking and the dream states.46

There are two factors: inapprehension and misapprehension. Misapprehension perforce is the result of inapprehension. Therefore wherever there is misapprehension, there is bound to be inapprehension of reality. Acarya Śāṅkara asserts that though Gaudapāda says that svapnaḥ anyataḥ gṛhṇataḥ, dreaming is misapprehension because misapprehension predominates in the dream state, inapprehension is also present in the dream state but it is not directly perceived as such. Where do we directly perceive inapprehension? The
Lord has endowed us with the third state, that of deep sleep, tattvā jñānālaṅkāra nīdraśāvī ksva nīdra nattvā laṅkaṁ nātāṁ. In the state of deep sleep, there is just not any apprehension, it is merely inapprehension. Thus, in the waking and dream states, both misapprehension and inapprehension are present. In deep sleep there is only inapprehension. Inapprehension in the waking and dream states is secondary gunabhūta. The dream state is a peculiar state because we do not apprehend the waking state as such and in its place we misapprehend conceptions as perceptions. Now what it is that we do not apprehend in the dream state? It is the cosmic creation that we do not apprehend. We create our own world in the dream state and when we create that, we cannot apprehend a real world. Thus, it is more or less similar to what we see in the waking state. That is why the Upanisad says that in the waking state one is ekānuvāṁśati mukhāḥ, similarly in the dream state also one is ekānuvāṁśati mukhāḥ. In the dream state we feel that we are looking at a pot with our own eyes. Though the eye that sees there and the pot that is seen are equally conceived. Neither the eye nor the pot is present there. But just as we perceive the pot in the waking state with the help of our senses, in the dream state too, we perceive the pot.

There have been some thinkers, particularly many Buddhist thinkers, who have tried to assert that dream is as good an experience as the waking state. Vedānta is able to keep to the straight line — the crests and troughs that we have talked about. Some thinkers believe that the waking state is the only state and one should not even talk about the dream state. It is merely dreaming and there is nothing in it. They try to explain everything in terms of the waking state. That is the one extreme. At the other extreme, a few Buddhist thinkers and many others try to explain waking in terms of dream. According to them, this whole world is nothing but a dream, there is no difference between dreaming and the real world. But there is a lot of difference. During the dream state, we are always within the space of our body. We are dreaming within and where we are dreaming, it is impossible to have big mountains, oceans and rivers. They cannot possibly exist within the space of the body. There have been thinkers who say that we might have by some peculiar power gone out and observed the Himalayas, observed the Ganges. Well, that also does not stand to reason because supposing we are dreaming of the Himalayas, or of Ganges, while sleeping in Delhi: suddenly somebody wakes us up. We do not take any time to come back here. We get up right here in Delhi. Thus, going out of the body does not stand to reason. So, neither we can explain the space factor nor the time factor. Therefore, the waking state cannot be explained in terms of the dream state. The dream state cannot be explained merely in terms of the waking state.

But, there is a way by which we are able to get knowledge from both. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad clearly mentions that though in a dream there is nothing of the external universe, but everything is created there by the conscious being. Similarly, this cosmic world is created by the conscious God. The limited conscious beings that we are, we are able to create only a limited world which is there only for a short while. But the fact that the conscious being is able to create without the help of anything else, gives us the clue that the Supreme Being has created the whole universe without the help of anything material and that naturally leads us to the next step. In a dream whatever exists, exists because of me I am the dreamer. There is nothing there which is not pervaded by me, which is not controlled by me. Similarly in this cosmic world which is created by God, God pervades every part of it and He controls every part of it. Now this is the clue that we are able to get by comparing the two stages that we go through.

Sometimes the question is raised: Dream is unreal, is the world also equally unreal? The answer is, as far as appearance is concerned, both are apparent. They have a similarity, because both appear. Therefore, both are not really real. But still there is a difference. The difference is that the dream world becomes not really real as soon as we get up. But the
waking world will not be really real only when we get up in God. Just as in the dream world we did not apprehend this external universe, the cosmic creation. As soon as we are able to apprehend this creation, the dream becomes unreal. Similarly, the universe is created by God. As soon as we get up in God, the prabodha, then the world is not really real, but not before that. So, Ācārya Śaṅkara points out that as long as this inapprehension of the final beatitude is present, for all practical purposes, the world is as real as anybody thinks of.

Deep sleep is able to give us the third clue to the nature of bliss. The fact that all the joys that we know are to be had by means of some object or the other. The moment we are happy and someone asks us what are we happy about, we are able to explain that we had a good meal, or went to a good orchestra. There is always an objective happiness. So the feeling is that even in the state of that final beatitude, somehow or other, objects have to be present. That is why all the different religions try to conceive of the objective world even in the state of final beatitude. There are descriptions of heaven, babisht, swarga and so on and so forth. But the moment we start analysing these descriptions, we are aghast to find that they are talking in terms of materialism, abject materialism. Whatever we do not have here we start conceiving there. In a warm climate like ours, whenever we think of heaven we are bound to think that it will be nice and cool. And the moment we think of hell, we think of getting burnt. In colder countries, they enjoy warmth, so to them heaven will be a warm place and hell will be a terribly cold place where even movement will not be possible. For instance, in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, the description of hell is always cool.

Now, deep sleep is able to take us away from these materialistic concepts of the final beatitude. In deep sleep we are in a state of enjoyment. That is why whenever we get up we are always able to say that we slept very well, we enjoyed our sleep. Whenever we have been dreaming a lot, there is always the feeling that we did not get good sleep, so we did not enjoy. Not only that, during the state of sleep we get complete rest, we are rejuvenated. No matter how tired a person is, if he is able to have deep sleep, on getting up he is no longer tired. It is practically as if the battery has been recharged. So the moment we think of the final beatitude it is deep sleep which is able to show us that there is such a thing as objectless joy, objectless happiness. But that does not mean that in deep sleep we have really attained the beatific vision, because there is no vision there. We are happy but our happiness is not being clearly perceived by us. Though we have attained that stage, we have not apprehended it. We have not realised it. In the state of realisation, that ignorance will not be present. So we can conceive of the joy of sleep being as clearly present to us as the joys of the world during the waking state. And since it is an objectless joy, we do not need any senses or the mind to perceive it. That is called the 'state of turīya.'

In all the three stages this turīya is equally present. Just as I said earlier, the inapprehension of deep sleep is equally present in both the stages of perception and conception, that is, waking and dream. Though the type of misapprehension is different in dream and waking but the inapprehension of God is present all along. So the Ācārya points out that when the Supreme Reality, the turīya, experiences these states it has not entered into the mire without making proper arrangements to get out of it. For instance, when a person enters a forest, he leaves definite marks so that he can come out of it. Similarly, we have not entered this universe without making proper arrangements. The experiences of these three states have been endowed to us, to every human being. It is true that the scriptures are able to guide us through the labyrinth of this thinking. They help because they are talking about something which we are experiencing. It is not that they are talking about something which is not part and parcel of nature, part and parcel of our experience. This is what I mean by unity in diversity.
There is a conceptual stage, a perceptual stage, and the stage of somnus, inapprehension, i.e., the dream state, the waking state and the deep sleep state. But in all these three states, why is it that we are continuously going back from one to the other? The reason is that the witness self which experiences all these crests and troughs, all these varieties is present in all the three states equally. Once we realise that tudhiya, we are able to see all the three stages in their respective place. Before that we have been only trying to see things as auma and an-auma, ego and non-ego, conscious and inert. When we analyse all the three stages, we find that there is no such thing as non-ego, there is no such thing as an unconscious or an inert element. It is the dream which is able to reveal to us this secret! What appears to us as inert is only an extension of God. Once we are able to see this, the whole world takes a different form. All the different varieties that we experience, fall in a particular mould.

Vedanta says that since nothing in the world is that which is not God, God can be worshipped anywhere in any form. To put it through to a common man, we say that there are thirty-three crores of Gods, which means practically infinite. If we ask some one to name thirty-three crores, one will have to recite the names of all the human population of India. I was at one time thirty-three crores. And we cannot have different names for the whole population. So what is being conveyed is that anything which can rouse that feeling of bliss in us can be worshipped. The importance is not in the thing, the importance is in the feeling. Those who are not able to see this will say that God can be worshipped only in the form of pasupati, only in the form of Krishna, only in the form of Jehovah, and so on and so forth. Vedanta says that whether it is Allah, whether it is Pasupati, it is the tudhiya there that is being prayed to. Acarya Vyadaranayasyamami goes to the extent of saying that a person who is earning his livelihood as a mason can worship the instrument of his masonry, kuddala, as a manifestation of God. We have heard the story of Atri. Anasuya worshipped her husband as the Supreme God and she was able to attain a stage where even the wives of the great trinity were not able to defeat her. She was able to rise to a stage where she could even control, that is, change into babies, the trinity itself. The idea being conveyed is that it is our state of mind which must rise, the particular object is only an occasion which is able to give us that feeling.

Once we have attained that state the whole universe becomes nothing but God Himself. Every part and parcel of this universe, every particle is able to rouse that feeling in us because we have experienced the final beatitude. So, we are able to comprehend and transcend all the varieties of religious experiences. That is why Acarya sankara in his own time dealt with all the prevailing concepts of religion. According to our literature, there were seventy-two different conceptions of religion, seventy-two viewpoints which were prevalent at that time. He was able to reconcile all of them into one whole. Unfortunately, recently some people have accused Acarya Shankara of having burnt, or destroyed the Buddhist temples and monasteries. There is not an iota of proof that he did any such thing. Not only that, even up to this day when we do our sankalpa for any religious ceremony, we refer to the Baudhavatara. If he had done any such thing, he would never have used a word like this. In his Dasavatara, he has definitely mentioned a prayer to Buddha. So the question of destroying does not arise. He is there to take a person from where he is to a higher height.

The straight line is not in demolishing anything, it is by bringing back to the reality. Compare that idea with the idea of Islam, which is always ready to destroy. The very same people who accused Shankara of having destroyed the Buddhist temples, say that the Mohammedan rulers actually did not want to destroy the temples for a religious reason, they were only after the money in these temples. But history contradicts them. Where was the necessity of destroying the image as such? It is clearly recorded that when Mohammed Ghori went to destroy Somnath temple, the priest told him to take as much money as he wanted but to leave the image
intact. His answer was, 'I am not a seller of images, I am the destroyer of images'. And that has been so throughout history. If they were after money, they would have taken the money and left the image because the image is not a very valuable thing. The same trend continues even today. The very same people who talk about these things, even our leaders, they will never try to educate us about what is going on in the Muslim countries: we cannot go there and worship. People who have visited these countries and have reported their experiences say that even carrying a picture of God is prohibited. In a public place, in the knowledge of the people they cannot worship. They cannot perform any *yajña*, any sacrifice.

If we want communal harmony, we will have to educate those who are followers of Islam in this country that what is being done in Muslim countries is not right. Because before there is communal harmony in the external world, there must be harmony within. If there are certain segments of society who feel that the other segments of society are absolutely wrong and need to be destroyed, how is it possible to bring in harmony? So we will have to teach them, as hiding things will never work. These contradictions can only be transcended by moving to a higher plane. It is something like this: When we see Delhi, we see different houses, different people, different roads. But if we are travelling by an air plane, then we are able to see the whole city as it is: all the different roads, all the different houses form a pattern. Similarly, when we are able to rise above all these different communities and view them from a higher perspective, then only we will be able to see what contributions different communities can to the make whole nation. It is not compartmentalisation.

Every religious feeling has a contribution to make at certain stages. So a Védántin, holding dearly to the fact that since there is only God who exists, one cannot worship Him because there are no two to worship and be worshipped, asserts that he will also uphold the most backward commun-

ity praying to a totem as a reality. He will not deny it the privilege of worshipping that particular totem. But, slowly he will try to take that community to a higher plane. So all the different approaches to God, all the different religions have a contribution to make. But until we rise higher, we will only see them as contradicting each other. Contradictions can be transcended by moving to a higher plane. Or take, for example, another illustration. I am a male, I see a female and get attracted. How to stop this attraction? If I can stop feeling myself to be a male, if I can feel myself as a human being, the maleness will not be present in my consciousness and then I will not look at the other person as a female. And if both of us are human beings, we cannot be attracted as male and female. We can go a step further. Whether it is an animal or whether it is a human being, the living force is present in both of them. So the moment we reach the stage of *prāṇa-maya*, we consider our self as only elan vital, the principle of vitality, the body is no longer important. So we are able to see the same vital force, the same elan vital which is present in us, is present in a dog, in a cow. As Krīṣṇa clearly says that a person who has learnt the highest truth about the Vedas sees with an equal eye, an elephant, a cow, a dog and an outcaste. In all of them he can see only elan. He sees it not by destroying the pariah. It is not by destroying or killing the dog that sameness is seen, a dog remains a dog but we are able to see something which is higher. So it is by raising ourselves and the social consciousness to a higher plane that we will be able to bring communal harmony, not by hiding things, not by trying to feel that these contradictions cannot be resolved, not by not having faith in humanity as such.

As I stated in the beginning, in a democracy, we have a firm faith that a person will decide reasonably correctly as far as his knowledge goes. Why is it that democracy is not a great success in India? Because those who claim to be democrats do not really trust the population. They feel that they are higher beings and know what is right. And that is why they will say that in such and such place there are terrorists and elections cannot be held. Does not the population there
know how to deal with terrorists? The moment we start feeling that we are superior and we know what is right, and people must be put in their place, democracy cannot work. The same thing is true of religion. As long as we do not have faith in people, there will be misunderstanding. The moment we realise that every conscious being is endowed with the spirit of rationality, there is bound to be better understanding. So, a Vedántin, holding dearly to the fact that none exists other than God, feels that there can be nobody other than himself to worship Him. If we are able to explain properly the truth in a correct and unbiased way, it is going to change the other person. There is a story about Acárya Śaṅkara. He was asked by someone, 'You are explaining to me and supposing I do not understand what you are explaining to me, what will you do?' Śaṅkara said, 'I will explain it to you again.' 'Supposing I still do not understand.' 'I will explain it again. As long as you live and as long as I live I will go on explaining because explanation is the only way to change the thinking of a person.' But we are influenced by the communist way of thinking. They say that if a person does not understand the revolution will come and his head will be chopped off. That is no reasoning. They are only showing the stick.

Vedánta says that we must have tremendous faith in the self. Tremendous faith not only in the self which is present in this body mind complex but in every body mind complex. Rsis have propounded a stage where the great ones reach. When one becomes established in non-violence anyone who comes near him will be a changed person. We may have seen certain pictures depicting a great sage with cats and rats, deer and lions playing together in complete harmony. If there can be complete harmony even among these contradictory animals, why not among human beings? Communal harmony is not becoming a reality because we do not have faith in ourselves. We do not have faith in people, we are not able to convey the idea to them. And by conveying I also mean the idea being conveyed to you. When two people talk honestly and truthfully then it is called vāda. When we have absolutely no axe to grind, we only want to find out what the truth is. So when we say something, the other person listens intently, analysing it, trying to understand. At the same time we are also trying to make him understand. We will always reach a conclusion. Communal harmony cannot take place as long as we are continuously in the process of jālpa, mere argumentation. 'I know what is true. If you understand, you are an intelligent person. If you do not understand, you are a fool.' As long as we are in the process of jālpa communal harmony cannot come into being. Dedication, faith must be to experience the straight line, the unity. The emphasis is not on what we believe, the emphasis is on what we have experienced. So our dedication, our faith must be to experience, to realise that beatific vision and not to any expression of that, whether in the form of a book or an individual, or a conception or a theory. Once this is accepted it will bring the message of Vedánta to our hearts and when people follow this message it will lead to absolute communal harmony, because it is then that within our hearts we would have reached the stage of harmony. Unless we reach that stage of harmony in ourselves we cannot bring it out in society, in the community. Vedánta, as we have seen, has a very positive contribution to make in bringing about communal harmony. But what is needed is an honest attempt to bring communal harmony and not just try to patch up, play hide and seek. As long as we have this attitude things will go on as at present. I may add, though it is not a very good thing, that I have a feeling that most of our politicians, most of our leaders, most of our social leaders are either afraid or they have some personal axe to grind in continuing communal disharmony. As long as there is fear in any single community, as long as there is an axe to grind, it will not be possible to bring communal harmony in India of the present age.