

# VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

For  
21st CENTURY

By

His-Holiness  
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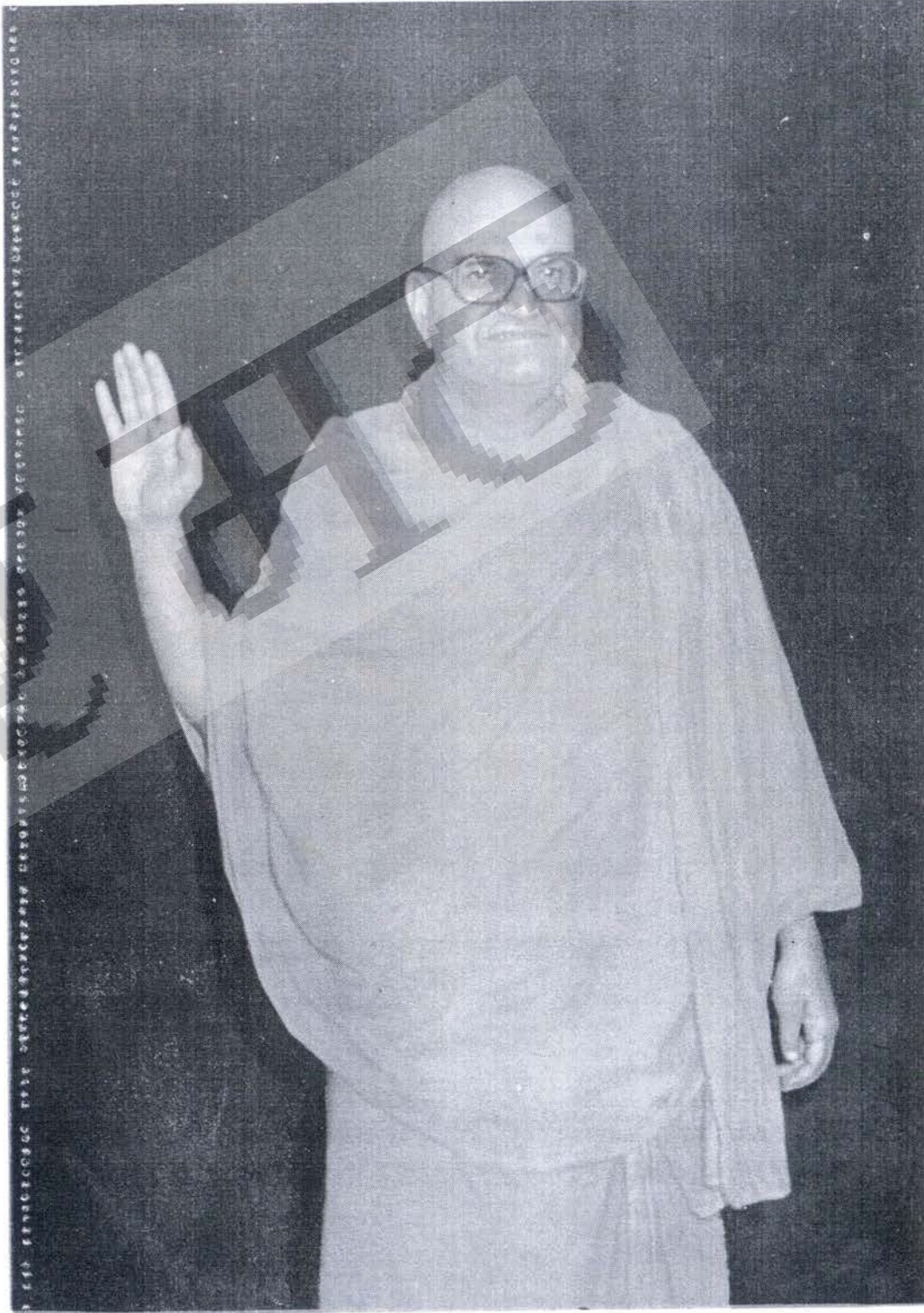
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दुर्जनः सज्जनो भूयात्,  
सज्जनश्शान्तिमाप्नुयात् ।  
शान्तो मुच्येत बन्धेभ्यो,  
मुक्तश्चान्यान् विमोचयेत् ॥

May the wicked become gentle,  
May the gentle attain peace.  
May the peaceful get rid of the bondages,  
May the liberated liberate others.





## Purity or Shaucha

Hinduism has emphasised the conception of Purity of the body, the senses, the mind and morality as no other religion has done. It is the firm belief of a Hindu that without purity it is impossible to be Godly.

The word for purity in *Sanatana Dharma* is *S'āucha*, which really means shining or brilliant. Hence the basic conception of purity is to make one brilliant, as even gods, the devas, are brilliant. Once the brilliance is attained and one shines like a god, it is easy for the Supreme Godhead to shine through one, for He is the God of gods, *Mahādeva*.

The dirt which has accumulated over the self is what prevents its shining. *Sāiva Agamas* call it *mala*. This dirt goes on increasing if it is not brushed away, and also if not prevented from falling over the self. These two modes of getting away from *mala* is what constitutes purity.

The body-mind-dichotomy is a fundamental tenet of Christianity, Islam and the reform movements of the middle ages in India. But *Sanatana Dharma* strongly holds to the unity of the two. Body and mind are so interpenetrative that it is practically impossible to leave one undisturbed, while cogitating the other. Hence the purity of the body is as essential as the purity of the mind. The Upanishad declares that the food consumed is converted into flesh and blood, as well as mind. The mind is as much a transformation of food as the body. Modern psychosomatic diseases and drugs definitely confirm this Upanishadic view. Hence the emphasis on the type of food to be consumed by a spiritual aspirant. No doubt it can be overdone, and *S'ankara* warns that the consumption of senses is as much of a food as the grains as far as the mind is concerned, nevertheless, it should not be underemphasised either, as is often done in the modern times.

Disease is a sign that some form of impurity has been committed, for the laws of God include the scientific laws including the biological ones. It is necessary to learn these laws to practice purity. Continuous medical research must be a part of social and individual life to know the will of God as expressed in nature. Thus this search is part of the Purity-programme.

The body is not only composed of the particles of food, liquid and air that are taken in, but also of those particles that are bombarded from the living and non-living beings that come in contact with it. S'āiva nomenclature of these particles is *spānda* or vibrations, but as all energy is manifested through matter, hence *smṛiti* literature uses the word particle, though the idea is the same. Our body, in turn, sends out particles that enter other living and non-living beings. In a very clear way we see human excreta consumed by dogs, cows, flies, ants, etc. We also know that milk etc., is consumed by us, and is controlled by the food-intake that cows, flies, etc. consume. The subtler exchange is not so clearly observable, but nonetheless it is equally important. Thus, purity is a very scientific conception which should not be brushed aside in the name of humanism, equality, etc. as is being done in modern times. We do not for a moment recommend all the inhumanities that are imposed by the vested interest or caste system, much less support them, but we must not throw away the baby with the bathtub. Our emphasis is on the continuous sieving of the essential from the non-essential by a scientific attitude of enquiry. But the principle must be understood. Thus both prevention and cure, that is, avoidance of new *mala* and removal of the old *mala* should go hand in hand.

First to be discussed is necessarily the *mala* associated with the body. The food that we take in must not only be as pure as possible but also nourishing. Perhaps with the exception of Judaism, no other world religion has given much attention to the quality of food. There are bound to be many prohibitions in this regard once we emphasise it, and Jews face the problem squarely. Fortunately *Sanātana Dharma* is more scientific and accommodating. We have divided all beings including the spiritual aspirants in three categories — conscientious (*sāttvic*), active (*rājasic*) and inert (*tāmasic*), all have place in its fold. Each of these are further divided as theo-centric (*nivṛtta*) or homo-centric (*pravṛtta*), depending on the aim that they want to attain, namely liberation from the fetters of ignorance or progress within the field of ignorance. Thus, food prescribed for each of them is bound to be different. Blanket prohibition for any food is

thus avoided. Due to this reason many people have often misunderstood or misconstrued the scriptures. Just because certain texts have permitted flesh as food, it is wrong to presume that meat is allowed or was allowed to all. It is equally wrong to condemn such texts as spurious or interpolated by interested groups. The fact in most cases is that they are meant for a particular type of aspirant. Meat was absolutely prohibited for theo-centric (*nivṛtta*) aspirants, but not for all homo-centric (*pravṛtta*) ones. The *Sāttvic* group among them was again prohibited from animal food. Thus we have to be careful not to impose one blanket prohibition on all the people. It is interesting to note that the *Bhagavad Gita* does not mention anything about flesh in its dealing of the food section. To a student of the scriptures it is clear that he is dealing with both types of aspirants and thus cannot possibly mention it. But to conclude from this that the *Gita* does not recommend giving up of animal food even to a theo-centric aspirant will be equally preposterous. Thus a close study of Manu and Yajñavalkya will yield an ocean of information on the subject, specially because the western or Christian oriented modern science has done practically no work along these lines.

The contact of food with the type of vessels is also considered important. Certain substances are allergic to certain metals so to say. Thus contact of copper and milk destroys the *sāttvic* element of the milk, whereas the contact of copper and water enhances the *sāttvic* nature of water. Similarly, salt added to milk makes it *rājasic* food and ginger mixed with lemon juice becomes *tāmasic*. All these are experimentally discovered and verifiable truths which can be taken advantage of.

Similarly, the type of individual that touches the food also influences its quality. An angry person gives off particles of anger, as much as a man of peace gives off particles of peace. The west has discovered a type of bracelet which changes colour according to the mood or temper of its wearer. Russian scientists have discovered the so-called Killock's camera to photograph the various light particles that are emitted by people in different moods. Difference between  $\alpha$ -particles and  $\beta$ -particles coming out of brain during sleep indicating the absence or presence of dream is now well-known, and is being utilised to determine the depth of concentration or *samādhi* in an individual. All these indicate the effect of particles on food. Thus the cooking and serving of food by one's own self or people closely knit ideologically and in the pattern of life has been given importance in the spiritual life. The present-day don't touchism of caste system is a mean caricature of the Vedic concept. In the beginning when people of the same

caste followed the same profession and pattern of life based on an identical ideal it was as close to the scientific fact as possible. But now in the changed circumstances, we have to base it on more fundamental grounds. Moreover, it must be clearly understood that all this is important to a spiritual aspirant, and is meaningless for a social group dedicated to mere worldly enjoyments.

The cleanliness of the body by bath externally, and regular excreting of faeces, urine, sweat and other secretions is also very important. Only a light body is useful for meditation. Special prayers give off thought vibrations that help to remove the particles accumulated in the system or on the body. From this analysis one will get an idea how the mind and the senses are also to be cleaned by keeping away from the objects that excite the senses in a *rājasic* or *tāmasic* way, and also the thought processes of such nature. Observance of all these contribute शौच

ज्ञानं तपो ऽग्निर् आहारो मृत् मनो वार्य् उपांजनम्  
वायुः कर्मर्कं कालौ च शुद्धेः कर्तृणि देहिनाम् (मनुस्मृ० २.१०५)

Knowledge, penance, fire (sacrifice), food, clay, mind, (meditation), water (pilgrimage), plaster (dwelling), air (*prānāyāma*), action, sun (*sandhya*), time (*proper*) purify a person.

अदिर्भर्गात्राणि शुध्यन्ति मनः सत्येन शुध्यति ।  
विद्यातपोभ्याम्भूतात्मा बुद्धिज्ञानेन शुध्यति ॥ (मनुस्मृ० ५.१०६)

Water purifies body, truth purifies mind, worship and penance purify the soul and knowledge purifies the intellect.

## Ethics

The final culmination of all the Vedic teachings is the assertion of the unity of God, soul and the universe or the experienced objects, experiencer and the experience and its controller. Hence, the Vedic ethics is just working out the implication of this in life. This is what places *Sanatana Dharma* beyond the ethics of do's and don'ts (ordinations and prohibitions) of all other world religions. All that leads to this unity is virtue and all that disturbs this unity is vice. Basically, it implies that ethics is not an end in itself, but is only a road to be traversed. Since the goal is fixed it is natural that the road traversed becomes redundant to the one who has gone beyond it, while retaining the usefulness for those who have yet to traverse it. Thus *Sanatana Dharma* construes ethics as a relative science rather than an absolute one.

During the last hundred and fifty years, the development of anthropology, sociology, archeology, psychology and related sciences have made ethics a big problem. Western science imbued with Christianity could be conscious of either an absolute ethics or its complete negation. The sciences give a lie to the absolute value of ethics and so the religion there has been opposed to the basic assumption of these sciences. On the other hand the scientists also, as human beings, cannot deny the value of ethics in any homogeneous social group, both because they realise the complete disintegration of the human society in its absence, and also as scientists they find that there is no human social group discovered till date which does not have a sense and a code of ethics, no matter how different it is from each other. In the beginning, societies were rated on the basis of Christian ethics, mostly of the puritan protestant variety. Any society holding these ethical values was by definition the most developed one, and one the most far-removed from it was the most backward one. Slowly, it dawned on the scientists that on some ethical points a particular social group is identical with the Christian ethics and yet far-removed on some other points. Thus, they were in search of some other criteria to grade the social groups. Harmony, vitality, creativity, resistive pliability for change,

and power of absorption for other social groups, were slowly developed as the criteria. But slowly it was realised that every society was complete in itself. Each lack was compensated by another quality. Thus, the realisation that there can be many models, each complete in itself. This is more or less the present view of ethics, and since this is true of most of the sciences, it has gained universal acceptance. Just as the nineteenth century was obsessed with the idea of value-gradation due to the theory of evolution, the present age is obsessed with relativism due to the theory of relativity.

But ethics is a religious problem as much as a scientific one. We mean to say that it is as much a subjective issue as an objective one. Hence, one wants to know *what is really right and wrong*. Even if one is convinced of the model system, one wants to know which is the best model for oneself. The ancient solution of the Kalpa-Sutras of *Sanatana Dharma* was that whichever branch of Veda (शाखा) one is born-in is the best for him, it was already irrelevant when Vaishnava, Shaiva and Shakta agamas within the orthodox system and Bauddha, Jaina, etc. outside it were developed in Hinduism. Each claimed a universal following of all people of all climes and times to themselves. But since the foundation of Hindu society was basically laid on toleration and understanding, society *somehow* survived. But 'somehow' is important because the fissures developed continued to grow, and at times created a social havoc. In the process of survival the new fabric woven was that of a federal structure, which survived until the fourteenth century of Christian era more or less intact. The federalism was based on social norms more than the religious ones. Hence the *Smārtā nibandhas* deal more with social matters than the religious ones. Even when they do concern themselves with certain religious matters they do not try to decide, but just content themselves with giving alternatives. Thus *ekādashi* of S'aivas and Vaishnavas remain different, and the nibandhas merely give a number of views without coming to any conclusion. Slowly social behaviour remained the main structure with the religion left to the individual or group concerned rather than the concern of the whole society. Thus *Varna-āshrama dharma* was the word used rather than *Vaidik dharma* in the later period, for Vedas became only a distant scriptures of little concern. Vedas, except for the *mimānsakas* and *Vedāntis* ceased to be everyday religious scriptures. Only the mantras connected with social rituals remain the living part of the Vedas. We have digressed from our main theme to indicate how the desire to save the social fabric generally leads to the disintegration of the basic ethical and religious values. The same problems are facing the modern world on a

still larger scale. The communication has made the whole earth but a big city, and the whole human race a tribe. Migrations of people are at a scale that could not have been even dreamt of. All this necessitates an integration but generally what is taking place is imitation. To take India again as an example, the social fabric as the basic fundamental of Hindu federation faced its major challenge from Mohammedan and later Christian societies. From the fourteenth century onwards the *varna āshrama* system was challenged first from external forces and later from internal forces too. Most of the reformists were great saints of Hinduism and wanted to discard the social fabric which had lost its religious favour. This was true enough, but the great saints could not possibly see that discarding it would be a total blow to Hinduism in the sense that nothing had remained to re-integrate it into an internally defined organism. Perhaps it is only *S'ivās* grace that has kept Hindu society even now as a unit, though nothing to call it an organism. Perhaps it is the crucible in which *S'ivā* is melting all values to organise the whole human race into a unit. And since only Hinduism is capable of performing this miracle, if we take the challenge, perhaps ours will be the greatest contribution to the new age. This is possible because of the *Vedāntic* view of evolving ethics based on the great dictum of unity between God, world and the soul as indicated in the beginning of this discussion.

Vedanta holds that any act is to be judged not by itself, but by the attitude of the actor. If he is guided by the unity principle the act is virtuous, otherwise not. Thus, if an individual performs a more unifying act than he performed previously, it is virtuous, but if it is more discriminative than the earlier one, it is vicious, though the same act performed by another actor who had performed a more discriminative one earlier, it may be virtuous for that actor. Thus a complete list is impossible and yet a directive ethics can be laid down.

As a matter of fact Hinduism developed this ethics in a practical way in absorbing different groups and tribes, particularly during the great integration performed by Shankara who is the founder of the present Hinduism. It was during this period that the foundations were laid which later developed into caste and group society in place of just the four varnas of the earlier period. Buddhism had absorbed a great men of differential social strata from all over the then known world. Each social group was considered a model complete in itself, but based on the *mora* or ethos of this unity-ideal. No model was left unguided by this principle. Groups were not considered competitive but cooperative; and so were individuals. Competition was to move towards



the goal of Self-Realisation in terms of Self-God identity. The intrinsic understanding was that no model will try to supersede the others.

Science consists of systematically arranged related facts on definite principles, hypothetical or theoretical. Ethics or the science of ethics will thus imply the arrangement of conduct, both socio-religious and individual arranged on the same ethics. It cannot merely consist in enumeration of virtues and vice. *Vedāntic* ethics means arranging them on the ethos of unity of God, soul and universe consisting of both the living and non-living. Undoubtedly, the nearest must be taken into account first. Thus, human beings and the nation form the nearest living and non-living unit. Dharma shastra is such a definitive and systematically arranged series of behavioural facts or conduct, and explanation of the underlying principle in each case.

Vedanta is religiously monism. Only one Parameshwara who is really formless but full of Divine Love is omnipotent and omniscient. Out of love (काम) the universe comes into being so that the souls who are as good as non-existing in the state of dissolution can unfold themselves and attain their complete unfoldment of the inherent nature leading to its fullest realisation of Infinite Bliss or *Bhumā* & Ananda. Thus, the world though born out of the inscrutable power (कारण) of God is not either purposeless or maleficent. It is not to cause misery to the souls, but to give joy, relative joy during the process and absolute joy at its fulfilment. Thus, universal joy is the principle underlying creation or the unfoldment of God's power.

Pleasant is not always joyful. A thing or conduct may be painful in the beginning, but if leads to greater joy of oneself and those associated with one, and does not bring consciously misery to others is really joyful. And, of course that which leads to the universal Bliss namely, the attainment of unity of one's self with the universal self (जीव ब्रह्मैक्य) is the supreme ethical act. Just as a bitter pill that removes a disease and brings health back to the individual is not really 'bitter', and a sweet pill that brings about a long lasting disease and takes away the health is not really 'sweet', so also a conduct that leads to unhappiness is not really virtuous. Smritis give detailed analysis of such acts. The Gita further stresses that any conduct that becomes natural due to long practice becomes joyful. Since we have been practicing vice, it has become joyful. But practicing virtue, it will become equally joyful. Every first smoker finds that the cigarette causes nausea, but becomes joyful by continuous indulgence. Similarly, by continuously practicing virtue it becomes natural. Since the body is the first to be tackled with, ethical acts per force must precede the emotional and intellectual realisation of one-ness. Often we do just the reverse. We understand intellectually the one-ness, but find we cannot mentally and bodily

act accordingly. This pains us deeply and causes continuous misery to our conscience. It makes our life schizophrenic. But if we have practiced out the virtues to a point where they have become our natural life, and loved S'iva to a point where that emotion has become natural, this misery is totally avoided. But we do realise that this age is the age of reason. And it will not be generally possible to avoid it. But at least its realisation will mean that we will not wait for the complete intellectual realisation prior to virtuous life and devotion to S'iva. We will try to practice as much as reason has shown us the way. This will avoid the rupture of understanding and living to be so large that it becomes unbearable. Understanding must become living.

Right and wrong are basic to human existence. This sense separates humanity from the animal world, even the most evolved species. This is called *Buddhi* in Hinduism and conscience in Christianity. The use of the two words is significant in as much as one emphasises the basic principle and the other mode of its attainment. This is again divided according to bringing out *pravrtti* or merging in *nivrtti*. Growing by experience, developing the body-mind-complex by absorbing the God's creation into one's individuality is the first and realisation that it was only the Divine play, and merging into S'iva by dedicating the individuality thus developed to the Divine Actor S'iva, is the second one. In the first the unity of individual consciousness is developed and in the second the unity of 'I' and 'Shiva' is attained. First is attaining and second distributing. The total is called evolution in Hinduism. The first is called evolution in modern science, but the second part is not yet known there as a scientific concept, though the dispersion of energy and entropy may be similar concept. First progress is due to *Shakti* and second due to S'iva. The ideal is the Unity or the central point of the two. One who has attained that as the central core of his being has attained the state that transcends *dos* and *don'ts* and is a completely free person. Just because such a one is placed beyond ethics, many Western theologians and thinkers like Albert Schweitzer, Christopher Isherwood, have concluded that Hinduism is non-ethical. But since everyone else on the scale either of unfolding or folding is under the rules of ethics, their conclusion is ill-founded if not malafide. Actually, since ethics is an evolutionary science in time, there has to be someone beyond it to guide the rest of humanity to follow or discard a particular model at a particular period of history. He is not a dictator to lay down arbitrarily, for he must show that the ethos needs the particular change. But since many models may be present as an alternative, someone must specify the particular model for that age and for that tribe. If he



is not able to rise beyond the given ethical mode his vision can never transcend it. Thus it is not a license, much less a concession, but a necessity for the community. This makes continuous evolution possible. In a fast changing age like ours this need is felt by all religions, and they try to sit together and take a decision on certain changes in the modes of living and even faith and doctrines. But there is no certainty that such changes are divine inspired, and mostly they are guided by expansionistic or survival values. It is just not possible for an ordinary follower to lead, since the two have to be guided by contrary values. The guiding factor for the leader is to decrease the separation and increase unity, whereas a follower must develop his individuality which has to be separate from the mass-level that is necessarily lower than what he is aiming at. Thus such conferences always lead to a lowering of the standard of morality, and almost never pitch it higher. In Hindu conferences which are an imitation of the western society one can clearly see that the voice of the Right is always suppressed by the majority. Weak individuals have to go through individualisation of unity within themselves prior to unity with the cosmos. It is like distribution prior to earning leading to loans. Bhishma declared long back that morality is subtle and needs wisdom that transcends the codes to be laid down. The Vedas must be interpreted by the light of wisdom that dawns on the realisation of the Truth, which is possible only when one transcends the dual consisting of attraction and repulsion including virtue and vice. Unless this is interpreted by one in every generation scriptural truth may fail grievously. Ethics is not a mere theory but has to be practical and is a living truth. Ethics that is doubted is worse than its absence. Ethics that has no reference to the circumstances will always lead to error. Sanayasin having none as his dependent can always forgive, but a king cannot overlook the slightest wrong done to his meanest subject. He may no doubt forgive a harm done to him personally. These differences are important. *Smritis* lay down that the ethics of Satyayuga is not that of Kaliyuga. The whole scheme of varna *āshramas* is in view of the social and personal circumstances.

Hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, passion, anger, miserliness, cruelty and ignorance etc. are the vices to be avoided by all. Fearlessness, cleanliness, wisdom, charity, truth, humility, compassion, and sportsmanship etc. are the virtues to be developed. Mutual service is a concept much emphasised in Hindu ethics. Every human being is indebted to other human beings specially the parents, teachers, ancestors as well as to gods and domestic and other animals. This debt must be paid off. The Hindu was nurtured for centuries on

the concept that indebtedness was a grievous sin. The present economic structure has hurt this sense seriously. Debts at present are encouraged, and often there are schemes to help one disown his debts. The present Government regards charity an expense, but writing off of debts as a legal concession. This has brought about a change in the psyche of the modern generation, and has effected the very structure of ethics of Hinduism. It may be that the rulers are ignorant of the damage they are causing, or it may be that non-Hindus are purposely causing this harm, but the harm at any rate is being caused. Discharge of duty in Hindu idiom is paying off of a debt. This 'ought' to be paid if one wants to avoid sin. A virtuous man recognises it and a vicious man disowns it.

Truth is one of the fundamentals of ethics. Actually all the virtues are considered by some as merely corollaries of this. Natural laws, ethical laws, religious laws, spiritual realisations are but the truths of those respective branches. All laws are thus expressed truths. To speak an untruth is only the grossest aspect. Even a truth spoken to hurt others or in a way that hurts others is considered an untruth. Shankara has emphasised this virtue beyond all others.

*Sheela* or character is another important virtue. It is the complete personality which is considered here. It encompasses physical acts, mental attitudes, a developed sense of duty, wisdom, faithfulness, devotion to S'iva and the general attitude towards one's fellow-beings and the world. The control of the senses and fairness are integral parts of it. Forbearance, forgiveness, overlooking others faults and weaknesses etc. are the armours of *Sheela*. One ought never to gloat over one's strength and other's weaknesses of character. Patience, charity, compassion and humility are its external expression. Dejection, delusion, cynicism, greed, envy, jealousy, irritation, worry, scorn, fear etc. destroy *Sheela*.

Virtue brings harmony. Since a man is most intimately connected with his five sheaths, namely body, vitality, mental, intellectual and causal, unless he is in harmony with these, it is impossible for him to be in harmony with others. This can only be attained by constant vigilance and by being guided by a higher principle than mere pleasure. Basically this is the foundation on which morality rests, since a person given to self-indulgence can hardly practice any virtue. All active virtues are expressed through body and speech along with vitality and are grounded in mind and intellect. Mind here includes emotion. The mind is guided by past impressions of pain and pleasure, and is controlled by the sense of possessiveness of pleasurable objects. Emotions are continuously goading us to move

towards relationships that are bound to cause merely pain. But the uncontrolled individual is a slave and knowingly moves towards them, hoping against hope, to use a trite. Mind and emotions cloud our thinking, reasoning and rationality. Intellect thus is forced into rationalising what these two dictate. Even Guru and Veda are utilised more to justify our own emotions rather than sought after to seek real guidance from them. Unless this slavery is abandoned no spiritual progress is possible. In its worst form it obstructs even the social development. But enlightened self-interest only projects pleasure in future, rather than turn one away from it. Heaven and its description was the old method, and futurism or utopia, the modern version of it. But real spirituality makes us transcend these limitations, rather than merely postpone it. Spirituality is a basic transformation of personality. Once the individual becomes the master of his five sheaths, the self-control is natural. The process involves thinking about the untold miseries that its absence means, and contemplation on the identity of soul and God or at least the qualities of God that are to be lived by him in the world. Control of speech is a very important part. By words we increase our emotions. By speech control, not only the expressed speech (वैश्वरो) is meant but also the unexpressed namely, that goes on in the mind. It is interesting that silence is called *mauna* in Sanskrit which is related to mind rather than words. The great Acharya Shankara specifically points out that contemplation of Brahman as beyond words, and the world as inexpressible is the real silence. Thus we are warned against the popular concept that silence of tongue is a discipline even though unaccompanied by silence of mental processes. It may be a help to start with but may soon degenerate into hypocrisy if not properly utilised. The control of the body is also necessary, for it is this abode which we must carry along with us every where. One aspect of it is practice of proper exercise or Yoga's third limb namely *āsana*. It is only then that we can utilise it properly. Health is a virtue, for disease is sin. Disease is always a result of transgressing some law or other of the organic or inorganic world. Only a healthy person is capable of withstanding the strain of ethical life in a world which is unethical. It is again a healthy body that can go through spiritual ladders. Often scriptures warn us against excessive austerity leading to disease. Celibacy is an important element. It does not necessarily mean complete abstinence. Observing the rule of monogamy and prohibitions within it is also celibacy. Modern generation reared in Freudian psychology often confuses the mere physical aspect with the emotional one. Emotional degeneration follows the physical *laissez-faire*, and it is this which has to be avoided. Most of our acts, physical and mental, are born out of mere habit. Thus developing proper habits avoids a great deal of viciousness. Desire for material objects and their means and power of control of other human beings is insatiable. It is their control

which builds character and not their gratification. Desire for objects and their bare necessity have to be discriminated. Similarly, possessiveness and possession are to be discriminated. Self-restraint is not self-abnegation. Material joys are not to be totally shunned. But they must not take control. Ethical and ordained means must be adhered to. Unethical and prohibited means and possessions must be abhorred. What we gain by pure means must satisfy us.

The love that prompts us to sacrifice our interests for others is called unselfish love. It makes us restrain ourselves for the common good. Such love leads towards unity. In making a sacrifice for the beloved we feel happy, and thus learn that greater happiness is in giving and not in receiving. Love may be directed to one's superior, equal or juniors. Love of God is the highest in the first category, closely followed by that of one's motherland, parents, preceptors, learned and the aged. Conjugal love is the love of equals. Here is the complete mergence of two into a greater identity than either one of them. Protection, shelter, tender feelings, yielding, and devotion to each other are the natural instincts. Such is also between two brothers, or brother and sister or sisters, or class-fellows or partners in business. The bond here is often so close and dear that one finds difficulty in even playing without the other. Wise counselling, loving sympathy, regarding their joys and sorrows identical are some of the virtues associated with this relationship. In the third category comes, hospitality. Sharing with an unknown human being what one at times needs most is greatly eulogised in *Sanatana Dharma*. In some of the works this is extended even to the animal world. Shibi's story is well-known where he gives the flesh of his body to please a vulture in order to protect a pigeon. Even the villains in epics behave with exemplary politeness towards guests, friends and foes. Disparaging others by look, word or actions is a sign of degeneration. A person may be junior in rank, less educated or deficient in experience or wealth, but he needs tenderness, gentleness kindness, and compassion from his superiors, not arrogance. If one has the strength or the means to protect the weak, but does not do so, the sin accrued is equal to the one who is persecuting them. Thus the conception that by action alone violence is committed is belied in the scriptures. The negative approach is more emphasised in Jaina stories. And this approach has vitiated the attitude of the common man to the extent that the society has become selfish and irresponsible. Humility in giving or protecting the weak is important virtue. The feeling must be of thankfulness to the Lord that He in his Divine Mercy has made us his fit instrument, and also to the weak for giving us a chance to help him, rather than that of pride.

Thus the practical corollary of the final realisation has been worked out in detail by the great authors of previous ages, and must be worked out for our own times.

प्रभवार्थाय भूतानान्धर्मं प्रवचनङ्कृतम् ।

यः स्यात् प्रभवसंयुक्तः स धर्म इति निश्चयः ॥ (महाभारत शान्तिपर्व राजधर्म)

For the good of all ethics is enunciated. That which causes good is ethics. This is the fundamental principle of ethics.

सर्वेषां यः सुहृन्नित्यं सर्वेषां च हिते रतः ।

कर्मणा मनसा वाचा स धर्म वेद जाजले ॥ (महाभारत शान्तिपर्व मोक्षधर्म)

He who is always acting in a loving and helpful manner towards all in order to do good to them by acts, speech and mind is practising ethics.

धर्मञ्चार्थञ्च कामञ्च यथावद्वदतां वर ।

विभज्य काले कालज्ञः सर्वान् सेवेत पण्डितः ॥ (महाभारत वनपर्व)

A wise person knowing proper time for worship, economic pursuit and pleasure, attends to all of them properly without neglect.

अन्ये कृतयुगे धर्मस्त्रेतायान्द्रापरपरे ।

अन्ये कलियुगे नृणां युगह्लासानुरूपतः ॥ (शांतिपर्व)

Ethics in its detail is different in golden age, silver age, copper age and iron age in descending order.

अतो यदात्मनोऽप्यथ्यम्परेषान्न तदाचरेत् । (याज्ञवल्क्य स्मृति ३.६५)

One must not behave with another in a way that he considers harmful for himself.

सत्यन्धर्मस्तपो योगसत्यम्ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।

सत्यं यज्ञः परः प्रोक्तः सर्वं सत्ये प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥ (महाभारत अनुशासनपर्व)

Truth is ethics, austerity, eternal Veda, supreme sacrifice, because everything is founded on and upheld by it.

आत्मन्यपि न विश्वासः तथा भवति सत्सुयः ।

तस्मात्सत्सु विशेषेण सर्वः प्रणयभिच्छति ॥ (वनपर्व)

The faith in good people is more than what one has in himself. Hence all want the love of such people.

पितृभिः भ्रातृभिश्चैताः पतिभिः देवैरैस्तथा ।

पूज्या भूषयितव्याश्च बहुकल्याणमीप्सुभिः ॥ (शान्तिपर्व)

Those who are desirous of much happiness should honour and adore their daughter, sister, wife and sister-in-law.

तृणानि भूमिरुदकं वाक् चतुर्थी च सूनृता ।

एतान्यपि सतां गेहे नोच्छिद्यन्ते कदाचन ॥ (मनु० ६.४५)

Room seat, drink and kind words are always available to a guest, in a gentleman's home.

नास्तिक्यं वेद निन्दां च देवतानां च कुत्सनम् ।

द्वेषं स्तंभं च मानं च क्रोधं तैक्ष्ण्यं च वर्जयेत् ॥ (मनु० २.१६३)

One ought to avoid atheism, attributing motives to the Veda, slighting gods, hatred, obstinacy, pride, anger and harshness.

नहीदृशं संवत्तन्त्रिषु लोकेषु विद्यते ।

दया मैत्री च भूतेषु दानं च मधुरा च वाक् ॥

तस्मात्सान्त्वं सदा वाच्यन्न वाच्यम्परुषं क्वचित् ।

पूज्यान्संपूजयेद्दृष्टान्न च याचेत्कदाचन ॥ (महाभारत आदिपर्व)

Compassion, friendliness, charity and a sweet tongue to all beings is the highest wealth. Hence one ought to always speak gently, never harshly, one ought to honour one's superiors in status, position, knowledge, age etc. One ought to give and never beg.

यस्तु क्रोधं समुत्पन्नम्प्रज्ञया प्रतिबांधते ।

तेजस्विनन्तं विद्वांसो मन्यन्ते तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥ (वनपर्व)

One who sublimates manifest anger with wise thought is called a man of light by the wise ones.

चक्रिणो दशमीस्थस्य रोगिणो भारिणः स्त्रिया ।

स्नातकस्य चराज्ञश्च पन्थां देयो वरस्य च ॥ (मनु० २.१३८)

The right of way belongs to the weak, very old, sick, loaded, women, graduated, ruler and bridegroom.



## Shi Dakshinamurti or the Silent Speaker

There are two traditions in Vedic Dharma, that of silence and that of truth. One is that of attainment, and the other of abandonment. Generally one of them is emphasised. Brhadaranyaka emphasises silent tradition whereas Manu says *maunāt satyam visiyate* that is truth is superior to silence. Though both are interactive but generally are in contrast to each other. In *S'ri Dakshināmurti* the two are merged by what is known as silent speech. He does not give any verbal teaching and so represents the ideal of silence, and yet through his *bhadra-mudra* He conveys the supreme truth and so equally represents the ideal of truth. The great Shankara in his own inimitable way represents the same tradition by asserting that the word (*mahāvākya*) cannot by itself convey the truth, and yet by implication (*lakṣanā*) the truth is conveyed. Implication can be construed only by one who is capable of implying because of long association with the preceptor. Thus Vidyananda says that the silent one became vocal in the Kali-yuga to get people out of the mire. Actually this is the secret of conventional truth (*Vyāvaharik Satya*) and Absolute truth (*pāramārthik Satya*). The fortieth chapter of Yajurveda, asserts that the face of truth is covered by a golden bowl, thus asserting the two truths, one which conceals and one which is concealed or one which is revealed by senses including words, and one which remains unrevealed by them. To an ordinary observer it is direct and indirect view but to an initiate it is subtler than that because it represents revealability and its absence in a direct way. Even the Buddhist thinker Chandrakirti asserts that the truth of suffering, its source and the path to eradicate it is revealable or conventional truth, while the cessation is unrevealable or the absolute truth. Upanishad is more poetic in asserting that one is concealing the other. This passage gives the clue to great Shankara to proclaim his now famous super imposition-theory. Wrongly viewed snake is a super-imposition in the true rope. Rope is concealed by the snake. The concealer has no locus standi of its own, but is quite important as a concealer of the absolute truth. No matter how one tackles the snake, one deals only with the concealment, and no matter how thoroughly we know and are wise about the snake, we can never find out its reality, that is rope. It is by drawing

our attention away from snake that there is a possibility to view the hidden truth. This concealer acts on him who is called by a well deserved name Satyadharmā i.e. who regards truth as duty. Duty deals with the world which is conventionally real. No matter how we practice it, it can never reveal the real. Thus Karma kanda and Gyan kanda stand opposed to each other. One deals with the truth, and the other with silence. Turning truth to silence is as much the tradition of Sri Dakshinamurti as turning silence to the truth. By offering the Karma to Siva one turns the wheel.

Rigveda x 136 says that the munis girdled with the wind, wear garments of soiled brownish colour and go swiftly like the wind where the devas have gone earlier. Muni is one who observed mauna. It is interesting to note the observation of Manfred Mayrhofer that muni is cognate with mute. This *Rg* gives in a nutshell the life of a paramahansa. *Sāmaveda* further says that mauna is brahmacharya for by observing it one is able to think about the absolute truth. Here mauna is apparently related to contemplation of the Divine Absolute. Actually one must first learn to avoid sin, then one must analyse the one who avoids sin, and finally identify the analyser with Siva, *Sāṅkara* affirms that *manan on maunah* by contemplation on the highest Absolute Truth one becomes silent. Thus it is silence of the wise and not the one of the fools. Dakshinamurti Samhita lays down that the silence is complete when body senses, vital air, speech, mind intellect and emotions are all silent. Following the mystical tradition the Samhita talks of मांस चक्षुः, दिव्य चक्षुः and प्रज्ञा चक्षुः or the physical vision, mental vision and divine vision. The first sees the form, the second perceives the personality, and the third sees Siva. First is developed by Sheela (morality), the second by meditation and the third by insight. The last sees non-discursive knowledge in the sense of Absolute Truth. The experience is that one is omniscient, neither sin can taint him, nor religious acts add anything to him, there is no duty for him and neither is there fear of any kind. The wisdom is so complete that nothing more can be added to it. The highest gods are mere slaves. But he is not a yogi to demonstrate his power. He is absolutely in harmony with himself and the world. Thus he alone can teach the absolute truth. Munis are generally associated with Saiva tradition in Hinduism. In this tradition knowledge alone is capable of liberating, thus it totally rejects the relative or conventional truth leading to Absolute Truth without a change over. *Sāṅkara* was opposed by the school of spoken truth viz. Karmakandis as a heretic, mainly because of his refusal to bind himself to the truth and exclude the silence tradition. Later Vedantins followed the Vaishnava tradition in accepting liberation as an aspect of conventional truth, though of a very highly purified type, but conventional all the same. Thus Vaisnavism and Saivism are not merely two names of the followers of the two

forms of the same God, but have entirely different school of philosophy. One represents the truth and the other silent traditions. But we must remember that Shankra belonged to Sri Dakshinamurti tradition, and hence emphasised the silence of different types, rather than merely do away with the truth tradition. There is one what is called a selective silence viz silence born out of the conviction that ultimates cannot be revealed to an uninitiate or one bereft of prajna chakshu. Then there is the ascetic silence meaning thereby that inner vision cannot possibly be revealed through mere words. And then there is withholding silence which means the truth in its complete form is withheld, though revealing its essence. Mauna vyakhya is a deep philosophy. The illumined teacher often helps his beloved disciple by a blessing of spiritual support whether with a look, a touch or sometime a mental wave. All this comes under silent lecture of Shri Dakshinamurti. Thus we find that Shri Dakshinamurti and S'ankra represent a harmony of the two traditions of silence and truth or absolute and conventional truth though their goal is silence and method truth.

## Shraddha

The conception of Shraddha is not mere belief, but something that gives momentum to living. The word itself S'rat =heart and dha=to place. Thus it implies placing of one's heart on something and thus it is that which has relevance to a living being. Basically it is a longing of the heart or it is yearning for some end. It is implied that one is convinced that the end is realisable and that too by some means. End we know always means a desire, and means implies confidence in its capacity to bring about the end. We cannot identify it with only one of them. End may either be observable or *pratyaksha*, or it may be verbal, (scriptural) or imperceptible. The first is incapable of integrating the whole life, whereas the latter always keeps it as a goal. This implies affirmative faith in integration which relates to absolute truth. Shraddha only in *pratyaksha* is basically an asuric tendency. Thus, it necessarily is involved in a sacred text whether eternal like the *Veda* or temporal like the *Gita*. The human being's predicament is his self-centeredness. Shraddha guides a person to transcend it by attaining the realisation of the unity of God, soul and world in loving communion. But Shraddha is also directly involved in the person's realisation of his own capabilities to attain the end. Unless one is confident of his own capacities the motion towards the goal does not even start. Thus, all that weakens self-confidence also negates shraddha. Psychologically many make a mistake by asserting the difficulty of the path. Though mostly this is indulged to indicate the superiority of the end, but too much of it is self-defeating.

The aspiration for Unified consciousness or Advaita-realisation is mainly an emotion or inner compulsion. Thus, the word *vividisha* or *jigusa* is often used to denote this aspect. The later Bhakti literature calls it Love. But love is Desire directed towards a conscious being, and since Advaita always implies a conscious goal *vividisha* and love are identical emotion. The later schools perhaps want to emphasise that a personal consciousness alone is fit for a loved goal. But they forget that love is equally directed towards a universal or an individual

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यम्यापिहितं मुखं ।  
तत्त्व पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ (ईशावास्य)

Reveal O Lord' the face of truth which is covered by a golden vessel for  
I follow the truth as my duty.

बान्धुं च पाण्डित्यं च निर्विद्याथ मुनिर्भवति । (वृ० ७३.५.१)

Being satiated with unattachment and wisdom he becomes a Muni.

consciousness. Thus, devotion is not a monopoly of dualism. Rather, true love always dissolves duality. Hence, true duality and love cannot co-exist. Illusory duality or unreal duality or conventional duality is not negated by *Advaita Vedanta*, and that is all that is needed for love. Thus only *Advaita Vedanta* can be truly helpful to Love. Shankara expresses it by saying that love is the most important cause of liberation. Since *advaita* of *one's* own self with the infinite bliss is understood, end that is aspired after becomes an object of Shradha, since it is impossible not to be emotionally aroused by it. Since it is the ignorance that hides the fact, its removal can definitely be attained only by knowledge. Thus Shradha about means is evident, and one's capability to attain is equally evident, for it is already present. The only thing that one needs to have Shradha about is the scripture and the preceptor who can enlighten us. Hence all the great Advaities have emphasised that complete faith in the words of Guru and *Vedanta* is Shradha, since the other two are evident. *Sādhyā* and *Sādhana* are evident, only the *Shastrā* and Guru changes in different schools of Vedanta. Since these are due to intellectual detailed knowledge, one finds the rationality slowly becoming logicity in the Vedanta tradition, giving rise to the illusion that logic is the most important means, if not the only one, in Advaita. Shankara again and again hammers into us that logic is not a gateway to knowledge, and perhaps some of his devastating words are reserved for it. The Shradha is the final instrument in the form of emotional attachment to the preceptor and Vedanta. In traditional Vedanta, the Guru is the object of adoration and worship as a symbol of Supreme Godhead. In the commentary on the third aphorism of *Bādarāyaṇā's* Brahma-sutra, the great Shankra points out two modes of this faith by explaining the sutra in two ways. Veda is the only scripture that reveals God or God is the only revealer of the Veda. A person may approach God by the fact that he has faith in the scriptures and thus is convinced that what the scriptures lay down is beyond doubt. Such a one will be emotionally moved by love towards the scriptures. Hence once he is convinced that the scriptures proclaim the identity of individual and universal consciousness he will be emotionally moved to attain it. About half of the works of Shankara is aimed to bring this emotion about. Or one may be devoted to Ishwara and emotionally moved only when he is convinced that the Vedanta is revealed by him. If the identity of Ishwara and Guru is emotionally operative, the mode of Shradha is the easiest path. It is because of this emotion that Shankara, though regarded supreme manifestation or incarnation of the Supreme deity Shiva, still is reverentially called Acharya. The same Advaita emotion calls Krishna as Jagadguru. Shankara himself asserts that Guru is the image of Sri Dakshnamurti. In his well-known Bhaja Govindam liturgy he remembers his Guru Govinda Bhagavadpada as God Himself. In his Manisha Panchaka he goes to the extent of saying that one who illumines may be even in a pariah

body but since he has touched the core of the Absolute he is definitely his guru. Thus in Advaita the identity of Guru and God is based on the firm foundation that one, who reveals the ultimate truth of the identity of individual self with the universal self is the revealer of the scripture and hence he is God Himself. Since most of those who belong outside the tradition do not perceive this identity they feel it is Gurudom and try to belittle it by calling it human adoration. Just as the image of stone is not God as stone, but definitely God as the *Archa Avtarā*. Guru is not God as a human being, but definitely God as the revealer of the import of the scriptures. Furthermore since this is the highest, if not the only manifestation of God that interests the spiritual aspirant Shradha in Guru as God is the main emotive force. In other forms he may have created or preserved the worlds, but those functions do not interest or are emotionally irrelevant to the aspirations of the seeker. Thus we find Shradha, in some predominantly intellectual and hence impersonal, and in others predominantly devotional and hence personal. The difference is due to the fact the immediate attention is given to the end or the means. Thus Karmakanda and Bhaktikanda both are the pathways to Shivajana Yoga of Patanjali is basically associated with means more than the ends, hence it is really a branch of bhaktikanda. Since the operative emotion is towards an impersonal God, it is considered different from Bhakti, for the word after Ramanuja was appropriated by those whose operative emotion is towards a personal God and that too generally towards Vishnu and his manifestations. But it is not based on any fundamental analysis.

Karma kanda is the theory that holds the view that if means are perfect the end automatically follows. Thus meticulous performance of sacrifice with fastidious concern to details is important. The attitude towards the one who bestows the end is lost sight of to the extent that even the bestower's existence is denied. Bhakti was a rebellion against this, though later on Bhakti also degenerates into ritualistic details of worship becoming more important, than the devotional attitude to the worshipped. With bhakti slowly becoming directed towards many sub-gods along with the main one the whole of Karma kanda was repeated all over again in the *Puranas* and Agamas. Shradha here is oriented ritualistically towards the means. Knowing this human tendency Shankara warns us again and again that the important thing is dawning of knowledge, which is the end, and not any particular means to it which may differ in individuals. The means to knowledge in some may be just hearing, in some others associated with rational analysis, in some others it may be further or independently associated with contemplation, in some others concentration or worship of deity his grace or repetitions or an inner living or dispassion or the grace of the preceptor or his service etc. The thing to



have shraddha for is the end, namely identity of jiva and Shiva, and not the means. It is important that Vedanta-Sutras start with not enquiry into means of Brahman, but enquiry of Brahman, the end. Undoubtedly self-control, meditation, solitude, celibacy, dispassion, austerity, service of Guru and listening to him etc. are emphasised but mystical union does not follow automatically but is the result of the grace of God in the form of Guru. Shraddha may be abstract to begin with, but though intellectual is never impersonal. It is interesting to note that some subschools have tried to make it impersonal by asserting that if the sravana, manana etc. are perfect the unitary consciousness is bound to follow, thus falling in line with the Karma kanda. They forget that faith in Guru and God is essential to take this path of knowledge. The case of Ramana Maharishi in modern times is an important one for he did not have a human Guru and still insisted on having a human Guru for others. Once questioned point blank how he attained the supreme truth without the aid of a guru he pointed out the image of Shiva in the form *Arunāchaleshwar* as his guru and indicating that just as Guru is God, God is Guru for those who due to excessive devotion can associate continually with the chosen form of God. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa of course had many gurus but each one was expressly told to be considered as such by the Bhadrakali image of Dakshineshwar Mahadev temple. The Upanishads clearly assert, and the Gita echoes that the grace of God is the essential element in the dawning of knowledge. God here means form of personal Guru in most cases is a matter of detail. This emphasis on the end tends to have emotional overtones. Eventually it degenerates into the lazy attitude of leaving one self to the mercy of a loving God. This is possible when absent form of personal God is the substitute for personal God. Personal should mean the one with whom we are personally associated and not the one with whom we are not personally associated. Impersonal should mean where personal association is absent. Thus Krishna to Arjuna, Uddhava, Bhishma, Gopis etc. was a person, and thus could become a personal God to them. But to us he will always be impersonal, no matter how attached we are to him, for it is only an imagined Krishna that we can contact. Krishna can be a substitute name for impersonal God, but he remains impersonal all the same. Thus Arjuna may be forced to fight by the personal Krishna, but the impersonal Krishna will give the guidance that most suits our mental lethargy. Guru is personal, hence he can never be impersonal. Thus Advaita emphasising this personal aspect, keeps the danger of falling into the sloth away. The *Gita* emphasises the personal aspect of Krishna in as much as Krishna is the personal Guru of Arjuna. But missing the context Krishna is made saviour in an impersonal way. Thus "my grace" "my order" "I shall save" etc. which are intimate personal revelations become mere substitute for self assurance, for Krishna is not giving these assurances directly

to that individual. But if these assurances come directly from Guru the assurances are also associated with his direct commands and thus both go hand in hand. Thus Vedanta harmonises personal love directed towards God as Guru and impersonal love directed towards God as revealed in the Vedic teachings. It is again a harmony of love between end which is the purest form of one's own being, and means which is love towards one's Guru and enquiry into one's own being. Since one is always an object of love for oneself bhakti or love is always present. Thus it is entirely different from ritualistic, magical, formal and morally corrupt Shraddha of the Karmakanda. If Guru is not a priest of knowledge, one must acquire it by his own effort. Guru's grace is only to light the lamp in your heart. The spiritual goal of self transcendence should never be confused with self transformation. Intuitive mystical unity of the Being as universal consciousness is the object or end of Shraddha. Means of this is a teacher who has realised this unity through profound wisdom and is fit as well as ready to impart it. Sacrifice is substituted by self-sacrifice and ritual is internal, mystical and psyche transcendence rather than any external ceremonial one. Guru is a living being, thus not an object of ritualistic devotion, but a loving personal attendance.

A transcendental concern involving the whole of life, an attitude of love towards a positive goal of transcendence and affirmation to its truth by a guide is the body of Shraddhe. A higher being is sought by transcending a lower one. It is this that makes Hinduism a living religion.

श्रद्धा विवेश Faith enters (कठ १.२)

श्रद्धां प्रातह्वामहे श्रद्धां मांघ्यन्दिन दिवि ।

We pray for faith all the time

तस्मै श्री गुरुमूर्तये श्री दक्षिणामूर्तये ।

The form of Guru is the Siva himself as the revealer of mystic unity,

चाण्डालोस्तु स तु द्विजोस्तु गुरु रित्येषा मनीषामम

My conviction is that wise one who reveals the mystic universal consciousness can be found in a pariah body as much in a caste-body.

श्रद्धा घनादन्यत्रं कथं तद्ब्रह्मोपलभ्यते ?

How can Supreme Identity be realised without the wealth called faith.

श्रद्धया संवत्सरं संवत्स्यथ (प्रश्न)

Stay with me for a year with faith.

द्रव्ययज्ञादात्मयज्ञो श्रेयः

External sacrifice is far inferior to the internal self-sacrifice.

## Satyameva Jayate

The famous quotation from Upanishad has often been *misused* as a slogan. at times, by religious fanatics and at other times even by political fanatics. Since Satyagraha (fanaticism of Truth) was the chief ammunition used in India's war for political freedom it was natural that the Upanishadic saying was adopted as our motto. It is a different matter that like all slogans its meaning has become mystical, hence unrelated to life. We see that in life a man practising untruth is the victorious one, and truthful man is the loser. Since the State of India is a secular one motto can not possibly refer to an after life victory. Hence it is like any incantation, a mystery.

We will try to see the meaning of Jayate, Mallinath has given the meaning of Jayate, in a different context as "existing by surpassing every thing else by one's own excellence or Utkarsha. The general meaning of 'wins' or 'is victorious' has a shade of fight with an external enemy. Since the word is often used where no such fight is evident, the meaning generally is changed to "as if victorious". Even the Gods and saints are often mentioned as *Vijay-tetaram* where the meaning is often in the sense that Muslims use the name of Prophet, followed by "peace be upon him". But this meaning of Mallinath is equally applicable in peace and war. It is the surpassing excellence as a quality that is verbalised. The derivative meaning of Utkarsa (the best or that which surpasses) is Ut or that which comes up by Karsa or churning. Just as butter comes up by churning, the curd or yogart the real personality shines forth on churning the apparent personality which is a mixture of the real and unreal. Since Satyam is really Brahma, the meaning is that by continuous churning of the apparent personality or Jiva, one finds that Brahma is the only reality that exists by surpassing (निरतिशय) everything else (including time, space, condition, substance etc.) by its own excellence (स्वमेहिन्). The word Ut is specially mentioned in Chandogya Upanishad of Sama Veda's Kauthumi recension as a name of Brahma. Thus the whole passage means that Brahma alone has the surpassing excellence, not necessarily manifest

always. Thus in the process of creation, he is the most excellent of the manifest and unmanifest, being both the material as well as the efficient cause of every thing. In the manifest world he is the most pervasive, being the material cause of space and time, and again being the Jiva, he is the most excellent of the manifest world. Thus the sentence really means that Brahma is the best or the essence of all that exists. Because he is the best, he is to be worshipped and followed. This is his Saguna aspect. He is Siva, the good and bliss. Because he is the essence, he is to be identical with or known as one's reality. This is his *Nirguna* aspect. He is Atman, the very being of our being.

Siva sustains and supports, in spite of conflicts and changes inherent in the world process due to his power of manifestation. Atma can not be destroyed by any process, for process can change only the superfluous or the superimposition and not the essence. Gold can never be changed by any amount of ornamenting. Only the particular ornament can be transformed. It holds all in complete accord and harmony in the midst of change, whether of quality or state. All life naturally is oriented towards its preservation and growth. Thus, the life's dharma is that which helps it. But the essence needs revelation of its own nature. This is Siva's Dharma and all that helps it is Sivatma Dharma. One may either take to life's dharma or Sivatma Dharma. Of course, the two need not always be in conflict. Mostly they may be harmonious. But there are moments or situations where one must decide, and it is this decision or preference that decides the victory of Satya or its manifestation viz life.

There is another famous saying that wherever there is dharma there is victory. This is really textology. On the other hand, Truth has its own character that supports it. Similarly we must admit false too has its own character that supports falsehood. But the fundamental thing about Truth is that it is never contradicted (कथं). Its essence is such that when it seems to be contradicted, it is on the verge of being reconciled in a greater harmony with a larger universal entity. On the other hand, the essence of false is to create appearances in a way that prevents contradiction being cognised at the time of its appearance. Thus the contradiction inherent in a rod, water pipe, snake, crack etc. are not cognised in themselves, and of course, not at all of their contradiction with the rope, the reality. The universe, though full of contradictions, is never perceived as such. Even when the contradiction is apparent, it is smoothed over. A physicist knows the inherent contradiction in a solid metal perceived by mere senses, and its absolute hollowness as moving positive and negative electric current. But in his normal behaviour the contradiction

is smoothened over. It is this that makes liberation in life possible. A knower of Brahman is conscious of the contradiction yet at the moment of perception it is glossed over. Vedanta asserts that the falsity of the world is supported by Brahman and Brahman again is the object of world's perception. Since snake is supported by the rope, and also rope is the object of snake's perception, rope is called real, similarly Brahman is called real. This opens up a whole new vista of the wisdom of Brahman's reality.

The state and social groups are controlled by certain rules. No society can exist without them. But mostly they are mere conventions. They are not the essence. But due to long association, they seem to be the essence of that society. But since they are not really so, the society will not disintegrate if they are changed according to temporal situations. But in the normal course, transgressing these conventional truths or laws brings about punishment. But any clever person finds out the means where transgressions will go unpunished. There is no way to deal with such people. Thus one feels that nature will inflict punishment, less realising that most of these transgressions are not based on the essence, thus cannot possibly concern nature. The external world is not amenable to man-made moral laws or beliefs. Any how, all religious retribution originates from such a belief. But essence is support in reality. This concept makes defeat of immorality inherent. If we transgress our essence which supports it, we lose our support, and are bound to be disintegrated. There is no way to avoid this. And if the degeneration does not set in, the essence was fictitious, and no harm can come from a fictitious law being transgressed. Since Brahman is the real essence, and since we are generally concerned with conventions, we have disintegrated from freedom to bondage. A Sanyasin leaves all conventional truths for the sake of this essence, hence though he seems to transgress all social conventions, he does not lose, but wins back his freedom.

This is the real victory (जय). But there is also a conventional dimension to it. Individuals depend on a group for practical purposes and are guided by reward and punishment, loss and gain that follows it. This is a lower ladder of victory. To suit it, we have a conventional concept of truth also. It stands for our faith in rituals, customs, feelings, etc. that are helpful in giving support to the social life and the individual belonging to it. Virtue, Vice, etc. as means, Heaven—Hell as ends, belong to this truth. Fear is the guiding divinity here. This truth is basically authoritative, for whether God commands them or scriptures reveal them, we can do nothing but accept it verbatim. Fear here is basically biological since the description of hell or heaven (including such highest as Vaikunth) refer only to biological pleasures or pain in the form of

sensuous perception, Karma and re-birth are also in the same pattern, though much more refined in their higher mode of expressions, where pleasures and pain are regarded in a general sense. But populists approach in most of the Puranas convey the theory of eye for an eye. A playboy is shown as getting a hot iron damsel to embrace and so on. Vedavyasa in his Mahabharata goes a step further by saying that the essence of virtue and vice are always veiled and the only way for ordinary people is to follow what the wise ones do in a particular situation. Thus the great sage clearly enunciates the interpretation of the truth with conventional truth as the one guiding and the other guided. Wise are never blind followers of the letters of the scriptures. Having sought out the truth of the inner essence, both of the man and universe, they are guided solely by it, and stick to this essence of scriptures, rather than their forms. Thus truth should become the director of the stage of conventional truth. Gaudapada, the grand preceptor of 'Sri Sankara' clearly mentions that a wise person should interpret the Vedas as he feels appropriate, and assign the sections to higher, lower, spiritual, temporal as he sees them.

Thus we find that excelling is becoming victorious and not just a stage in conflict or war. Excelling does not depend on others. Hence it is not relative. In the practical world, excelling does mean coming on top of others, and hence we expect to win in that sense by following the path of truth. But we soon learn that the practical excelling needs practical truths, and not the Truth. It is wrong to expect a highly developed instrument to successfully weigh a kilo of vegetables. Similarly, the pati of absolute should not be expected to win victories which are based on wrong premises. Worldly success implies stepping on other's toes, no matter in howsoever a small measure. On the other hand, the ideal to be excelled presented here, where to be stepped upon is superior than stepping upon. The passage makes it clear by asserting that the path of truth here was trodden by the supreme gods, and it is this path that is opened up. Negatively, it asserts that truth does not conquer untruth, but is excellent in itself, and that untruth can never excel the truth, for by its very nature, it is of a lower order. Truth of rope sublimates the snake, not destroy it, for they both belong to different category of existence. Conquering is possible where two or more substances are of similar existence. Thus, excellence of truth is not relative to untruth, but is independent of it, and sublimates or absorbs it into itself and transcends it. This conception of truth is what makes Advaita absorb every shade of religion. Hinduism has survived through milleniums not by conquering, but by excelling. It never believed in conversion of others, but in sublimating them in a higher reality. Rama conquers Ravana not to put Lakshmana on the throne, but to bestow it on Bibhishana, his



brother, Similarly Jarasandha's son, Narakasura's son etc. are put on the throne by Krishna. The idea is not to destroy but to harmonise.

The leaves grow all over the tree more or less simultaneously in the spring. But none of the leaves interfere in each other's growth. It makes way for others without in any way being interfered by the others. There is vivacious harmony. In a single lotus bud, the petals are all intertwined. It is impossible to separate them without destroying them. But in a natural way they blossom and each one is complete and in harmony with distinction painted large on each one of them. This is the harmony that truth brings about. Each soul is in full harmony with others. The whole concept of modern western culture is analogical, thus destructive. It follows the Christian conversion principles. And the 'truth is victorious' is read in the light of this methodology to put truth against untruth. Naturally both are considered as belonging to the same category of existence. The experience does not uphold it and the saying becomes a trite. But seen in the light of excellence, as done here, one can see that the saying is as true as ever. Unity is not destruction but dissolution. The harmony of all of us, together being in the harmony of Siva, is what excels. Siva unites us all, is both imminent and transcendent. Every particle is in harmony with all that exists. This is the rhythm of life, the symphony of all distinct and separate notes. To transgress is to lose, to be defeated, to die. Disharmony is divisive, separateness and is false. Advaita, is harmony, oneness, creative and is reality. Life is really an experience of blossoming through different manifestations. People, often, in trying to identify experience with outer objects, are unable to see the true essence of experience itself. Real excellence does not depend on whatever we have, the external objects and achievements. They are always coming and going. External thing can never be completely ours. They, not doubt, excite us, induce some motion in us, But it is on the harmony of these with our inner experience, that life is really built up. Newer modes of thoughts, reflections and reactions to the external stimuli that brings about stability within our ownself, is never destroyed or lost. Experience of Siva is not like an experience of an object. It is the attainment of one's finest and subtlest existence. One transcends impermanence and attains permanence. It is the direct perception that one permeates all that exists. After the experience, all finite gifts become the infinite grace in and through those gifts. Finite (परिच्छिन्न) has to have its ultimate root in the infinite (अपरिच्छिन्न). This infinite is the Truth and all finite is untruth. Infinite alone shines in its excellence is what the Upanishad proclaims.

Siva is infinite. Hence we cannot search Siva in a particular space, time or causal chain. Hence worship of Siva can only be in the form of knowing

our non-existence without Him, or feeling our existence entirely due to Him. Removal of all obstructions which stand in the way of our union with Him is becoming excellent. Extension of our consciousness of HIM by devoted feeling and service by expressing goodness in love is really excellent. In all our emotions, deeds and thoughts, there must be an ever flowing current which keeps us in continuous contact with this infinite Being. The physical pleasures are mean, narrow and limited, and it is only the emotions, deeds or thoughts of possessing these pleasures, and the objects associated with them that make us lose this infinite. Infinity, though at hand but out of its love, becomes unattainable. Once Siva is present as continuous expansion, we live and have our being in Him. Each step emerges with His steps. We are but HIM or we feel like a mirror—image of him, but not in reverse. Once hunger is appeased nothing is left. But in emotive and intellectual pursuits the scope is infinite. There is equal pleasure in getting a solution and not getting it. Whether love is responded or not, the same experience is manifested. The beloved is not exhausted by getting Him in love, for what we get, infinitely more remains to be yearned as we come closer to Him. Someone has said that the eyes are still hungry when one has gazed upon the beauty of the beloved's face from eternity. In the closest embrace of eternity, the heart remains as unsatisfied as at the beginning. Similarly, a philosopher is as unsatisfied of his philosophical results after building the whole structure of philosophy from the scratch, as he was at the beginning. The solution creates as many problems as it solves. This is the main difference between our vital pleasures and emotive intellectual ones. We are ever in search of our beloved Siva, who is our own realised self, in and through our own self, the self of others and the manifest universe. The yearning increases in geometrical progression as the vision increases in arithmatic progression. This is because the goal of the search, the beloved of our yearning, is the infinite Siva, but the means is the finite manifestations. But the renunciation of finite is infinite. This renunciation is the deepest reality of the human soul. Hence Siva can be attained only through renunciation. But outgrowing possessions and the possessive instinct we move towards the eternal through the path which is a series of progressively increasing field of renunciation. Thus the truth is the renunciation that excels in a total experience (सर्व कर्म सत्यास).

The impossibility of possessing the infinite is not a mere logical proposition, but a direct intuitive experience. In flying through the space, the boundlessness of it is intuitively experienced, and in this experience lies the joy of flying. The famous passages of Bible assert that one can not live by bread alone. The human situation does not allow shutting itself within the bounds of mere necessities, for one feels oneself is infinitely much more than what is

merely necessary. Infinite, Siva gazes in the heart of Jiva. He feels within himself the incompleteness as if he is yet to be. There seems to be no end of his becoming. The hunger for the infinite has to be appeased. The biological self is roped in by necessities that are limited, but the intuitive self wants to break through the bondage. Freedom and bliss is what is at stake. The truth is not gaining material possessions, nor is it to be used to gain material purposes, but it is for realising our excellence which is Siva in our own self, for Siva is ever present within ourselves as our own being. Our coming into human situation is meaningless, if we cannot excell by realising Siva as our real being. Being is Siva and becoming is Jiva. Their relation is an eternal play of love and is the deepest mystery. This mystery is the source of all truth and beauty, which manifests as the eternal creation. To use the Upanishad's language, water as the river is the eternal lover, and again water as the ocean is the eternal beloved. The river, in its flow, waters all land, but has no real relation with them. Its relation is only with the ocean into whose bosom it must merge for ever. This is the spirit of renunciation of the Truth. While flowing river remains an individual though it is even then nothing but water, similarly Jiva is fully conscious of its individuality, though intuitively it is nothing but Brahman. The sense of overcoming obstacles and impediments, sorrows and sufferings, can be transcended when the merger is complete with the Beloved. In a poem in epic, painting or a drama, the central idea or the theme holds every sentence, rhyme, sonorous effect, lines of colour, light, shade, etc. in harmonious blending. This is attained through every part, but is not contained in any of them, but transcends them. If we detach any part from the central idea, we see multitude of words or colour, but not the final result, which is a poem or a painting. Similarly by knowing the parts of the universe, we can never understand Siva, who is infinite. Yet He is not beyond knowledge. Mere intellectual knowledge is partial for intellect is only the means of knowing Him. Just as a flower cannot be known merely by eye or nose. All the senses, when combined, give us the true knowledge of the flower. Similarly, we can contact Siva only through our whole being, which is manifested in action, emotion, volition and intelligence. Some call it wisdom, others prefer to call it love. The first emphasises the intellectual aspect, the other emotive aspect. But actually it is exhausted by neither. Experience, perhaps is a more comprehensive word. Thus excellingly resting in experience is the fruit of truth, Love or wisdom or experience in the process of its manifestation is bound to be accompanied with pain. Through pain only, the inherent joy of love can be attained. The truth is shining in excellence even throughout the process, yet manifests through the process in time. To use an oft-quoted Upanishadic passage, "Siva has chosen the Jiva and the revelation is complete." The one, who is in union in eternity, is being persued in time and space, in joys and

sorrows. Once the soul understands it is blissful and at rest. This excellent state is the Truth.

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम् सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः । मुंडकोपनिषद् ३.१.६

Truth excels not the false. By the truth, the way to Divine becomes a continuous current towards it. It is by renouncing all that is unreal that the one who is truthful excels in his own glory.

स्वयमेव जगद्भूत्वाः प्राविशज्जीवरूपतः । स्मार्तोपनिषद्

Siva transformed Himself into the Universe and then entered it in the form of soul, as the controller.

आश्रयत्व विषयत्व भागिनी निर्विभाग चित्तिरेव केवला । सर्वज्ञात्म

Absolute pure experience is the simultaneous subject and object in the realm of nescience.

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रे अस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।

तथा विद्वान्नामरूपाद्विमुक्तः परात्परं पुरुषं उपैति विद्वान् ॥ मुंडकोपनिषद् ३.२.८

Just as rivers of various forms having various names merge into the ocean devoid of their individual forms and names and can then be considered only as identical with ocean, the seer merges into the Supreme Godhead, losing the individual form and name and is then nothing else but the supreme Godhead.

अनुभवासना हि ब्रह्मविद्या । Shanker in Brahma Sutra Bhasya

The Supreme knowledge of Siva is considered to have been reached finally when it shines as an experience without the contamination of the thought or emotive process.

एवं यो वेद तत्त्वेन कल्पयेत् सोऽविशंकित । माण्डूक्यकारिका २.३०

One who has realised through the sacred teachings and rationality that the Supreme Being is the only reality which is falsely conceived as different deities etc. is the one who is authorised to give proper interpretation to the sacred lore to what it refers. One who does not know the Supreme Being can never comprehend the true meaning of the various passages in the Vedas.

तस्योदितिः नाम । स एष सर्वेभ्यः पाद्मभ्य उदिति

उदेति ह वै सर्वेभ्यः पाद्मभ्यो य एवं वेद ॥ छान्दोग्योपनिषत् १.६.७

Ut is the name of the Supreme Being for it denotes his quality. He is ever transcendent to all that is sinful and its results. Ut means transcendent. One who contemplates Him as such also goes, beyond the sin and its results.

(प्रतिष्ठित इति) स्वे महिम्नि, यदि वा न महिम्नोति । छान्दोग्योपनिषत् ७.२४.१

The transcendental Being is established in his own greatness or it may equally be said to be established in none else than Himself. He is never dependent or needs no other foundation for He is the ultimate existence or foundation of all that exists.

यतो धर्मं स्ततो जयः । महाभारत

Wherever the virtue resides, there only the excellence resides.

## Vedanta

The scriptures on which the whole of Hinduism and its philosophy is based is called Veda. Since it is a very large volume, the essential part dealing with reality or God, as compared to rituals, is collected separately and called Vedanta meaning the culmination of the Vedic lore. Vedavyasa or Badarayana codified it and systematically developed its metaphysics, eschaeotology, ethics, epistemology, etc. into his magnum opus Brahma sutra. There were undoubtedly earlier attempts to do so, and the views of those earlier authors are referred into the Sutras. But the present work surpassed them in its comprehensive and logical consistency so that they were gradually lost. Since *Panini* refers to it, the date of the present work has to be 1500 B.C. or earlier. Thus for the last three or four thousand years, the Vedanta text has been Brahma sutra. The various commentators during the centuries interpreted it variously. But the most ancient commentary available at present is the one by the pen of the great Master Sankara. He does refer to certain earlier commentaries, sometimes agreeing with him, at times differing with him, but we can not come to any definite conclusion about their views in absence of any work of those schools. Thus Sutra and Sankara Bhashya are the only ancient works of Vedanta available to us. Ramanuja, Madhwa, Vallabha, Nimbarta, Baldeva etc. have unsuccessfully tried to interpret Sutra in the light of Vaishnava tantras called Pancharatra and *Vaikhana*. As Sankara repeatedly points out the Sutra is not an independent philosophical work, but merely interpretative and categorical one. As a such the topic (अधिकरण) must directly refer to some in consistency apparent in the particular passage in the Upanishads and its resolution in times of the Upanishad. The Vaishnava picture becomes clear in the commentary of one Vaishnava writer called Suka who refers to the topics as belonging to the *Bhāgwata* text. Thus though he does not call it so, he wants to change *Brahma* sutra into Bhagawata Sutra. Since many moderners are obsessed with numerical strength, and since the number of Vaishnava interpreters is larger, they feel that there must have been a tradition considering Brahma



Sutra as an independent philosophical work, rather than the codifier of the wisdom of the Vedas. One must remember that soon after Sankara Bhaskara followed and integrated Sutra in terms of a qualified non-dualism of a particular variety. Iswara to him was identical with Brahman. He was at least true to the traditions of Upanishads no matter how wrong in interpreting its philosophy. He is not obsessed with Vaishnava sectarian works. Thus though there might have been a stream which insisted on realistic interpretation of the Veda and personality of God, there seems to be no justification to hold that it was in any way associated with Vaishnava sectarianism. But even a cursory glance at the Upanishad convinces one that their purport seems to be the mystic wisdom of the unity of God, soul and the world *Thibaut* though holding sutra to be dualistic does categorically state that Upanishads are non-dualistic. It is very difficult to agree that Vedavyasa misunderstood Veda. Schopenhauer, *Deussen* etc. have all understood by Vedanta, the school of Sankara. The Persian translation of Dara Shikoh, the son of Muslim emperor Shahajahan also interprets them in this light. All the other schools of thought including Buddhists and Jains while referring to Vedanta always refer to non-sectarian non-dualistic view of it, and never Vaishnava view. Thus there is no proof whatsoever that Vedanta's Vaishnava interpretation pre-dates Ramanuja. Moreover, in their religious life, they emphasise the works of devotion by Alvars rather than the major Upanishad. This also is an important clue to find the authenticity of their interpretation. In the tradition of Sankara it is the Upanishads that form the major religious liturgy.

Thus upto date an unbroken traditions of Vedanta, not contaminated by the thoughts of any other tradition exists in the order of Sankara, coming as it does directly from Sri Dakshinamurti at the beginning of the creation.

According to Sankara ignorance of one's own reality is the cause of the universe and the feeling of bondage in the soul. The knowledge of unity is the sole cause of liberation from it. In one of his famous pithy verse he states the essence of Vedanta as the identity of soul and God as the liberating truth, and bondage to be unreal. *Apayana* Dikshita in his *Siddhanta-lesha* has summarised different ways to obtain this mystic vision of union. *Madhusudana* has given rational approach to the different methodologies. *Vidyaranaya* has summarised no less than fifteen approaches. Thus Vedanta while asserting the truth as one, and its mystic vision as the only means, accords recognition to multiple approaches to this vision. This liberal attitude has often confused both, the metaphysician and the theologian. At times *Vadantis* argue against each other so vehemently as regards to their own approach to be the best that a novice will assume them to be belonging to different schools or religions

altogether. But on the other hand, this broad mindedness has kept it as the only ancient living religion and philosophy. Each generation has felt free to interpret the basic truth in the language and cultural moves of his own generation, without feeling fettered by the earlier interpretation, though strictly adhering and following the original texts, and with unbound faith and devotion to all the earlier writers. Thus Vedanta is the science of Reality, rather than a dogma, religious or philosophical. The unbroken bond or thread through the infinite approaches is the faith that Siva alone is the ultimate truth and the seeker himself is the Siva.

The greatest contribution of Sankara to the Vedanta is epistemological. There were many schools which held to the absoluteness of Siva, but in order to explain the relative, they felt some sort of reality has to be imparted to it. Following the unbroken tradition from Rigveda onwards Sankara gave the most logical explanations based on the concept of superimposition. Metaphysically Absolute may be pre-existent and self-revealing, but temporally and factually or experientially the relative soul is the self-revealing and pre-existing entity. Thus in stead of asserting the Absolute, Sankara points out that the self in us is to be searched into, and the method of search is as simple as to find out what is really the self-bereft of all, adjuncts. To put it clearly one can say that to try to find out what is really 'I' apart from all that can be experienced as not 'I' is the key to the final wisdom. One of the clearest way is to see the three states of consciousness, waking, dreaming and sleeping as the states that 'I' passes through remaining untouched by any of them. This takes away the false reality that one has assigned to the body-mind-complex as the real 'I'. But to get to the truth one must meditate the truths, as prescribed by Vedanta without the cumberances of everyday activity that imposes its own compulsions. Faith in Siva, preceptor and scriptures is a must for the dawning of the wisdom. Control of mind and senses, makes the enquiry possible. But all these are accessories. The real issue that sprouts is the enquiry of the cause of the universe including the self.

Prior to enquiry, devotion to the Supreme Lord and dedicating of all actions as his worship is to be followed. One can either select a form or a name to keep continuity of feeling Him according to one's temperament. Guru, Father, Mother, Spouse, Son, Friend, Deities or any other form that suits because of intense affections, will serve the purpose. But one must stick to one symbol only. Aum is the most efficacious name because it easily lends itself to be divided into three corresponding to three states consciousness. Thus in the spiritual discipline of Advaita Aum takes precedence over all other sound symbols. Similarly Sivalinga takes precedence over all other form symbols, for it lends

itself easily to the universal interpretation. Linga is the space in motion. All natural motions are conical and when we gaze into the infinite sky we see the universe as linga. Moreover it is three mensional Aum as written in the Sanskrit language of Devnagari script. The normal (ओम्) or (ॐ) is not used as a symbol of the highest but (ॐ) in the Sanskrit language of Devanagari script. But as pointed out earlier, any symbol that one is attached to will serve the purpose.

The ethical life is an integral part of Vedanta aspirant. One must be bold enough to renounce all if necessary for the goal. Ethical life implies giving up the gains that accrue out of immorality. Passion, Anger and miserliness are the basic sins that one must avoid. Truth and love are the virtues one must practice thoroughly. Social responsibilities come next in the hierachy of values. One's duty to the family, parents, community and country in this particular order must be fulfilled to the best of one's capacities until an intense passion to wisdom dawns. It is the time when the experience of Siva directly becomes the only thing that matters, that one has transcended the path of action. From this time onwards, all activities indulged must necessarily be in harmony with the goal of unifying the consciousness that if divided (individualised) into Jiva and Siva. If for any reason whatsoever, one is not able to take the plunge into this harmony, the wisdom will elude him. But the seed will remain through reincarnations and will definitely sprout at the appropriate time. Hence one of the most important spiritual disciplines in Vedanta is to learn the Upanishads and its associated literature from the teachers who have themselves not only mastered them literally but also have lived accordingly. Often this is painted by the uninitiate as mere scholarship, and is often derided. But what worship of the image is to a devotee, Japa to a nadi, dhyana to a yogi, awakening of *kundalini* to a *kaula*, capturing the spirit of Veda is to an Advaiti. He does not study to learn but to remove the dirt of ignorance from his apparent self. Since Buddhi (Rational Comprehension) is the highest instrument of wisdom that human beings possess, Vedanta perfects it and his Sadhana is basically to use this instrument. But his approach is to reveal the mystery that is hidden in the scriptures as well as the mystery hidden in his own soul. Scriptures reveal that which is in the soul. Thus just as light reveals the pot which is existing on the ground, Vedic texts reveal the truth that is already within the soul. Soul is directed by our own self. Hence revelation needs no other accessory Sadhana but to rationally comprehend it. Since no other theology accepts that God is already at hand, they all work out a rich mysterious methodology to attain it. knowing well that whatever is attained is bound to be lost, Vedanta lays down the easiest and the only efficacious method

of wisdom. It is to understand and live the unity of Being that already exists. Thus learning the purport of Upanishads, through a preceptor is the first step in gaining wisdom. Having learnt it, one must reason it out and harmonise it with all other experiences and build up a rational logical base of this harmony. Preceptor may guide the aspirant in this, but basically it is a lonely path, for everyone's experiences are his own, and others can only faintly *cognise* it. Once these two steps are over, the main hurdle in wisdom is overcome. Now it is the time and continual living that brings out the flash of wisdom that dispells ignorance in its entirety and the difference is entirely lost. Man has attained the stage of a Muni, rishi, Brahmana. One of the most important contribution of Vedanta, following the whole tradition of Veda, Smriti, Purana, Itihasa and *Agama* is that the world is to be transformed into Brahman, and the methodology is to view it properly. Misconstruing we see Brahman as the world and knowingly, we see nothing but Brahman. This is not pantheism for in that view of name and forms as such are *Theos* whereas in Vedanta the substance is Brahmana and name and form are merely transfixed on it, through ignorance. Thus just as we clearly understand that in a painting Rama and Sita are not really existent, but only the paper is really existent, but due to the colours the paper remaining a paper appears like a tree, road, lake Rama, Sita etc., the man of wisdom knows that Brahman alone is the really existent and the soul, space, time, earth, etc. are apparent due to the power of Siva known as Shakti, which is basically nescience. But just as the knowledge does not reduce the joy of viewing the painting, or appreciating it, the wise enjoy and appreciate the universe. But the sense of reality is entirely lost. Just as the viewer is basically a witness the wise is also merely a witness of the cosmic manifestation which includes his own body-mind complex. Since a sympathetic critic alone is the best guide to understand a piece of art, wise one who is sympathetic, being the alter-ego of the cosmic creator, and a critic being unattached to it is the best guide to understand the cosmic play. He is the one who has attained the highest point of the Vedanta in his life. Vedanta has started living in him and through him. The society is to be judged by the number of such individuals living in its midst. Vedanta's contribution to the world is the production of such lives.

अन्तरान्तर्बहिश्चैव देहिनां देहपूरणी ।  
स्वसंवेद्य स्वरूपा सा दृश्या देशिकदर्शितः ॥

(प्रपंचसार)

Filling the body of the living beings present inside and outside, Known by those who are shown by the preceptor as the one who is of the nature of self-enlightenment.

सकारं चहकारं चलोपयित्वा प्रयोजयेत् ।  
संधि वै पूर्वरूपाख्यं ततोऽसौ प्रणवो भवेत् ॥

(प्रपंचसार)

Aum is the amalgamation form of Siva and Jiva represented by SA & Ha.

अर्चा कार्या नित्यशः शैवपीठे स्यादर्प्यगैर्लोकपालैस्तदस्त्रैः ।

सभ्यकपूजां वस्तुभिर्मन्त्रजापैः प्रोक्तं ह्येतन्मृत्युभेतुर्विधानम् ॥ (प्रपंचसार)

offering of worship with proper mantras and all accessories daily leads one to attain the state beyond death.

रम्यमप्युज्ज्वलमपि मनसोपि समीप्सितम् ।

लोकविद्वेषणं बेषं न गृदवीयात्कदाचन ॥

(प्रपंचसार)

One must externally behave or wear a cloak which is not appreciated by people around even though one may like such a behaviour and even though it may be really good and beneficial.

लोकोद्वेगकरीयाच याच कर्मनिकृन्तिवी ।।

स्थित्युच्छेदकरी यांच तां गिरां नैव भाषयेत् ॥

The language that creates repulsion in the mind of the people around and directs them away from the good acts suitable to their stage of evolution or that which disturbs the social and other equilibrium must not be indulged in.

शिव प्रसादेन विना सद्धिः शिवप्रसादेन विना बुद्धिः ।

शिवप्रसादेन विना युक्तिः शिवप्रसादेन विना मुक्तिः ॥

(सर्ववेदान्तरीय प्रपंचसार संगक)

Without the grace of Siva neither purity of mind, nor wisdom, nor meditation, nor liberation can be attained.

अज्ञान सर्पदष्टस्य ब्रह्मजानौषधं विना ।

किमुवेदंश्च शास्त्रैश्च किमुमंत्रैः किमौषधैः ॥

(विवेक चूडामणि)

One bitten by poisonous snake of ignorance can not be treated without the knowledge of Brahman. The repetition of Veda, study of philosophy, practicing liturgy or taking medicine is of no help.

शान्ता महान्तो विनसन्ति सन्तो व सन्त वल्लोकहितचरन्तः ।

तीर्णा स्वयं भीममवार्षणं जनानू अहेतुनाऽन्यान् अपि तारयन्तः ॥ (विवेक चूडामणि)

The great wise ones live in peace with themselves and the cosmos, moving about doing good to people without any return like the spring Having crossed the dangerous oceans of the world, they out of mere compassion continuously strive to liberate others from the same.

## Sri Dakshinamurti Peeth

An Introduction

Sanandana, Sanaka, Sanatana and Sanat-kumara—the four kumaras, were the first creations of Brahma. From birth they were imbued with high spiritual qualities of discrimination and dispassion and had no mind for anything but the vision of the ultimate Truth. So renouncing their father and his creation they sought the guidance of Lord Siva Who, they were told, had imparted knowledge to their father also when he found himself overwhelmed by the stupendous task of creation. Lord Siva perceiving the intense spiritual mood and keen intellect of the Kumaras decided that the ordinary modes of teaching would not do, the naked Truth must be revealed instantly and in its pure light. So He assumed a very youthful benign form and sat under a spreading banyan tree facing the south. When the Kumaras accompanied by a throng of rishis approached Him and offered due worship seeking His discipleship, the Lord without uttering a word showed them the *Chinmudra*, seeing which the disciples were enlightened at once.

From that moment the path of renunciation and knowledge (निवृत्तिमार्ग) was thrown open to the world and a tradition was ushered in, which through apostolical *spiritual* succession (गुरुशिष्यपरंपरा) has come down to this day. Sri Dakshinamurti (or Dakshinabhimukha) so called because He faces the southern direction, is thus the first and foremost Guru, imparter of Supreme Knowledge and the chosen-deity (इष्टदेवता) of all Sri Paramahamasa Sannyasins who belong to this tradition and renounce everything for the sake of this God - knowledge (ब्रह्मज्ञान).

The concept of Guru has a very deep Philosophical significance and as the World-Teacher (लोक-गुरु) Sri Dekshinamurti also assumes a new and striking form. Speaking of it the Krishna Yajur Veda says :

शेमुषी दक्षिणा प्रोक्ता सा यस्याभीक्षणे मुखम् ।

दक्षिणाभिमुखः प्रोक्तः शिवोसौ ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥



"The mental state in *samadhi* is called *dakshina*, the skilful (because it accomplishes what nothing else can). That which is seen through the *mukha* (portal) of *dakshina* is the Dakshinabhimukha i.e. Dakshinamurti and that is Siva; so have the Preachers of Brahman declared." That is to say, Dakshinamurti is that Supreme Truth which is directly perceived through the mind that has become one with the *swarupa* of Brahman while dwelling on it in *samadhi* (ब्रह्माकारवृत्ति). The Vedas speak of that Brahman as *swayamjyoti*, the self-effulgent light of consciousness which makes the sun and moon to shine. Who can reveal that Supreme light? It shines by itself giving light to all. In this respect Sri Dakshinamurti is not only the foremost but the only Guru. Wherever truth is perceived it is Sri Dakshinamurti alone that is revealing Himself through the human-medium.

In this light Sri Dakshinamurti comes very close to us and assumes a precious role in life with a message for all. This message is the essence of the upanishads and is being given to us through His gracious *Chinmudra*. The significance of the mudra should therefore be clearly grasped.

*Chinmudra* is formed by drawing the right forefinger away from its neighbouring three upright fingers and joining its tip with that of the thumb. The three fingers held upright represent the three states of being—waking, dream and deep-sleep (जाग्रत्, स्वप्न, सुषुप्ति), each of them composed of the three principles of the enjoyed, enjoyer and enjoyment (भोग्य, भोक्ता, भोग). The forefinger symbolises the *jiva* or individual self. When it is one with the group of the above three, that is the world of experience, it is separated from the thumb which stands for the immovable, unchanging and untouched principle of Truth, *Paramatman*, Supreme-self. When through discrimination the *jiva* knows that he is totally different from the experiential world of the three states and identifies himself with the *Paramatman* through the awareness "I am the eternal witness of all that is", then all ignorance and the sorrows of transmigration (संसार) that flows from it cease; the *jiva* attains liberation (मोक्ष). This awareness indicated by the *Chinmudra* is clearly described in the Kaivalya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda thus :

त्रिषुधामसु यद्भोग्यं भोक्ता भोगश्च यद् भवेत् ।  
तेभ्यो विलक्षणः साक्षी चिन्मात्रोहं सदाशिवः ॥

Because it gives the knowledge of the "*Chinmatra*," it is called "*chinmudra*". This knowledge cannot be conveyed directly by words, since it is absolutely subjective, a pure awareness of the self without medium or relation to anything. To impart this awareness to the eager aspirants filled with devotion and dispassion, the Lord out of His unlimited grace has contrived this ingenious mystic device palpable to the visual perception as the *Pranava* (ॐ) is to the auditory

There are five different Vedic descriptions of Sri Dakshinamurti's form varying in the symbols of the four hands. But *chinmudra* is common to all and is the chief characteristic of this particular manifestation of the Lord. The mudras or postures of the other hands too are symbolic of the qualities that enhance or pave the path to Supreme knowledge. For instance one standard meditation-verse (ध्यानश्लोक) describes the Lord displaying the *chinmudra* in lower right hand and an axe in the upper, holding the hind legs of a leaping deer in the upper left hand and resting the other left palm on the knee of left leg folded in *padmasana*. The axe represents dispassion, for it cuts down the tree of worldliness as told in the Gita : असंगशस्त्रेण हृदयेन छित्त्वा. The leaping deer is symbolic of the restless mind. This has to be held firm through the practice of restraint (शम) and other auxiliary disciplines like दम, उपरति, तितिक्षा etc. The resting palm suggests perfect poise and ease, the natural and free state of liberation (सहजावस्था) resulting from the *chinmudra*-knowledge. Sometimes a flower is mentioned as being held in the resting fingers, to denote the beauty and bliss that blossom in that state.

The *Vina*-Dakshinamurti displays apart from the *chinmudra* a *vina* (stringed musical instrument), rosary and the Vedas. *Vina* has very deep significance pertaining to yoga-practice, the awakening of kundalini as well as the *Nada-upasana*. Rosary conveys the power of meditating or reflecting on the mantra (मनन-शक्ति).

In the Medha-Dakshinamurti the *vina* is replaced by a pot of nectar (अमृत) which stands for *moksha*, the supreme fulfilment and perfection of life untouched by death or decay. A variation of the same has two pots along with *chinmudra* and Vedas. The second pot stands for the nectar in *sahasrara*, thus emphasising the *Kundalini-yoga*.

Another form depicts the Lord as holding a flame, a snake and the Vedas. Flame obviously refers to Saguna Brahman and the serpent, like the *vina*, is a standard symbol of yogic power, the kundalini shakti.

The limpid cool stream of Ganga gushing from the matted locks and the ambrosial rain of light from the crescent moon on the crest are of course inevitable items of all images of Siva they breathe an air of abundant bliss and purity putting out the conflagration of worldly afflictions. They also emphasise the message of pouring out peace and harmonious progress by one who has drunk deep within.

All this has been enumerated here to show clearly that Sri Dakshinamurti

is the giver of the highest knowledge and Bliss and is Himself the sweetest fulfilment of life.

In the course of ages when *dharma*, the path to perfection, gets lost in the wild overgrowth of human passions, delusions and evil deeds, then the Lone Path-maker comes to clear the way and re-establish pilgrims in the right direction. For, that is His promise and the nature of His mercy. Drawn by that Sri Dakshinamurti also had to incarnate in the age of Kali when the *dharma* of Vedas was nearly extinct. This time seeing the degradation of people's intellectual and spiritual standards the Lord could no more sit under the tree in silence and enlighten disciples through signs and symbols. He now came as Sri Sankara Bhagavat Pada, the great Acharya, resplendent with wisdom and renunciation, roaming the country from end to end, spreading his message like flames in all directions and consuming every opponent to the Vedic tradition. To consolidate the work and leave a lasting legacy, the Lord laid down the ancient knowledge in the form of copious commentaries on the scriptures, small treatises and beautiful hymns blending deep philosophical thought with high emotional quality. Also, with great insight into the times that were to come, the Acharya created *Mathas* and *Pithas* all over the country to serve as institutions devoted to study and preaching of this knowledge respectively.

Since study requires stability and application at one place in a particular environment, *mathas* were fixed and few while the *Pithas* were mobile bodies formed by a number of illustrious monks and scholars led by an acharya. Each *pitha* in due course developed its own following, field and characteristic pattern of work. Some, especially in North India, were lost in the onslaught of foreign invasion and persecution, both physical and cultural. A few managed to survive and even to flourish.

One such blessed *Pitha* that has preserved to this day the traditions of the Acharya, is the Sri Dakshinamurti Pitha, a tradition that is at once vital and significant in its very name. True to it, this *Pitha* has jealously guarded the intellectual purity of its Philosophy as given to us in the works of Acharya and his successor Bhagawan Sureswara and Padmapada and has stuck to the worship of Sri Dakshinamurti as an almost solitary exception entire expanse of the North.

When roaming about in large numbers became difficult, cumbersome and even at times dangerous, the acharyas of this tradition started spending a major part of their time in a garden in the vicinity of Lord Sri Viswanatha at Kasi. There, under a banyan tree, the Lord used to be worshipped unostentatiously in a Siva-linga. Later on a small marble image of *Medha* Dakshinamurti was installed. In recent years an enlarged shrine was built with a new

marble image about three feet high, sculptured and installed according to scriptural injunctions and thus endowed with divine beauty.

The acharyas of this *Pitha* set an example of a high spiritual life of utter renunciation and humility coupled with deep scholarship and devotion to the Lord, Guru and scriptures. Kashi being the centre of Sanskrit learning and culture the *Pitha* soon got converted into a regular *matha* or establishment for monks and students. Three generation back as many as seven free-kitchens (*anna-kshetra*) were run by the *pitha* in Kashi, feeding all who came there.

Then came the tremendous flux in world affairs, the introduction of technology and the after-math of war. The country too went through dramatic changes. The ancient city of Indraprastha [Delhi] once more became the capital of a free Indian Government. At this stage the illustrious acharya of this *pitha*, Ananta Sri Swami Nrsimha Giriji Maharaj, Mahamandaleshwar also the Acharya of Sri Niranjani Akhada, happened to be invited by devotees at Delhi for *satsanga*. His inimitable lectures and loving, saintly bearing exercised the minds of the citizens so profoundly that the Swami had to yield to their requests every year and spend many months at a stretch in the capital. As the result of his contact for twelve years a permanent centre for preaching was established there in 1951 under the name of Sri Viswanatha Sannyasa Ashrama

Situated on the sands of sacred Yamuna, with a spacious lecture hall, stately marble temples of Sri Viswanatha and Sri Lakshmi Narayana, monks-quarters, library and free-ayurvedic dispensary, Sri Sannyasa Ashrama continues to be the source of religious fervour that has since then permeated the entire city. The importance and scope of the institution have been greatly enlarged by the establishment of a Sanskrit College known as Sri Viswanatha Sanskrita Mahavidyalaya, providing free hostel facilities and education up to "Acharya" (equivalent to M.A. degree) of the Benaras Sanskrit University, with which it is affiliated.

Even before the starting of this college, the matha at Kashi had set the example and reputation of a well-established college by converting its hostel into Sri Dakshinamurti Sanskrita Mahavidyalaya with free hostel facilities for forty monks and a student rolls running to double the number.

Thus the *pitha* came to function in full swing through its centres of preaching (सत्संग, स्वाध्याय). But a centre for training (साधना) of the monks was still lacking. This was felt greatly by the present Acharya of the Pitha Ananta Sri Swami Maheshananda Giriji Maharaj.

Once during his travels His Holiness happened to visit Mount Abu and was very much impressed by its spiritual atmosphere and many other qualities ideally suited for a training centre of monks. As the wish of the Swami grew stronger it enlarged in size also and at last, through the will of the Lord, assumed the proportion of an organisation which will spread the message of Sri Dakshinamurti in the western part of the country. As a result of this Sri Dakshinamurti-Pitha-Mahamandal was formed in 1962 with its head-quarters at Mt Abu. The training of monks forms an essential part of its manifold aims which are just beginning to materialise in effective shape.

In this age when, more than ever, the tide of materialism is gaining ground and gathering momentum and threatens to sweep away humanity off its spiritual moorings, there still is a hope that atleast the few sincerely thoughtful will see and understand the outlines of truth if presented in the proper light. Truth is eternally one and the same. But though in itself unchanging, its presentation can be varied according to the capacities of people. This is the era of intellectualism and the world needs must know the Truth, approach God, by first satisfying the reasoning power. In such a state we can confidently say that the Dakshinamurti tradition holds the key in its hand; no other presentation of Philosophy can rival its intellectual purity, penetration and completeness. It does not, however, deny emotion but provides for it a fully developed and unique system of *upasana* (worship) and takes the yearning soul past all sentiment and speculation to the direct experience of Truth beyond both. It fulfills exactly the upnishadic command "शरत्तन्मयो भवेत्—Like the arrow, be one with it"—for, the Dakshinamurti-Discipline is verily a clean and straight flight of the unerring arrow that cleaves the target and remains there. Such directness and oneness alone can give real and lasting peace and freedom which every one hankers after.

The Vedas never tire of exhorting us to seek the Supreme Knowledge here and now. The religion or path that promises something in an after-life is meant for infants. "If you do not attain it here, great is the loss" says the Sama Veda. For this then we have to go to the source of knowledge, the very form of it (ज्ञान विग्रह), the Divinity displaying the *chinmudra*; and, sitting at its feet we have to pray in the words of the Rishi of Yajur Veda : "अजात इत्येवं कश्चिद् भीरुः प्रतिपद्यते रुद्र यत्ने दक्षिणं मुखं तेन मां पाहि नित्यम् ।" "O, Lord, destroyer of darkness, knowing thee alone to be the unborn, those filled with the fear of death do take shelter in thee. Do thou protect me with the benign grace of thine *Dakshinamukha* !"

—and the tradition is nothing but the Path to this altar; the great Acharyas have mercifully pointed out that path to us and are still keeping it clear for us to discover it and move in it onward step by step, developing and perfecting ourselves till the goal is reached. "स्वस्ति नः पराराय तमसः परस्तात् ।"