

Vedanta and Modern Society

VEDANTA SOCIETY

*Lectures on Vedanta
and
Modern Society*

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गणित

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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.*

PREFACE

*Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;
And vice sometimes by action dignified.
Within the infant rind of this small flower
Poison hath residence and medicine power:
For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part;
Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart,
Two such opposed beings encamp them still
In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will;
And where the worser is predominant,
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.*

Shakespeare

Humanity has reached a crossroad. Within a period of twenty years or so it went through the agony of the two World Wars. Since the end of the last war, during the last thirty years or so, we are living on the threshold of a nuclear holocaust. Humanity is at the mercy of two super states, and perhaps even those so-called super states are also at the mercy of a score or so individuals. During the millions of years that the homo sapiens have existed, they have never been in such a pitiable and dependent state. This is what modern science has given as a present to humanity for the complete confidence and faith that humanity reposed in it. Thus with the nuclear war-mongers of the two camps roaring in the horizon the process of desiccation of spiritual values from the human mind has set in. The earth seems to be a spiritual wasteland, and values but a mirage. Unless humanity is able to neutralise this base instinct, it is headed for total annihilation. Children have already turned to nihilism, for spiritualism seems to have failed. A vibrant

spiritual resurgence is the only practical solution for human survival. A devoted heart, boundless faith, deep intellectual introspection, love expressed as active sympathy, mystic intuitive experience and absolute fearlessness is the need of the hour.

Vedanta is concerned mainly with the supreme spiritual reality. This reality is the basis of external as well as the internal world. The identity of *Jiva* (internal) and *Shiva* (external) is the final truth. Though this is to be actually sought within the cavern of one's heart, yet once realised it explodes the barrier of the internal and external, leading to one homogeneous wholesome existence. Such individual realisation serves as a catalyst for the emergence of a deeper change in humanity. The divine state of blessedness does not remain a dream but becomes a reality in every day life. Such persons become capable of turning the mirage of spiritual and ethical values as a palpable reality. Myths, legends and scriptures open up the deep spiritual significance that is embedded in them. The 'joy' of science pales into insignificance in the Sun of Shiva-blessedness. India with its rich cultural heritage is the right spot to bring this blessedness to humanity. There is vast literature yet unpublished in the Indian languages which will prove a paradise to those interested in bringing a re-formation of modern society both in India and the rest of the world. It is bound to add to the references which will enrich humanity and its knowledge quantum.

Homo Sapiens is also socialis. As such he is under constant observation and judgement of other human beings, and in turn is an observer and judge of all those who come in his contact. He also observes the nature around him both in an intelligent and emotional manner. In doing so he evaluates and concludes a situation or a person as good or bad, and sometimes as indefinite. This is what is known as the 'value-judgement'. Values are not consciously created but 'discovered'. Psychologists may claim that social or individual or even the cosmic unconscious creates them, but as a matter of fact even this is only a judgement based on a 'value', which may at least involve a cause and effect syndrome. Thus we are right in claiming that values existed before our birth and will outlast our death. Values in

particularity may change, but value as such persists. Just as the content of our knowledge may change, but knowledge as such goes on existing, for the changed-knowledge is also knowledge, similarly values change but a changed value is also a value. Hence a value-less human being is contradiction in terms. It is in this sense that value is eternal. Values can never be transient as objects are transient. Values are like mathematical laws. Mathematics may change models. Decimal system, Pentad system, etc., have given way to the Diad system in the computer age, but the eternity of laws remain. Similarly the law of love as a value is eternal though models and modulations of love may change.

Human society is more potently affected by values than any other art or science. One may not take cognisance of these laws but they affect us all the same. Values may be subdivided as universal values, categorical values, true values, human values, cultural values, religious values, national values, social values, etc. But all values are necessarily 'demanding'. They dictate 'should do' rather than 'should be'. In ancient India *Dharma* and *Gyana* were subdivisions of vedas based on this. Jaimini dealt with what one 'should do', whereas Badarayana dealt with what 'should be'. Bochenski in the west has dealt with this problem, though somewhat loosely. Aesthetic values, he points out, are 'should be' values for they deal with beauty, elegance, sublimity and so forth. Hindus for that very reason have included joy in 'Brahman' rather than Dharma group. No individual can be entirely bereft of 'should do' whether he calls himself an atheist or a cynic. He expects from other members of society what he will claim is to be complied by all members. Similarly a country may claim to be secular, yet it expects some duties from the populace. Even the charvakas of ancient India expected their members to observe the rules or laws laid down by the dominant group or the king. Thus every individual is attached to some religion. Irreligion is only a religion which is not my religion. Criminal law is based on certain values, and no social group or country lacks it totally.

Values must be inculcated in children at the earliest ages. Cultural, social or national values must be implanted in

schools, compulsorily in all the groups of society, majority or minority, tribals or otherwise scheduled. These cannot be inculcated merely didactically. They require a medium to be transmitted just as sound needs a medium for transmission. Language, history, geography, sciences, mathematics, psychology, etc., are all such mediums, provided the teachers possess proper vision and are ready to convey it. This is the only method to educate children apart from literating them. Vedanta's major contribution to modern society is to lay the foundations of intellectual and emotional education. The present ills of modern society spring from a lack of value structure which can be intellectually perceived and emotionally felt by a scientific mind. By supplying this corrective modern society can become the harbinger of paradise on this earth *Sampurnanjagadeva nandanavanam*.

Bharatiya Sanskriti Samaj arranged this series of lectures at the FICCI auditorium, New Delhi in 1987. 1987 has been an year of intense search within as far as India is concerned with such issues as the President, the Prime Minister, scandals of Bofors, submarines, etc. The dominant ruling congress party has been functioning anti-democratically and un-democratically, since its inception in 1967. But the present observation of whimsical actions is a new nadir. India is bound to see some fundamental changes in not too distant a future. Vedanta is bound to become the bedrock of future changes. We hope the thoughts enshrined in these lectures will help in laying the foundations of this change.

*Shankar Math
Mount Abu
Bhadra Sankranti*

MAHESHANAND GIRI

LECTURE I

We had discussed the art of living earlier, the next problem we will take up is modern society, the field in which we have to practice this art of living. The word society is derived from the root 'socius' in Latin which basically means a companion. Actually it implies where human beings live together as a group, because that is what we mean by a companion—living as a group. People may live with each other without forming a group but that does not create a society. Also, that group must be in a situation in which the dealings of each individual in that group is for the good of all them, that is, members of the group strive towards common welfare. If members of a group interact with each other, but do not help each other toward a common goal, toward the ideal of common welfare, then one cannot call it a society. In other words, by society we mean companionship, because the concept of companion is intertwined with the idea of helping each other toward the same goal.

The society that we will discuss here is modern society because that is where we have to live. Modern means that which is at present with us. No doubt the word modern also implies just now. But 'just now' is merely a concept.

In the present context we can say that from 1450 AD onwards a definite change in the social structure was seen all over the world. Although the ball started rolling with the Reformation in Europe, but somewhere in the mid-fifteenth century there was a complete change of attitude towards certain basic factors of life. From an idealistic culture we moved towards a sensate culture or what is commonly known as the scientific culture. What is the major premise of

modern science? It believes that all what is objective is real, all what is valuable is always sensory. In other words, whatever we receive through our senses that knowledge alone is reliable. All other concepts must be reduced in terms of this sensuous knowledge. This led to a change. Though it may have started in Europe, yet slowly this modern social conception, this modern culture, this modern scientific outlook pervaded all over the world.

We are all living in that culture where all cognitions are to be reduced to, what a Vedantin will call, the *jagrat* level. As human beings we are continuously moving in three states of consciousness. Sensory perceptions are at the *jagrat* level, that is, the waking state. Then we move to the dream state where there are no sensuous perceptions. But can we deny its reality? Modern science and modern social outlook want us to forget about the dream state that we all experience. Whenever a Vedantin talks about the dream state, people will immediately tell him to forget about that state. But one experiences the dream state as much as one experiences the waking state. On what objective criteria can they say that we must reject the dream experience apart from the fact that there is a superstitious attachment to the waking state. In short, modern science does not want to consider this state. If, at all, this state has to be discussed, then it is taken for granted that it is only a reflection of what has been experienced in the waking state.

The third state which we experience is the state of deep sleep. In this state there are no perceptions—neither are there any sensual perceptions nor any mental perceptions. Deep sleep is the state in which we experience nothing but joy. It is bereft of all objective experience. Modern science wants us to forget about this state. This view is based on the subjective experience which modern science does not want to discuss, because that is the source of all intuitive knowledge. Though the senses are not active and the mind is not active in deep sleep state, yet we experience something so deep, so touching, so intuitive that this is the only state from which we get up absolutely relaxed and fresh. If, for a few days, we do not experience that state, we take all kinds of tranquillisers so that we can experience that state. In spite of this modern science, modern social outlook does not want to analyse it.

Of the three states of consciousness, arbitrarily two-thirds of our life is, so to say, cut away by the modern scientific outlook which forms the modern social outlook. This is the reason why more and more emphasis is placed on chemical, physical and biological interpretations of our experiences and values. Everything must be reduced in terms of physical, chemical or biological phenomena.

Some psychoanalysts and psychologists perceive the mind as something of an active nature. But being influenced by the modern scientific outlook, even they try to reduce all psychological phenomena in terms of what has been experienced through the senses. The view that the mind is an active agent is generally denied. We are what we experienced in our childhood or, some may even say, what we experienced while we were in the womb. Some experience on a sensuous level has shaped our mind the way it is. The mind is not an active agent in itself. If this is the case of psychological phenomena, then what to talk of religious or metaphysical experiences. The modern scientific outlook decries these experiences entirely. It goes to the extent of repudiating them as something fantastic, something which does not talk about the reality as it is. It emphasises that this is an unscientific way of looking at things. The modern scientific outlook goes to the extent of saying that even if this leads to an experience, it is meaningless and has no utility. This particular attitude of sensate life predominates all our thinking since the middle of the fifteenth century.

Vedanta has defined the framework within which we have to practice the art of living. We must first define what we mean by a Vedantic frame. Acharya Shankara has expressed this in a very short verse.¹ He says that even though the field of Vedanta is vast,² it deals with the totality of human experience at all different strata, yet it is a very short, terse form. Brahma alone expresses itself as the source and matter. *Brahmev jiva*—the soul is nothing but God Himself. In short, the Vedantic outlook is absolutely opposed to the sensate outlook. In the latter God has no place whereas in the former God is present within one as one's own self. The two viewpoints are totally contradictory. One doubts the very existence of God, while the other emphasises that God is the reality which cannot be contradicted. It believes that since we ourselves are God then how can we contradict our

self. No one can deny oneself. The whole of the sensate world that we are seeing is nothing but God manifested through different adjuncts. God is present in us as the perceiver and He is also present everywhere as the perceived. Just as the scientific outlook stresses that everything is nothing but sensuous, Vedanta maintains that there is nothing but God.

What is liberation?³ It is nothing but getting established in this truth—where there is no division between the seer and the seen and both are sublimated. We are neither the perceiver nor the perceived but something which has made perception itself possible. Always being in that state without any contradiction within our own self that is what we mean by the term liberation or *moksha*. This *brahman* is non-dual (*advitiya*). It has absolutely nothing which can be limited in any way either by time, space or causation. Nothing can ever limit it or place it within constraints. This is the message of all the Vedas (*shrutiya pramanam*): Even though there are many *shrutis*, many Vedic passages, they all aim to produce the same result. That is why the word *pramanam* is used in the singular. The different Vedas, the various passages of the Vedas do not convey contradictory messages. They all convey the same message without any difference whatsoever.

We can say that the whole conception of modern society is sensate as compared to the conception of Vedanta which is divine. The question arises: though this may be the most ancient wisdom of mankind, can it contribute to modern social living? Can Vedanta be lived in modern society? Is Vedanta relevant today? We can go even further and analyse—can it be an instrument of common welfare? All these questions must be discussed thoroughly because merely saying that Vedanta is an ancient wisdom will place it in the category of archaeology where it can only be studied. It will not be a living guide for us either in our own life, or for the sake of humanity or even nation building. The fact that Vedanta in modern society is practical, relevant and the only instrument through which common welfare can be achieved is what we shall try to assert here. The main reason is that the sensate culture has failed by its own weight. A few years ago people could have doubted the utility of Vedanta. But today we find that science has created its own Frankenstein. It is being killed by its own momentum. We

are in a very peculiar situation. We see that a person who discovers a hydrogen bomb, something which can destroy humanity, is considered a nobel laureate. The very idea, the very conception hurts an ordinary individual.

People have begun to wonder whether they are going on the right track, whether their direction is right. Until a few decades ago, the movement was linear. It seemed as if technology would deliver us from want, from poverty and all that which comes with it. In India even today a part of that superstition persists. Even in highly civilised societies like the United States we find that they have not been able to remove poverty, not been able to remove hunger. It is true no doubt that hunger and poverty have been removed to some extent and these societies have attained a high standard of living. But the crucial point is that they have not been able to eradicate them completely. If they have not been able to eliminate these ills even in their own countries, is it possible that their advanced technology would be able to do so from the whole of human society? Of course people may say that this failure to eradicate these ills completely is due to the fact that those techniques have not been utilised properly. But the question remains—while taking credit for all the achievements, why is technology not ready to accept all the faults that stem from it? This is where superstition comes in. Every development is immediately traced back to science, but whenever we question this illegitimate way of life, it is immediately traced back to values. Why has science failed to give us those values? There must be something fundamentally wrong in the scientific way of thinking.

Acharya Shankara has expressed this in a very beautiful verse. Why is it that these values are disturbed? Fundamental values are values of renunciation, values of sacrifice. The moment we get rid of those values and try to emphasise the sensate aspect of life, the sensory perceptions of life, contradictions arise. The Lord, he says, is playing in the garden of Vedanta like a peacock. He says that a peacock has a crown-like thing on the top of its head and because of this the peacock is called *shikhi*.⁴ The Lord is also a *shikhi*. Why is the Lord a *shikhi*? *Aakash* always adorns His head. *Aakash* is the space. Everything else can be removed from our

minds, from our conceptions—materially everything can be removed—but space is something which can never be removed. As far as the material world is concerned, space is irremovable. The Lord's crown is *aakash* which is irremovable. No matter how much we try to get rid of space, we cannot get rid of it. Space is not a negative concept as some people seem to think. It is not merely the absence of things. Space makes all movements possible. Any one who has *aakash*, that is, the absence of all material things, as his crown, he alone can give the value to life. Generally, people consider space to be something meaningless and without any value. But, on the contrary, it is most valuable because out of that space the whole universe comes into being. Without space there would be nothing. In short, we must make *aakash*—the absence of all sensuous knowledge—our crown.

The Lord always has snakes around his body.⁵ *Samast phaninam netra, ananta* and *vasuki* are the kings of snakes. He adorns them on His body like an ornament. Generally, a snake is considered to be the most dreaded of all animals. As soon as a person sees a snake, he is afraid. That which makes us fearful all the time is what is to be worn as an ornament. Such should be the state of our fearlessness. Modern society is geared to make us feel afraid all the time. We are afraid of wars, we are afraid of everything. Today in India we are afraid of death all the time.

Vinobha Bhave has recorded that he was invited to attend the inaugural function of the Benaras Hindu University. The then Viceroy had also been invited. Gandhiji was also present at the occasion. As is the custom among Indians, they regard the king as the manifestation of the divine power. Vinobha Bhave records that people were trying to catch a glimpse of the Viceroy, they were trying to move close to him and trying to touch him. Touching another person is very natural as far as Indians are concerned. The Viceroy was surrounded on all sides by the police. Everybody was being pushed away so that no one could go anywhere near the Viceroy. Gandhiji was presiding over the function, he said that people were trying to move closer to the Viceroy but they were being pushed away because the Viceroy was afraid. Gandhiji made that remark in the very presence of the Viceroy. Gandhiji went on to say that it would be better if the Viceroy is killed and he faces death once instead of

being afraid all the time and facing death every moment of his life. That fearlessness which was implanted in our minds is no longer a part of us. We are afraid of our own people. At least the Viceroy was a foreigner. But we, who belong to this nation, are afraid of our own people.

Once we have accepted that even the king of snakes has to be adorned as an ornament, we have nothing to be afraid of. Each individual has to die only once. No one can die twice. Then why this fear of death most of the time? Death is a sweet experience. Many people spend a lot of money and go to America or to Switzerland; the middle class go to Kashmir or Ooty; while those from the lower class cannot afford to go abroad or to a hill station so they go to Lodhi Gardens. We all welcome a change of circumstance, a change of environment. What is death? To us Indians, it is only a change of circumstances, a change of environment. Why should we be afraid of death? The concept of being afraid of death is alien to us; the semitic religions believe that they have been given only one chance of life and if they are afraid of death it may make some sense. They feel that they have very little chance of going to heaven and they can only enjoy whatever is here. For us, there is an infinite expanse of lives spreading out before us. What are we afraid of? By adorning His body with the king of snakes, He is giving us the message that only a person who is as fearless as that can give direction to the values of life. A person who is constantly afraid can never give values to life.⁶ Even though he is bereft of all worldly possessions because space is His crown, even though He has accepted snakes as His ornaments, yet who ever goes to Him—*natanugrahi* or the one who goes with humility towards Him—to him He is always full of grace. *Anugrah* means that when a person approaches another humbly only then can he be taught the truths of life. A person who is already full of his own thoughts cannot be taught the values of life.

There is a story which illustrates this very well. There was once a nobleman who went to an abbot at a monastery and asked him to teach him something. The abbot replied that he would teach him but they should have tea first. So they sat down for tea. The abbot poured tea into a cup. Even though the cup was full, yet he continued to pour. The

nobleman saw this and told him, 'It seems sir that your eyes are weak. You are still pouring tea even though the cup is full.' The abbot replied that even though the cup was full but why not have some more. Whereupon the nobleman told him that the cup would not hold it. The abbot stopped and poured tea into his own cup. They drank tea and the abbot sat silently. The nobleman again asked him whether he would teach him something. The abbot replied that he had already taught him. The nobleman was surprised and said that he did not understand and he did not hear anything. The abbot said, 'When the cup is already full more tea cannot be poured into it. Similarly, you are full of your own ideas, your own way of thinking, your own superstitions. You have not come here with the attitude of humility to learn. Whatever will be poured will just flow out. It will not be contained. I have taught you that only when the mind takes the attitude of humility that the higher truths can be taught and grasped.'

Those who come to learn, those who are humble enough to know that they have to learn, to them the Lord gives the *upadesh, nath anugrahi upadesh*.⁷ How does the Lord give this *upadesh*? Just as the peacock gives a shrill call which is known as *keki*. *Keka* is the sound. The one who produces that sound is called *keki*. Similarly the Lord gives the *pranav omkar* as the final knowledge to him and this final truth leads to the knowledge of all the three states of consciousness. *Om* has three letters in it—*a, au, and m*. Though *Om* is one sound yet when we analyse we find that it has three aspects. Similarly, supreme consciousness is one but when we analyse we find that it is expressed in the three states of consciousness—the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state. The Lord gives the final knowledge with a full-throated sound so that the person is able to absorb and understand it completely.

The Lord is a dancing Lord. For us the concept of Godhead is not that of a supreme judge who makes decisions. This concept does not appeal to the Hindu mind. To the Hindu mind, the beautiful sound of the flute while dancing in the raas mandal or a Nataraj dancing is the joy of life. He is the supreme joy. For Hindus, the concept of God is akin to the concept of joy more than to the concept of justice. Even for

a moment one should not think that the concept of justice is not present. The emphasis, however, is on the blissful aspect of the Lord, on the joyful aspect of the Lord. God has not created this universe so that when we do something He will be just and reward us. This is a very prosaic way of looking at creation itself. Parents do not produce children so that they will be able to punish them and reward them. We must ask ourselves: do we create children with this in mind—that we can give them a biscuit or a chocolate whenever they act properly or slap them whenever they misbehave. We create them out of our own inner joy. We want them to be completely full of joy. We want them to enjoy everything, to be joyful and blissful. We have created them out of bliss and we want them to be blissful. In the same way the Lord has created us out of the fullness of His bliss. He has poured out, so to say, His bliss and He wants our own life to be full of joy and bliss. Like the peacock the Lord dances. The peacock dances when he sees the rain clouds. When does the Lord dance?⁸ He dances seeing Parvati, His divine spouse. The rain clouds are dark in colour, so is the mother Parvati dark—*shyama*.

Parvati is born out of the mountains, the Himalayas.⁹ Now this is very interesting. On the one hand, He wears a crown of *aakash*, the subtlest of all elements, on the other He dances looking at the grossest of the five elements, that is, the mountain or the earth which represents the grossest element. Looking at this gross element the Lord dances, because out of that all what exists comes into being. Only after all the five elements have been created that out of the fifth element spring forth all the varieties that we see around us. All the five perceptions are experienced there—completely and wholly. When we look at the mountains we think that they are inert. But out of those inert mountains emerges Shyama or Parvati. Similarly when we look at the universe it appears that there is nothing there. But out of that emerges the ineffable manifest universe completely and thoroughly and looking at this universe the Lord dances with joy.

We may ask—where does the Lord dance? Where can we see His dance? All the Upanishads and Vedanta form the garden where He dances. Just as in a garden there are a

number of trees and all of them together form a garden. There is, no doubt, a difference between a garden and a place where trees have grown haphazardly, without any harmony. Like the garden, the Upanishads have a harmonious existence. We find that it is in that harmony that the Lord dances.

What is the Lord's own form? His form is *Neelkanth*. A peacock's throat is blue, so is the Lord's throat blue in colour. But why is the Lord's throat blue? We see blue because we perceive the poison *halahal* which can burn away everything. We can say that it is something like an atomic bomb. This poison was of such intensity that even the great gods were afraid of it just as we are afraid of nuclear war, star wars and what not. But the Lord was able to contain this poison within His throat. The poison was not able to affect His whole body and it appeared like a dot on His throat. Similarly, according to Vedanta, we should be able to swallow all the poisonous elements and keep them within us without allowing them to destroy anything external to them, external to our own self. Until we attain that state we will not be able to practice the Vedantic concept of life. By describing the Lord as a peacock, he tells us how we can attain this Vedantic view.

Modern society seems to be an unsuitable place for practicing this Vedantic concept of life. But it has to be practiced here and, what is more, it can be practiced here. Though I have mentioned only the atomic bomb as one of the problems faced by an individual today, yet there are many other problems—ecological, environmental, etc. Everywhere the poison is spreading. Who is to hold this poison within? It is the consciousness which will be able to hold this poison within. Unless we are able to do this, we will not be able to practice the art of living. Unless modern society is given this particular impetus, this particular direction which Vedanta talks about, it will not be able to withstand the various poisons.

Vedanta emphasises a society based on coherence. The present day societies adhere with each other. In any given society an individual will have a number of social outlooks. For example, you are a Hindu by religion, yet at the same time you are an Indian national. You are a Hindu because

you belong to that religion and you are an Indian because you belong to that nation. The term adherence implies that the two exist side by side without cohering, without completely merging into something which will produce not contradiction in them but a wholesome view of life. As long as there is adherence this cohesion is not possible. This is true of any given society. For example, a person belonging to Hinduism may be a member of another state, say, the United Kingdom or Canada. Thus he is living in two societies at the same time and if he is not able to bring about coherence and if adherence persists it will breed conflict within his own self. A kind of schizophrenia manifests itself because there is no coherence. Supposing that person is not very religious minded, he does not care whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim, but he is still an Indian then there will be no conflict. But the question arises: is it as easy as that? It is true that he does not believe in religion, but what about his linguistic identity? He is either Hindi-speaking or Tamil-speaking. Here again he identifies himself with a particular group and unless there is coherence there is bound to be conflict. A person who holds strongly to the national society will say that everything else must be secondary. The Indian nation is the primary unit in this case. But the moment the question of primary and secondary arises another person may not agree. Only recently a minister in Tamil Nadu said that he was a Tamilian first and an Indian later. We cannot deny these experiences. When we deal with a society we should remember that different societies will be continuously interpenetrating each other. These conflicts are seen even in the societies of ants and bees.

When we deal with modern society, we are dealing with a society which has not been able to give coherence to total living. We are only able to postpone decisions and our attitude is let us wait for tomorrow, something may happen, some problems will be solved. Because the sensate society, the society based on sensory perceptions has failed to give us those values on the basis of which we can create a coherent society, Vedanta gives us that basis. It has been tested again and again in the Indian context. Whenever there have been complete social changes, Vedanta has come in the forefront and has given coherence to all the different societies.

A concept which is often criticised is that of caste. Actually it is a great contribution. It was through the caste system, at a particular time in history, that we were able to give coherence to the whole social structure. How that coherence was brought about will be discussed later.

To sum up we can say that the art of living has to be practiced in a field and that field is modern society. Modern society is a society based on the fundamental conception that sensory perception is the only real, valid and valuable perception. Vedanta, on the other hand, emphasises that it is only a part of our life. We are greater than this sensate perception. We have to bring about the values from other psychological and spiritual fields. The values which are to be introduced will be discussed later.

LECTURE II

We had discussed earlier what we mean by modern society. We said that modern society could be defined as the period from the middle of the fifteenth century to the present day, because it is this period which has given all that we have of the so-called scientific society or the modern society. We also noted that it emphasised the sensate aspect of life more than any other. Thereby, repudiating the values which were inherent in our religious, metaphysical thought pattern. It has, no doubt, led to increased worldly development, but in the process it has not given us the direction towards which we must move. It has tried to create an adhesive society instead of a cohesive society. Coherence is what we need most today. There is a fundamental difference between coherence and adherence. Coherence is the force by which the molecules of a substance are held together. Though the molecules are different they belong to the same substance. There is a force which holds them together. To express this in the terminology of modern physics we can say that this is due to the fact that the electromagnetic waves are related in such a way with each other that their amplitudes are exactly equivalent. Thereby the molecules rise and fall together. This is precisely what we mean by a coherent society which includes different social groups.

As mentioned earlier, in any given society there are bound to be different groups because society is basically specialisation and interdependence. Society can never develop unless we have specialised branches of knowledge, specialised fields of work. We cannot possibly think of a developed

society where any individual will be able to do everything. This is just not possible, so we need specialisation. The moment we seek specialisation, we have to create small groups who specialise in those fields, with their own problems and their own ways of looking at things. If these groups are absolutely independent of each other, if they are not interdependent, then they will not form a society. It has already been mentioned in the passing, how this problem was dealt with at a particular given moment in the history of India.

Specialisation can be divided into four fields. Some people are intellectuals; others specialise in the art of controlling society from running amok; still others who specialise in increasing the economic welfare of the society; and, finally, the majority of the people who have to be guided, they have to work so that society continuously progresses towards a goal. This division is basically what is known as the *chaturvarnya* system. The important feature of this system was that it was interdependent. An intellectual person could not start a business so he had to depend economically on the other group. It must be remembered that a society cannot be ruled unless there are economic advantages. We cannot have a society comprising only of Brahmins or Kshatriyas or Vaishyas or Shudras. Hence specialisation and interdependence are important concepts of a society. What happened when we tried to do away with the *varna vyavastha* and substituted language as the basis of forming a society? Each linguistic group thought that it was not dependent on the other group. Had we been able to create a system where different languages were dependent on each other and would not have been able to survive if they moved away from society, then the problem of deteriorating nationalism and national movement would not have arisen. It must be mentioned here that the *chaturvarnya* system is not being emphasised as the only system, rather what is being emphasised is that the basic concept underlying this system that of interdependence and specialisation was not realised by those at the helm of affairs. Hence the idea of interdependence was not present in the social groups and national disintegration raised its head. Thus, in any given society there will be specialisation and there will be different groups. Only in a coherent society will

we be able to develop a system in which each group will be dependent on the other groups and the question of getting away from the main social fabric will not arise. It was noted earlier that in a coherent electromagnetic field the waves are related in such a way that their amplitudes are more or less equivalent. Hence they rise and fall together. In a coherent society economic, social and educational developments are of the same amplitude for all the different groups in it.

Those of you who are above fifty years of age may remember your childhood. In a village or a small town the standard of living was, more or less, the same no matter how rich or poor a person was. For example, if a rich person went to a barber, he would pay him according to what he had and not according to the services rendered by the barber. If he could afford to pay him five rupees, he paid him that amount. If a poor man could afford to give only four annas, he paid him only four annas. The barber would serve both of them regardless of the amount each had given him.

A few years ago I had gone to Badrinarayan temple to attend a puja. The government has taken over the management of the temple. An old man from Bihar had come there with his wife. They were both dressed in torn clothes. The old man's eyesight was very weak and he was wearing very powerful glasses. He moved near the door of the shrine but he could not see anything within. So he told the man in charge of the temple that they had come a long way from Bihar and wanted to have *darshan*. He asked him whether they could go in and have a closer look. The man in charge told him that the *darshan* fee was fifty rupees. Upon hearing this, the old man told him that he did not have that much money and he took out a one rupee note and offered it to the man. The man in charge repeated that the fee was fifty rupees and everything had been regularised since the government took over the temple. Wealthy people are happy about this because they can do what they like. The old man thought for a long time, discussed the matter with his wife and eventually took out a five rupee note and told the man that this was all the money he had apart from the fare which meant that they would not have anything to eat on the way back. Seeing the five rupee note, the man laughed

and said, 'Nothing doing, get out. Nothing less than fifty rupees and we cannot do anything about it.'

I remember the times of the Pandas. When they were in charge of the temple they also took money, but a person who had only one rupee was also allowed to enter and have *darshan*. In case a rich person came along they would demand as much as a thousand rupees. But a poor person also had an approach because the Pandas knew that even though this man had no money today, they had a relationship with him. They had a family relationship with him—may be after five generations, some one from his family would come who would have enough money and they would get from him what they were not able to get today. This family relationship existed in all different spheres of life. Rise and fall went together. For example, if a person was rich, then all those related to him should become rich. If a person from a village graduated and went to the city, say, Allahabad or any of the big cities, and practiced law there, it was taken for granted that any one from that village who desired a college degree would go to Allahabad and stay with him. It was accepted as a norm because this man from the village had grown. He had used that stage. Today we can stay with him, tomorrow his fortunes may decline and his son may stay with us. This conception of rise and fall at the same time was emphasised in a coherent society. In an adherent society these conceptions do not exist.

Often I tell people that there are certain conceptions in different societies and we should understand them properly. These days we hear that there is widespread nepotism. What is nepotism? Have we ever tried to analyse the concept? If a person is related to us in some way and we want to give him a lift it is perceived to be nepotism. Have we ever thought that in the Indian context, is it not our duty to help a person who is related to us? Are we not being ungrateful when we deny him that opportunity to rise with us? How do we try to check nepotism? A Brahmin would normally be related to another Brahmin and the only job that he can offer him would be teaching, he cannot offer him the job of a chaprasi even though he is related to him. Nepotism can only be checked when there is specialisation so that people related to a person would belong to the same specialised field. Nepotism today has taken the other form, the uglier

form, because a Brahmin wants to give the job of a chowkidar—a Shudra's job—to another Brahmin who is related to him.

When we try to analyse society we must take society as a whole. Often the mistake that we make is to depend on Westerners or their coordinates to analyse our society. Society has to be analysed from within, only a member of that society can understand its problems and not some one who is outside that society. When an outsider analyses, he does not take such important factors into consideration as what have we based our society on and what are our relations. The idea of interdependence was present, the idea of rising and falling together was present, but through the very concept of specialisation it was restricted. We cannot say that a man in a particular post would recruit his own people everywhere, because he would be able to exercise his authority only in a limited area. As I said earlier, we may have to evolve an entirely different system but before we develop that system we must find out the fundamental values on which we will base that system.

The word for society in Sanskrit and Hindi is *samaj*—*sam* + *aj*. *Aj* means to move, when we move together towards a goal.¹⁰ The Shruti says that when we move together, the movement is together. But a crowd also moves together can we call it a *samaj*? There must be understanding of each other—*sangatya ajati*. Though there may be several different fields of specialisation yet there must be basic understanding. The emphasis should be on understanding each other—*samatya ajati*. After understanding each other there must be *sammiti*, that is, a view most of us agree to. For example, Kamraj without being influenced by any Western powers was able to select two Prime Ministers in India. His selection may have been right or wrong, we will not go into any political discussions here, but the fact that he was able to create a consensus without breaking up the whole social group—a particular party in this case—is the core of our *samajic* conception. *Sammiti* is important, a total identity of views is not possible because in that case it will not be *sammiti*. However, we can arrive at a consensus.

Today laws are framed without any particular goal in mind. We may talk about Indian society but do we have any

particular goal for that society. The moment we talk about goals the reaction is that certain groups may not accept these goals, hence we must be tolerant. This is not toleration. In fact, this is destroying the very fundamentals of society. If we want to bring about a change in a particular social group, even there we find no understanding or *sangati*. We may decide to do something but we never make an attempt to explain why and what for that decision has been taken. Hence, when there is no convergence towards a goal, when there is no understanding of the goal, the question of *sangati* does not arise. There is no consensus on any issue and, as a result, whenever any decision is taken immediately there is an opposition to that decision. Certainly, in any given society there will be people who will oppose but if there is *sangati* and *sammiti* then they can be easily won over.

What happens today in the name of democracy, in the name of minority, in the name of majority—a large number of people are always opposing any step which is taken. We see this at the level of the government—there is no issue on which we have a national consensus, the moment the government takes a decision, those in the opposition feel that they are in the minority and hence they have to oppose that decision. Being opposition parties they have nothing else to do but oppose.

We see the same thing in a business concern, in an industry. There may be difference of opinion between labour and the management but they never reach *sammiti*. They never reach an agreement on any decision, the moment a decision is taken by the management and agreed to by the workers that they will work to make it a success but at the back of their minds they want to make sure that it is unsuccessful. The desire to make an agreement successful is not present because that *sammiti* has never been reached.¹¹ When we are moving together there must be a common feeling for each other—*sanhridya sahridyata*. While doing anything we must be able to understand the difficulties of others. Until all these are present at all the different levels, we cannot have a coherent society.

Adherence involves different molecules which do not have equality of amplitude. They are merely together because circumstances have brought them together. It is something

like growth in the body. Biologically, we can say that it is joining together of fibrous tissue. If there is a wound in the body, the fibrous tissues will close the wound but there will be no strength because that is lacking. Though the wound has joined together yet it has not formed oneness. At present our society is an adhesive society. Even though we talk about national integration yet we feel that we are here by chance and, somehow or other, we have to live as separate groups. In every field of life we are trying to find a solution to the problem of living together, not how to live as one, or how to live in the sense of unity. Vedanta emphasises that we must not only have a coherent nation but also a coherent humanity. All the different national groups should cohere not because there is one world government, if this happens then we will have the same problem that we are facing in India today.

Often I feel that India is like a crucible, a place where God conducts experiments for the good of humanity. We find that all the different religions, all the different linguistic groups are fighting here, is it not a mini panorama of what is going on all over the world. Therefore, if the problem can be solved here, then not only the problem of this nation would be solved but that of the entire humanity. These groups have always existed as an adherent society and the result has been conflict which has been taken for granted. If we go back one thousand years in Indian history, we find that different cultural groups, different religious groups, different social groups and different tribes came here. Even at that time—a thousand years ago—they had formed a coherent society. Today if we talk about that society we say that it had only one name—the Hindu society. Though that society comprised different groups yet they had become coherent because each was given independence. It was basically a federal structure.

Western people often laugh at us, they say that on the one hand we talk about *advaita*, about the universal consciousness being present everywhere and on the other we worship the basil leaf tree (*tulsi* tree) and the *vat vriksh*. Is this not a contradiction? They do not understand the fundamentals of a coherent society. A person who came from a particular social fabric or tribe worshipped a particular tree or

leaf or bush and we accepted this and gave it greater meaning. We related this belief to a complete thought pattern—the basil leaf or *tulsi* is no longer just a bush but it becomes a manifestation of the divine. This is how a coherent society evolves. A coherent society implies that we have accepted the difference and having accepted we try to build up a fundamental wholesome unit.

We will discuss the concept of this *samaj*—the modern society—in the Sammanasya Sukta of the Atharva Veda where it has been described.¹² The Lord says that I bestow on you a heart full of love (*sahridayam*), a mind full of virtuous thoughts (*sammanasyam*), and a life devoid of animosity (*avidvesham trinomi*). May you love each other just like a cow loves its newborn calf.¹³ This is indeed beautiful imagery. The word used here for cow is *aghnaya*. *Aghnaya* means that which is never to be killed. The Vedas, we find, often refer to a cow as *aghnaya* because the cow should never be killed. The point being emphasised here is that just as a cow should never be killed, similarly a society should never be killed. We must never entertain thoughts of getting rid of the society. That is the fundamental conception. Like a cow loves its newborn calf, a society must love each different group equally and totally. This is a two way process—a group in a society should have the attitude of *aghnaya* towards the totality of society. We must not do anything under any circumstances which will kill the spirit of a society. No social group in the society should believe that it can suppress or destroy any other social group. This love between the part and the whole is what is important. Each social group is a part, it is like an organ of the body whereas society is like the body. The organs are interdependent, all the organs of the body are required to sustain the body. Similarly all the social groups must be absolutely necessary for the survival of the society.

The kind of society we evolve will depend on the particular ideology we follow. According to the Atharva Veda, and even the Rig Veda, there are basically three types of societies—the Marya society, the Narya society and the Divya society. The Marya society is oriented towards this worldly goal. Religion in a Marya society is also directed towards this world. Today's sensate society is, more or less, a Marya

society. Here religion is judged not in terms of its spiritual values, but in terms of the type of bureaucracy it involves, the type of hierarchy it entails, the buildings and funds it has at its disposal.

Whenever we talk about different religious groups in India, do we ever discuss which group has produced, in the last thirty years or so, the greatest number of spiritual leaders, the greatest number of spiritual ideas or books? We merely talk about different bureaucratic movements and this has led to a very peculiar situation. Hinduism has never been a fundamentalistic religion, it cannot be fundamentalistic because a fundamentalistic religion is restricted by a particular time, space and book. Going back to that time, to that circumstance is fundamentalism. Hinduism, on the other hand, is Sanatan Dharma. We cannot say that there is a particular period of history or person or anything else which we want to go back to. Go back to what? Go back to Rama's time or Krishna's time or Buddha's time or Shankara's time? The very idea of fundamentalism does not appeal to the Hindu mind, temperament or religion. Then why has this concept emerged? There is no spiritualism involved here. The sensate society seeks power, wealth and all the other external worldly things but it does not seek spirituality. Desirous of all these worldly things, the sensate society wants to see the same thing in a Hindu group.

We have always emphasised that whenever religion is not present, religious practices do not exist, then where does *dharma* reside. *Dharma* does not reside in any textbook. We may have a huge library of all the religious texts but does that make us religious? Does religion lie in those textbooks?¹⁴ Acharya Shabaraswamy says that religion is that which is practiced. When we practice religion, only then it becomes *dharma*. When we say that one should speak the truth, this statement by itself is not *dharma*. Only when a person speaks the truth that it becomes *dharma*. In other words, religion is something which is to be practiced, *dharma* is something which is to be practiced.

Once I was invited to a particular place to attend a religious function. The arrangements were excellent, the organisation was superb. There was a big Shiva temple nearby. The conference was ending a day prior to Shivratri.

When I inquired whether they had organised any puja in the temple to celebrate Shivratri, the organisers were all surprised and remarked that they were not aware that Shivratri was the following day. This is what I call Hindu fundamentalism. People will talk about Hinduism but there is no spiritual content in their discussion. For them religion is a political or an economic movement. Thus, the Marya sanskriti always emphasises this worldly things.

We can conduct an experiment to see this for ourselves. On Tuesdays there are long queues outside a Hanuman temple. If we were to ask each person in the queue the reason for his being there, I am sure that 99 per cent of the people would reply that they desire some worldly object. Not one person would say that he was there in the hope of getting salvation so that he could have peace of mind. This is what the Marya culture, the sensate culture gives us in the garb of religion. If this is the case of religion which is another worldly object, then what to say of other things in society. In other words, in the Marya sanskriti, in the Marya society, the emphasis is on orientation towards this world.

Opposed to the Marya sanskriti is the Narya sanskriti which denies the value of this world, completely and entirely. It propagates world negation. At a particular period in Indian history this viewpoint was emphasised. In Europe too during the middle ages this view was emphasised. This is what I sometimes call the puritanistic or the kill-joy society. It cannot tolerate any one enjoying himself. It is essentially a reaction against the Marya culture which emphasised that everything should be in terms of worldly enjoyment. The Narya culture denies everything. According to this viewpoint, there should be no music, no dance in a religion. Music and dance and all other such things were always found in our temples because they were a part of our lives and life was not to be negated. God has not given us things so that we reject them. If, for example, we have to close our eyes all the time then why did God give us eyes. If we have to shut our ears all the time then why did God give us ears. Narya culture, in short, is a world negation and as mentioned earlier, it evolved as a reaction against the Marya culture.

Vedanta emphasises the concept of a Divya society, where everything must be oriented towards God and not towards the joys of this world. Here joy is not negated but the orientation is towards God. All our joys should be through the divinity and not directly. This is the greatness of Divya society and this is precisely why we are able to rise and fall together. The basic idea being that God is in the centre. Basically in a field, action and reaction take place together. Society exists so that individuals can act and react with each other. It is the resultant direction which shows us the goal towards which a particular society is moving.

In any given society there will be people who have a worldly outlook; others who are world negating; and still others who are God oriented in their approach to life. No society can be bereft of all these three categories of individuals. When we speak of a Marya or Narya or Divya society, we refer to the resultant of this action and reaction of individuals and society. Is the resultant movement towards God or is it towards this world or towards a negation of this world? Action and reaction will always be present. Each individual is free to react. The action stems from the society and we have no control over it but what we can control is how we react to it. When a Hindu, a Vedantin, talks about fundamentalism, if he is forced to talk about it, his fundamental value will be that under all circumstances he will stick to the Divya view. He will also believe that he has complete control over his own reaction, but he does not have complete control over the way another person will react.

A Divya society is duty oriented, the emphasis is on what we have to do and not on what the other person has to do. In the Manusmriti or the Yagnyavalkyasmriti nowhere do we come across any reference to a Brahmin forcing another person to prostrate before him, to do *namaskara*. When the duties of others are described then the question is what are our duties. The question of our rights does not arise here. When the duties of women are described, the issue of their rights does not arise. When the duties of a husband are discussed, there is no discussion of his rights over his wife and children. A Divya society always tries to teach us what we ought to do because that is where we are independent. On the other hand, a Marya society or the sensate society,

always makes us conscious of our rights. It is taken for granted that one must be made conscious of his rights. A right is something which we demand and it is for the other person to give it or not. This is the easiest way to make another person unhappy. No one wants to give us what we want from him because all the time he is conscious of what he is not getting from us. A rights oriented society, a Marya society, is conflict ridden.

We have tried to create a society based on the concept of duty. To do duty is in our own hands. There is an interesting story. Atharvang had a son called Bhooti. He was ill-tempered and was always ready to condemn anyone and became angry at the slightest offence. He had a disciple called Shanti. The teacher, as was his habit, was always angry with him. One day he was invited by his brother Swarcha to perform a particular sacrifice. Before leaving, he instructed his disciple Shanti to tend to the fires so that the fire did not go out. That was the ancient way of worshipping. One day Shanti was away collecting fuel and it took him very long, when he went back he found that the fire had extinguished. He could have, if he wanted lit the fire again but he knew that his teacher would get to know and he would be very angry. So he began praying to the Lord in the form of fire—'Please come back or my master will be very angry and will drive me away instead of teaching me'. His prayers were so heart rending that the Lord in the form of fire appeared before him and told him to ask for anything. Shanti told the Lord that He should bless his teacher with a son so that he would know what love meant and he would learn to love all beings. The Lord was very pleased with Shanti because he had not asked anything for himself but had asked for something for his teacher. Shanti wanted his teacher to get rid of the one weakness he had. This is the conception of a Divya society. All the time we think of what we can do for others, how we can help them. In this story Shanti did not entertain any thought of condemnation for his teacher. The only thought present in his mind was how could he help his teacher.

Today this concept is no longer seen in our educational institutions. A few years ago I was in Mount Abu. A mother was sitting by me. Soon her son joined us. They were

Brahmins. The son was explaining to me that teachers these days were hopeless as they asked the students to buy vegetables from the market. He said that buying vegetables was not their duty. When the mother heard this, she told her son that his maternal grandfather was a teacher and all the students would work for him. She told him that there was nothing wrong if his teacher had asked him to do something. This change from duty orientation to rights orientation is what we see today. Earlier, every student believed that it was his duty to serve his teacher. Every student believed that the teacher was imparting knowledge which he had acquired through hard work and, therefore, he must do something for the teacher. Today the attitude has changed and we say that it is our right to get education from him. It is our right that he should teach us but we have no duty towards him.

Marya, Narya and Divya cultures involve entirely different ways of looking at things and the reality. We must ask ourselves which way are we looking at the reality. Are we looking at it in terms of what we can give or in terms of what we can get? Today we observe this difference even in a family, between a husband and a wife. This is where the basic cultural unity comes in. A family is one unit where two or more members fuse into one 'we'. It is no longer I and you, but 'we'. We rise and fall together, we are happy with each other. The feeling of animosity is not present. There is *sahridayata and sammanasya*. We are always thinking of the good of others in the family and that is the fundamental concept of the family. In the absence of this feeling of 'we', we have today what is called companionship. We are only companions because of certain advantages we get from each other. The moment we see that there are more advantages in another situation, we are ready to walk out of the present situation because there is no fusion into one 'we'. If, within the family, we are not able to introduce this concept of we, how can we introduce it in the society at large. In other words, we have to emphasise the concept of what we can give and not what we can get from others.

How do we develop this idea of what we can give? There are three stages of development of our own 'I'. According to Vedanta when a person has not been trained into

anything, his idea is different.¹⁵ The Mahopanishad says that to begin with a person thinks that he is only from head to foot, that is, the body which has emerged from the mother's womb. At that time that is the only I which is present. Apart from this body there is no 'I'. The Marya sanskriti lives and dies with this idea. All the time people in this society think of nothing but this body. Whether they talk of development or any other progress, they only talk in terms of the body and not even in terms of the mind.

In the last forty years has any census been taken to determine the number of people who think that they are happy. There have been censuses to estimate the number of roads that have been built, to estimate the average income of the people, or to determine the number of people who have houses to stay in. But has any census ever been taken to ascertain the number of people who are happy? We are not bothered about happiness, we are only concerned about the body. In the sensate culture, only this body is the centre of 'I' and everyone feels that they are just this body. This stage is without any reflective thought. It is taken for granted that we are only this body.

The moment we begin to think, we realise that we cannot be this body; the reason being that when this body was ten inches long at the time of birth and when it is six feet tall today it is not the same. The question remains—have I changed? What I was in my youth, I am not in my old age. But the 'I' is the same. Hence 'I' cannot be the body because the body is continuously changing but 'I' remain unchanged in that body. To some extent even the Marya society has to accept this.

This point can be illustrated with the help of the following story. Once a person committed a theft and he was caught and produced before the magistrate. Since he was caught redhanded, there was definite evidence that he was guilty. When he was asked whether he had anything to say, he replied that his hand had committed the theft and punishment should be given to his hand. This is a very novel idea. The magistrate agreed and wrote in the judgement that since his hand had committed the theft, his hand should be imprisoned. He was free to decide whether he wanted his whole body to be imprisoned or not. The lawyer was very

intelligent. When the judgement was delivered, the man wore an artificial hand. He took off his hand and gave it to the judge to be put into prison. The hand has not really committed the theft and punishment should not be given to the hand but to the person who has committed the theft. If that was the case, then people in India would be very happy because our courts sometimes take as long as twenty years to give a judgement, and they could easily plead that they are not the person who had committed the crime, the body had changed, the person had changed.

In a Marya culture, in a sensate culture, the body is taken as 'I' but under some circumstances even this culture has to accept a continuing 'I' which does not change with the body. When people in the Marya society think about this they conclude that the soul is different from the other changes in the body.¹⁶ But how different? This difference is emphasised in the Narya sanskriti. The Divya sanskriti goes a step further, it talks about a duality. The body-mind complex is a changing phenomenon and the 'I' is the unchanging concept. In the Narya sanskriti the unchanging is emphasised at the cost of the changing and that is the reason for the world negation. In the Divya sanskriti we go even further and ask where does this body exist apart from the 'I',¹⁷ Does this body exist apart from me? In the Marya sanskriti the body is 'I'; in the Narya sanskriti, I am different from the body; and in the Divya sanskriti, the body cannot exist apart for me. All that which exists is a part of me. In the Divya sanskriti there is nothing which is to be denied. But everything has to be denied, as a part devoid of the whole has no reality of its own. A hand removed from the body may be a piece of flesh but definitely not a hand. Similarly an individual out of society is not the same though he may still continue to live. Each thing as an individual and each thing as apart from the whole is to be denied, but each thing as part of the whole is also to be asserted.

LECTURE III

We have been discussing the concept of modern society. We analysed that all the social forms can be divided into three categories—those which are oriented only towards this world; those which are a negation of this world; and those which sustain this world, that is, divine oriented (*divya*). We have also seen that society is basically a field, an interaction, thus the individual has as much of a contribution to make as the whole social group.

During the last hundred years or so, the emphasis has been more on what we can do collectively, rather than on what we can do individually. This emphasis has slowly weakened the very fibre of the individual. The individual looks upon society as something happening outside him, to the extent that he does not feel responsible for whatever is going on around him. This feeling has weakened the struggle to reform society. All the time we depend on an organised way of doing things. Therefore, we feel that a large number of people, somehow or the other, by gathering together would bring about a change. When we study the history of culture we find that it has never worked this way. It is only an individual or a few individuals who strive for a higher goal and in the very process of that striving, they are able to bring about a change in the whole social outlook. This realisation must dawn upon us that each one of us is responsible and is capable of transforming society. It is not that we have to wait for something to happen, but it is within our power to change society.

Why is it that we feel so helpless? There is a reason behind this helplessness. We do not try to analyse. Each of us have

conflicting egos, different responsibilities are heaped upon us which sap away all energy that we have. And unless we are able to rise above this, we will not be able to transform even ourselves, what to speak of transforming society. This weakening arises because we are continuously identifying ourselves with our body-mind complex. The limitations of the body and mind will be discussed later in detail.

The limitations of the body and mind continuously puts an albatross around our neck and we do not feel bouyant enough or strong enough to withstand that pull. Until we are able to disassociate ourselves from this body, from this mind, we will never be able to do anything worthwhile. Theoretically, we know that we are basically the spirit which remains unchanged at all the different stages of life. We know that, yet we are not able to withdraw into the spirit when the situation arises. Why? The answer to this can be found in the following story.

There was once a king who was a simpleton. One day he heard jackals howling.

He asked his courtiers 'What is the matter, why are they weeping?'

We all know that when jackals howl the sound is similar to that of a child weeping. The courtiers thought that this was a good opportunity to make a little extra money.

They replied, 'They are howling, they are crying because they have no house to stay in and it is very cold outside. If they are provided with houses, it would make them happy.'

The king being a simpleton thought that it was a good idea and sanctioned the funds to build houses for the jackals. After some time he heard the jackals howling again. He again inquired why they were crying.

The courtiers replied, 'You have provided them with houses. But they do not have any food, they are crying for food.'

The king ordered that they should be given food. Some time passed and he heard them howling again.

He asked, 'What is the matter?'

The courtiers replied that they did not have any clothes. Whereupon the king gave orders that clothes should be provided to them. When he heard them howling again, he inquired what was troubling them.

The courtiers said, 'Now that you have provided them with everything. They are just thanking you.'

This continued for a long time. Then an intelligent minister joined the court and while checking the accounts he found that a large sum had been sanctioned to provide shelter, food and clothing for the jackals. Upon inquiring he was informed that those were the king's orders.

He told the king, 'You have done a very good act. But we should go and see where those houses are and how they are living.'

As soon as he made that suggestion all the courtiers were alarmed because they were staying in those houses and enjoying all these advantages. This is not very surprising. We see the same thing even today, so much money is being provided for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Whenever there is a drought, whenever there are floods, huge funds are provided for their relief. But if we go and see how much is really being provided to those people who are in need, we find that the situation has not changed very much. The same thing is true of our own powers. In our everyday provision for material comforts all our energies are wasted and we do not have the energies to move towards a higher goal.

Acharya Gaudapada has expressed this in a beautiful verse.¹⁸ He says that first, we imagine that we are responsible for this body-mind complex and that this body-mind complex will not move without us. Even a little bit of analysis shows that we are not conscious of most of the functions that take place in our body—how the blood is pumped, how digestion takes place, how blood circulation takes place. We do not know about most of these functions and yet they are just taking place in our body. The same is true of our minds. Do we know why a particular thought arises in our mind at a particular time? We sit down to meditate, to think of God, and we start thinking of some political issue which does not concern us in any way, and no matter how hard

we try to get rid of the idea we are not able to get rid of it. Are we really thinking, or has the thought just arisen? When we analyse we find that our conscious and unconscious activities are taking place on four different levels.

Most of our activities are purely biological and we have practically no control over them. I am using the word practically because it is only through great effort of Yoga that we are able to control them. It can be said that they are not entirely beyond control. Yet in the case of a normal person we can say that they are not entirely under his control. Unconsciously functions are taking place. We all have the urge to eat, even animals have this urge. They do not have to think about it. Whenever there is an experience of intense heat, we want to alleviate that suffering—this action is at a biological level. Even if we are fast asleep and the sun is shining on our body, we turn on the side where there is shade. All these things take place automatically and we have practically no control over them.

The next category includes what are known as bio-conscious energies. They are biological drives no doubt, but we are conscious of these processes. For example, the urge to eat is a biological necessity. At a particular intensity, we will not be able to resist eating, we will not be able to resist drinking—that is the unconscious level. But most of the time a human being is conscious of this urge. That is why they are called bio-conscious energies. They are rooted in our biological existence but we are conscious of them. The moment we are conscious of an activity, we can talk about good and bad, right and wrong, what we call *dharma*—the oughtness. As long as we are operating on an entirely unconscious level, the biological level, we cannot talk about rightness or wrongness, of what ought to be and what ought not to be. The moment this idea of oughtness arises, we find that conflicts arise out of our bio-conscious energies. At times we may feel hunger and thirst. We are conscious of both, but we have to decide which one must be given preference. The moment we want to give preference, we make a value judgement. Unless we have analysed the order of values, we will be in a state of conflict. We will not know what exactly we must do at a particular time. Here the entirely biological ego, so to say, has been replaced by a

conscious ego because we have become conscious of it. When we want to eat it is a conscious act, not just the urge to eat, but we want to eat. There are certain foods we ought to eat, certain foods we ought not eat. Immediately the idea of *dharma* arises. Every culture specifies certain foods which can be eaten and certain foods which cannot be eaten.

In this context Pannikar has recorded that when he was in China, he was once eating with Chiang Kai-Shek and while eating Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek enquired whether he liked the food. Pannikar recalls that the food was very good. Whereupon Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek informed him that what he was eating was a snake. As soon as he heard that he was eating a snake, Pannikar recalls that his stomach started to churn. As long as he was eating without knowing what it was, there was no problem. In China a snake may be considered a delicacy, but in India we do not consider it to be edible. So the moment we use our bio-conscious energies, all these problems arise—what ought, what ought not be done. For example, we are walking in the street and we see delicious food. We can steal the food, but we will not steal it because there is an oughtness involved in it. As far as the urge to eat is concerned, it is immaterial. But it is a conscious decision at that particular point of time, consciously we decide to eat a particular food. There are social ways of doing a thing and there are anti-social ways of doing a thing. So as long as we are dealing with purely biological urges, the question of oughtness, i.e., rightness and wrongness does not arise. But the moment we operate at the bio-conscious level, *dharma* enters, the concept of righteousness arises. Since it is rooted in biological urges, there is a limit to it.

The third category includes the conscious, socio-cultural energies. Here, the biological urges of the body do not direct us. These socio-cultural energies are generated by a conscious meaningful interaction of thinking persons. Here, being conscious is more important. The moment the idea of being conscious becomes more important, the concept of meaningfulness coexists. In bio-conscious energies the concept of meaningfulness is not present, only the idea of right and wrong is present, because they are rooted in biological necessities. But here we are talking of something which is

meaningful, and this emerges from an accumulation and transmission of many cultural patterns through generations. These things develop slowly in a particular society. Different societies have grown out of different meaningful interactions. For example, a Westerner comes to your house with his wife and child. As far as he is concerned he has come with his entire family. Supposing your father is also present, he will ask the visitor, 'How is your entire family?' Because as far as he is concerned mother, father, brother, brother's wife, sister, sister's husband, all these people together constitute the *entire family*. These are meaningful interactions which have developed in different ways in different societies. In India if a woman is called mother she feels very happy. But in a European society if a woman is called mother she will be angry. Of course, these ideas have slowly infiltrated in Indian society and there are women who object to being called mother. Their immediate reaction is whether they are old enough to be the other person's mother. When a person in Indian society uses the word 'mother', the age factor does not determine his response. It is a particular love and respectful attitude which determines his response. It is an intense form of love which he is trying to express. These notions are inherited through generations.

Society has been patterned in definite scientific ways of looking at things. It is easy to say that science is something universal. But when we begin to analyse, even science shows its own pattern. Different cultural groups, different social groups will have a different attitude towards the same scientific phenomenon. Provisionally, we may say that as far as something external is concerned it will be the same as far as the observation is concerned. But science is not mere observation. It is the way in which we connect our different observations, and that way of connecting observations changes in different social patterns.

Philosophical thinking is controlled much more by the social pattern. In religion this control will be still more as here we are dealing entirely with value judgements, value systems. It will be still more if we are dealing with an artistic object. These values become totally entwined with feelings and feelings develop out of a particular

social pattern. So the moment we talk about art, it is very difficult to reach a consensus as to whether it is the highest type of art. For example, in India we have always considered that every great epic should end in 'and they lived happily thereafter'. The whole of Greek thinking perceives tragedy to be superior. These are fundamental ways of looking at things. That particular pattern has been imprinted on that social group because it depends on conscious interaction. The same applies to technology.

What is the reason that there is so much conflict all around us today. One of the basic reasons is that technology and science, even philosophy and art, is being imposed on a social group which does not absorb that particular idea because the social pattern has not changed. We are just imposing something from above. Because this is an interaction all these different processes lead to different egos, as was mentioned earlier. A person possesses as many egos as the number of social groups to which he belongs—family, state, occupation, local community and political community. When you are at home, you are in a particular environment. The moment you go to your place of work, your ego undergoes a change. You cannot possibly behave in the place of work as you behave at home. It is not possible, you will be considered a queer person. At your place of work, you have to behave in an entirely different way. Similarly, in a religious place there is a particular environment, a particular way of looking up to the priest or teacher. The attitude here is entirely different from that when you are in a political party. You cannot possibly look upon your party leader as some one having extraordinary authority, as you would look upon your priest. So these concepts vary in different groups where we act differently. But human being is one. When we move from one group to another, we are not able to entirely divest ourself from the previous value system with which we were working and as a result conflict arises. Values can be entirely different. It is easy to say that when we are in a political party we must forget about our religious convictions. But it is not that easy because man is the same. So the ideas persist, and as this conflict increases, it becomes difficult for a person to absorb and interact in an objective way.

Pavlov conducted an experiment with dogs to illustrate this point. A dog was shown a circle, a perfect circle, on a screen, and he was given food. At other times he was shown a parabola but he was not given any food. Slowly the circle and parabola were made so similar that it became difficult for the dog to differentiate between the two. He did not know when he would get food and when he would not get food. He had learnt that if he could identify the circle he would get food. But now the figures had become so similar that the dog was not able to differentiate. The dog began to bark, showed signs of nervousness, not knowing what was going to happen next.

The same thing holds true even for human beings when faced with conflicting issues of equal importance. To begin with these issues are not equally important. In a particular social group, politics may be more important than religion. In another group the opposite may be true, that is, religion is more important than politics. In some groups the family may be more important than occupation and in other groups it may be vice versa. But a stage comes when two or more issues acquire equal significance. It is then that a person shows signs of nervousness and does not know what to do. His will power is slowly undermined. It is the certainty, the self-confidence, knowing definitely what he wants and the means by which he will get it which increases will power. When that certainty is not present, a person's will power is undermined. This is exactly what is happening today in our society. A person has two sets of values. He must please his boss and at the same time he must do his work properly. Generally, at no point can he say whether his boss will be pleased by flattering him, or by doing the work properly. So the person's will power is weakened. He does not know at any stage what he is supposed to do, what will lead to the desired result. When will power is weakened, vitality and energy are sapped up because the moment conflicts within a person increase, it is not possible to do any thing with the same vitality and energy.

This is where we have to be very careful even with our own children. Most of the time our children do not know how we will react—whether we will be happy or whether we will scold them to make them keep quiet. Children slowly

develop conflicts. We often find that they are not good at their studies, they are not good at games and we wonder what is wrong. The problem is simple—we have not helped them build up that will power, we have not taught them proper value judgements which will help them decide. Slowly the peace of mind is disturbed and the child becomes hesitant in doing anything and is confused. He does not know what he is supposed to do. Gradually his behaviour becomes inconsistent. That inconsistency which initially began as a reaction to an external situation, has now become a part of him and may even lead to serious mental disturbances. These mental disorders in society breed what we call today delinquency and terrorism. Today this problem is seen in every part of the world. People feel that they can curb terrorism merely by forcing a person not to engage in terrorist activities. What they do not realise is that the seeds are in the mind because the whole society has failed to provide a proper consistent attitude on which they can rely and, therefore, people become nervous, even nervous wrecks, and this leads to all sorts of disturbances in society.

How do we deal with this problem of terrorism? One way of tackling this problem, which most people adopt, is to disassociate ourselves with certain groups. If there are two conflicting issues we should get rid of one of them. It may be possible in certain cases. For example, if our occupation interferes with our family life, we will either divorce our wife or divorce our work. We can opt for one of the two alternatives. But there are situations where this strategy cannot be adopted. As a result some people become sceptics. They begin to doubt everything and are totally cynical in their attitude. That is the attitude of despair. We cannot do anything, nothing can be done, so there is no value which is absolute. The first strategy, at least in the matter of religion, many people in India try to adopt. People often say that religion comes into conflict with their views. They feel that if they can do away with religion and not be associated with it, their conflicts would decrease. They believe that religion produces conflicts. Similarly, there are a large number of people who have become basically sceptics and cynics. They do not believe in any values. They believe in taking advantage of an opportunity and do not attach importance to any value judgements. This leads to desocialisa-

tion. Cynicism always weakens the social fabric because the basic concept of society is common welfare. If the idea of common welfare is not present, then we are not dealing with a society. Such people become the basis of desocialisation and this eventually demoralises the whole society. Of course, at this stage biological and bio-conscious urges are largely predominant and man is guided by these urges because he wants to do away with all that has been inherited as an interaction between individuals.

There are some people who believe that they should have something which is superior to other things, instead of fighting about certain values, there should be a master urge. For instance, they believe that they should be Indians first and foremost and only then belong to any other group. That means being an Indian is a master urge. But the trouble arises when people do not agree to a particular master urge. As far as a particular group is concerned, it may be more important to belong to a particular religion—Hinduism or Islam—than just being an Indian.

This particular value cannot be imposed because the social fibre existed before the creation of the super society, namely, nations. So all the other master urges are always present. The concept of imposing master urges does not solve the problem.

There is a fourth energy which we have not tapped, and that is the superconscious energy in every human being. It is this what we call the divine in man. Though it is present, yet we have not tapped it. It is something which stands apart from all these relationships and yet controls all these relationships. If given a chance it integrates these multitudes of egos. After all, it is one individual who has associated himself with all the different egos, all the different social groups. But who is he? If we are able to tap this energy, then we will be able to integrate all these different egos and identify the unity behind all these changing egos. But that can be done only through analysis.

In the Marya culture we accept the sensate, the sensuous perceptions as they are without analysing them. In the Narya culture we only analyse and do not go any further. But in the Divya culture we analyse and synthesise at the same time. All these different egos can be digested because

there is something which is behind all these egos. It contains them all, because it is this which keeps all these different egos in harmony with each other. No doubt conflicts will arise. But before conflicts arise, there is some harmony. What is it that keeps them in harmony with each other? When we use a phrase like 'my mind', 'my intellect', we are presupposing something of the nature 'I' which is different from our mind, from our intellect. Otherwise we cannot say 'my mind' and 'my intellect'. We have experienced it. We sit for meditation, or to do some other work, so there is someone who sat to work. The person could not concentrate because the mind was disturbed. In other words, there is an 'I' who wanted to work, which is different from the mind who refused to work. This 'I' has to be tapped because it is the master of the mind. But we have not tapped it properly to control all these different egos. Being different from all these egos, it is called 'ego-less'. The word egoless is a very peculiar term but we have to use it. The identification of different biological, bio-conscious and socio-conscious processes we call 'egos', this is where the identification takes place. The moment we talk about something which does not identify with any of the egos but which is the matrix of all identification we call it 'egoless'. When it starts operating, one ceases to be a mere bio-conscious or even a socio-cultural ego. Only through practice we are able to get in touch with it. We have to analyse this 'I'. We see that throughout the day we receive various types of knowledge preceding each other. For example, we know a pot, then we know a vessel, and a man. There is something which is common in all this knowledge, and that is the knower, the 'I' who knows all these things. While doing things we should become conscious of this 'I'. This must be practiced slowly.

Most of the time we are not conscious of ourselves. The biological urges play freely during this lack of consciousness. One of the ways to control this is to sit for meditation. Select a particular object on which you are going to meditate. It may be a feeling, or an organ in the body like the heart, or the centre of the eyebrows, or a religious symbol. Whatever the particular symbol, we must think only of that symbol or that organ or that feeling as intensely as we can without being distracted by anything. Initially, we will experience external distractions. But gradually

we will be able to shut ourselves out. Then we will find that our own bodily tensions distract us. We must slowly control this, and forget the biological pressures throughout our body, throughout our organs. As we go deeper into meditation we will be surprised to observe that things which had never crossed our mind, as far as the bodily organs are concerned, will be felt by us. But slowly we learn to ignore them. While meditating on an object it is very important to see it as clearly as possible. Most of the time when we meditate, the object of meditation does not become clear and hence there is no intensity. So the imagination, so to say, has to increase, because it is then alone that the mind will become absolutely concentrated on that particular object and even though these biological tensions are felt, they will not be a distraction. Slowly we will reach a stage where this effort will cease. We will be at ease, we will feel happy. In the initial stages it is a great struggle and we will feel tired after meditation. But once we are no longer conscious of the biological tensions, the bodily tensions, we will observe that we are completely relaxed. The process of meditation will cease to be and there will only be a subject and an object, that is, the person and the object of meditation. Through this process we are able to reach that state of egolessness. No doubt we experience that state of egolessness in deep sleep, but here this egolessness is through ignorance. And that is why even though we are egoless in deep sleep, as soon as we get up, we are in the same state as we were in before we entered it. But when we reach the state of egolessness and we emerge from that state we find a change in ourselves. The change is easily observable by anybody—this is the creativeness. The moment we reach that state of egolessness, there is a lot of creativity within us. It is pushed into us so to say. Any good scholar, or a good grammarian, or a teacher of English knows the syntax, knows the words, knows the language, but does he become a Shakespeare? Once he enters that state, he becomes a changed person.

We know the story of Kalidas. He was totally illiterate to the extent that he cut off the branch of the tree on which he was sitting. Upon being questioned as to why he was doing so, he answered that the branch would fall and he come down. His wife was a woman of very high intellectual calibre. The story is a long one. When his wife discovered

that Kalidas was totally illiterate, she just drove him away from the house. Kalidas was very unhappy and he began to worship the Divine Mother to attain knowledge. He attained proficiency in writing great epics and it was only after he had acquired knowledge that he returned home.

Every student of Sanskrit knows how to write Sanskrit but does he become a Kalidas? Every person who knows music, knows all the seventy-two ragas, knows all the taalams, but does he become a Thyagaraj? So it is something beyond these egos, something beyond these techniques, which gives one that creativeness and one is able to create something out of the way. That creativeness indicates that one has touched the fountain of that egolessness. The story of Ramanujan is well known. He was an ordinary postman with no education at all. But he was able to solve many mathematical problems which could not be solved for hundreds of years. He was asked how he was able to do this. His answer was that whenever he sat for meditation, the Divine Mother would appear to him and give him all the solutions.

Acharya Gaudapada has expressed this in a beautiful verse.¹⁹ He says that who ever—whether he is educated or not, whether he is an intellectual or not, whether he is a great artist or not, what ever type of person he may be—touches that egoless stage,²⁰ that *aja*, that which is always unborn, that which is *samya*, that which never changes, remains the same in all circumstances. When he is able to touch it (*sunischita*) and touch it in a way which has become his nature²¹ then he attains all the knowledge which is worth attaining. Ordinary people cannot even understand how that creativeness has come into being, how it arises.²² As far as they are concerned that creativeness will always remain a miracle. They think that it is a very strange thing and wonder how it has happened. But actually that creativeness emerges upon entering that state. Some people are able to do it in a very conscious way, while others are able to achieve it because they have practiced it in their previous lives. There are some people who have the capacity to enter that state of egolessness since birth. All the creativity comes out of it whether it has been practiced in this life, or whether it has been practiced in an earlier life.

As the person goes deeper and deeper into this state of egolessness, he finds that there are three things: a subject, an object and the conscious effort. This is called trinity or *triputi* in Sanskrit, that is, three things are present there. Gradually only two things remain—the subject and the object, because the effort ceases to be as it has become his nature. It is something that he is able to do in an absolutely relaxed fashion. It is with ease that he is able to dive into this state of egolessness. Slowly the feeling of duality is also lost. The subject becomes absolutely one with the object. The self is united with the object. This is called *isht* in Sanskrit. *Ish* means what we have willed to be, what we have chosen to be. So the individual becomes totally absorbed in the object he is meditating upon. His subjectiveness melts into it and becomes one with it. He is no more conscious of it as something separate from him. When he first began to meditate the same thing was present because it was through his own mind that he had made his *isht* present there. In short, he was the one who had created it. Consciousness was present though it was something separate from him. Now he has attained the state where it has become one. In other words, first he sees consciousness as something separate from him, but eventually he melts into it and it becomes one identical experience. In Sanskrit this is called the *akhand vritti* that is, where the subject and object relationship does not exist. When he reaches this stage then he attains complete knowledge and all the extraordinary powers become natural to him because he has touched that which is the root of all powers. When he has attained that state, then there is absolutely no conflict whatsoever; because wherever he is he has analysed and differentiated his 'I' from all the different egos. At that stage he can see how that 'I' takes place and is being reflected in all these different egos. In other words, synthesis has taken place. In the initial stages, he identified himself with the body, without thinking and analysing what he was identifying with.

First, he has to analyse and see himself separate from the body. Once he has analysed this, he finds that the body is nothing but his own extension. He saw the body as something different from him, so that he could analyse it properly. To make things simpler, let us consider the example

of deep sleep. In deep sleep what happens to our eyes, to the power of seeing, the power of hearing, the power of touching, the power of moving, the power of holding and the power of speaking? Where are all these powers when we are in deep sleep? We can only say that they are all absorbed into us. We have withdrawn, so to say, all of those powers within us, because as soon as we wake up, our body has all those powers. So they are all within us and now we are manifesting them through this body. What is this body? Is it apart from all these powers? The moment all these powers cease to exist, we are called a corpse and not a body. We invest the body with these powers when we are in the state of wakefulness and we withdraw these powers when we enter the deep sleep state. Of course this is only an illustration, because there is one power which exists even when we are in deep sleep state and that is the power of *pran*, the vitality. The body carries out all the biological functions even when we are asleep. All the other powers of cognition and action have been endowed into the body by the conscious ego. Similarly, when we reach that stage of egolessness we find that the whole universe is being made meaningful and powerful with our power, with the power of that egoless ego. The whole concept changes. The experience has been described by various people. One of the great masters, Sarvagyatma Mahamuni says²³—I am seeing all this universe of different variety, as if it is different. But I am, all the time, in that partless consciousness which is infinite, that itself is my body. That infinite consciousness which is being expressed through all the different egos, through humanity, through all the living beings, throughout the universe, it is in that eternal consciousness in which I am residing, that is my body, that is my reality, that is my *vapu*. Residing in that consciousness I look upon all this duality as something very peculiar.²⁴

All these things appear to be like a rope which has been burnt and reduced to ashes. But until the wind does not blow away the ashes, anybody who sees it will believe that it is a rope, though it is really not a rope because it has been burnt and reduced to ashes. Similarly, I am able to see this whole universe in an entirely different way. Earlier, it was continuously binding me and I was always in bondage. Now when I look at this whole universe it no longer binds me

because it has been burnt and only the ashes apparently appear as before.

It is this experience which leads to totality. It may lead to the building of organisations. Merely trying to build organisations—without this experience—by imposing external pressures which can change the whole society will not work. We cannot change society because the instruments that we are using are not ones which can bring about a change. There may be any number of archbishops, bishops and abbots who know all the methodology, and the Bible by heart, but can they bring about the change which St. Francis of Assisi brought? Can they bring about the changes which are a result of that creativity, that touch which he had with the Lord. So, when we talk about the Divya sanskriti, we talk about a society in which we are able to introduce that divine content. But, first that divinity must be touched within our own hearts. Unless we are able to touch that divinity within ourselves, any change outside will not be possible.

LECTURE IV

We have discussed how to attain the non-dualistic experience which forms the basis of the Vedantic conception of society. It is a difficult path. I am sure that many of you may be wondering if it is possible to have a society where a majority of the people will have that experience and particularly in modern society, but that is true at all times. Vedanta is not so naive as to believe that a large number of people can attain that realisation or absolute sublimation. Once we begin to follow that path even though we may not attain the final beatitude or final realisation, yet we will be able to create a society. Vedanta is also conscious of the fact that more than 85 per cent of the people, more or less, follow what the best or the greatest individuals in any given society consider to be an ideal. They cannot analyse for themselves.

Lord Krishna has said that common people will follow that person who is perceived to be the best, the finest and the highest in any given society.²⁵ Most people do not have the ability to analyse and discover for themselves. They are so accustomed to doing things mechanically that it is just not possible for them to do anything but mechanically. Unfortunately this is the bitter truth. The following example will enable us to understand this better.

The Bank of England has a rule which states that who ever comes late to work must mention in the register the reason for being late. The weather of London being what it is, people are generally late because the buses run late due to fog. If the first person who comes late mentions the reason 'fog', the others just write 'ditto' without reading the reason men-

tioned by the first latecomer. One day people were surprised to find that someone had come late because his wife had given birth to twins in the morning, and all the people who had come to work after him had just written 'ditto' without reading the reason. Most of us are like that. If one person does something, immediately another person will imitate him and all the people will follow without thinking. In any given society norms are established by those who are the best. Others simply follow them.

Vedanta deals with the science of reality, reality as it is perceived, known and experienced. This is precisely why it does not base its coordinates, its mores, its norms, its values and judgements on any given text as such. Texts have their value, but Vedanta emphasises that unless the truth of Vedanta is realised in a particular historical period, it is not valid for the people of that age. It must be made an object of experience and it must be experienced. Unless it is experienced by someone who belongs to our age, we can never be sure of the meaning of that particular text. This is the reason why we do not see fundamentalism in any form in the field of Sanatan Dharma.

Fundamentalism refers to second hand, third hand, or even fourth hand knowledge. It refers to the experience of another and not to our own experience. It refers to the experience of a different age, a different place. It does not refer to the experience of a person who is living in our times. Vedanta has emphasised that even to find out what the scriptures really mean there must be a man of realisation who knows what they exactly mean. Words change their nuances and we can never be sure what a particular word means. If we were to read Chaucer or Shakespeare today, we would find that most of the words have lost those particular shades of meaning which were prevalent when those works were written. We would require a commentary to understand these works. The person who writes the commentary must base it on his own experience. Only when he has experienced that it becomes a living scripture. While insisting on the science of reality, Vedanta says that the norms have to be lived in our own age. Though only a few individuals will be able to attain this state, yet they will be able to guide the large majority. A few *Brahmagyanis*, so to say, are essential for the survival of a society and for a

balanced view of life. Fortunately, India throughout the ages has produced such individuals because we emphasised this aspect of living the Vedanta. There is something peculiar in the Indian context which includes certain spiritual concepts and values. If we do not emphasise this idea of realisation, not many individuals will follow this path and attain this state.

Often people ask the question: how many individuals really attain the final beatitude? I ask them that tell me the number of primary school children who enter a school and the number of doctrates and post-doctrates. Whatever is the proportion in that case is the proportion here.

The Lord says that of the many people only a few will have the desire to follow this path, and of the many who try, only a few will succeed.²⁶ And it is those few successful people who are able to guide humanity and the society in which they are. When we closely examine what they have continuously preached and repeatedly emphasised, we realise that it is that effusive love towards all human beings. The unity of all beings has to be expressed in terms of this love. Out of the experience of non-dualism, out of the experience of oneness, what emerges is love. And this is what determines the norms of a society. Love presupposes certain things. In the context of the modern society this is very important.

Darwin emphasised that the growth of a species depends on competition—survival of the fittest. This is only a part of life. When we analyse we find that no species can survive without a non-competitive element because love is basically a non-competitive element. For example, a newborn child is absolutely helpless, he cannot compete with us. Why do we protect him? The answer is that if a species does not give protection to its young ones it will die. In short, love is equally important, if not more important, than the spirit of competition. Since Darwin, the notion of competition has come to occupy the main stage of our thinking. We think that society can survive only because of competition. There are national competitions—different nations fight among themselves for supremacy. Within nations there are different groups who fight among themselves for supremacy. That spirit of love which have we repeatedly emphasised is

lacking in modern society and as a result the fibre of our living together has become weak.

This problem has been discussed by other scientists who were interested in Darwin's findings. Koestler discussed this problem in detail and later Krokotkin examined it. No species can survive without an element of love and it has been proved that a society which emphasised competition was always destroyed by its own effort. We see the same thing today. What is it that we feel will destroy humanity? This spirit of competition will ultimately destroy humanity. Why are we afraid of nuclear wars? Again, the answer lies in the spirit of competition. Had the practice of love been present, scientific progress would have given us all the things that we need for our biological survival and our social survival.

A number of studies have been conducted to study this problem. For instance, in the United States Dr Murphy observed children between two and four years of age for 216 hours and found that 169 times these children did an act of love. Even if we observe an infant, say, an infant of twenty days, he will respond to our smile. This is a response of love. These things are fundamental aspects of our life and we have not tried to emphasise them.

When that love expands not only in a particular group but to the whole cosmos, then we can say that we are living not as a bound soul or *jiva*. *Jivan* has been replaced by *Shivan*. The word used is 'animus', that is, life is anew. Once we accept that norm then instead of living as *jiva* we begin to live as Shiva.

Generally when a person follows spiritual practices, goes deep into meditation, he has to limit his external activities. Other people around him usually say that he is leading a selfish life, and he is trying to realise or attain liberation only for himself, so what good is he to society. If he is working for his own body-mind complex which is the self as an ordinary human being understands it, then he could be called selfish, but he is working for Shiva who is the final goal of all striving. He wants to attain identity with the whole cosmos. Thus he is not being selfish as other people understand it. Having reached that stage there are some persons who have much more power than others like a

Yagnyavalkya or a Vashishtha or a Krishna or a Rama or a Shankara and they are able to bring about a complete change in society and we are able to see this for ourselves. But there are others who attain that stage but do not have as much power. Their actions are generally not understood by ordinary people. But they are like light houses, like stars. A Yagnyavalkya or a Vashishtha can be compared to the sun in whose light we can do all activities. It is true no doubt that a star does not give as much light as the sun but it does show the way. By looking at the stars we know the direction in which we are going. Just as the stars show us a particular direction, similarly those who have realised and attained that state are able to show us the direction in which we have to move. This is why it is emphasised again and again that one must attain this state and only then one is able to correctly interpret the scriptures. Such a person tries to change the total outlook of humanity from an egocentric view to the cosmo-centric or deo-centric view. People who are unable to understand this believe that the sensate experience is the only experience.

Acharya Gaudapada says that there are three types of individuals because there are three types of experiences. The first is the waking experience where we have an object and we have knowledge of that object. Next is the dream experience where there are no objects but we merely have knowledge of those objects, that is, knowledge of non-existing objects. Then there is the experience of deep sleep where there are no objects nor is there any experience of those objects:

Following these three experiences, there are three types of individuals.²⁷ The first type he calls the *lokik* or the ordinary people. These people believe that the world is really real and whatever they perceive is really real. They believe in an objective reality and also believe that the experience is objective. Because they perceive the world to be absolutely real, they perceive their body-mind complex to be absolutely real. This explains why they are selfish, egoistic, full of hatred and harbour feelings of animosity. For them the world is absolutely real, and they act in an anti-loving way. Not only do they not love but they also do things which are against love.

The second category of people are the non-loving type. They are not anti-loving most of the time. These people will not try to cheat anyone and they are content with what belongs to them legally. But they will not be willing to part with anything that belongs to them. They want their rights. The anti-loving type on the other hand is not bothered whether a thing morally belongs to him. He is not concerned whether he deserves a thing or not.

There is an interesting story which throws light on the anti-loving type of individuals. There once lived a man in a village who was anti-loving by nature. He always tried to create problems in every family. Slowly people around him realised that whatever he said or did was basically to harm others, so they began to ignore him. When he found that he was not able to create any trouble and satisfy his need to do so, he went away to a forest. Someone who was passing through the forest saw him and asked him the reason for his being there at that hour of the evening, especially since there were wild animals in the forest. The man offered to take him to his village. But he refused to go with that man and told him that he was in the forest with the intention of being killed and eaten by a tiger. The man was surprised when he heard this and thought that pressures and problems of life were driving him to commit suicide. He reassured the man that he was not being driven to commit suicide because of problems in life but he had a particular goal in mind which he wanted to achieve even at the cost of death. He then explained that the tiger would become a man-eater after killing him and would attack the people of his village. If he could not do any harm by being alive, then he would do harm by dying.

These people are anti-loving by nature and they are never bothered about others. Today, there are people who manufacture drugs which do not contain even a bit of the medicine. They are not concerned that those who take these medicines may die. There are others who adulterate foods without thinking that the people who eat that food may suffer. This is the anti-loving way of doing things. Not everyone falls into this category. Some people are of the non-loving type, they do not part with anything that belongs to them and neither do they take anything from the other person.

Many social workers, who appear to be doing social service, fall into this category. They do not part with anything that belongs to them but they work for the good of the society at others' cost.

The third category of people are the pseudo loving type. These people will talk of nothing but love, helping others and being sympathetic but the moment they are expected to act, they simply recoil. They are convinced that their behaviour is correct and they can also convince others that they are in the right. They are absolutely bereft of love. Though it appears that they are convinced of loving others, yet this is only a type of pseudo loving. All these three types of individuals consider the universe to be real as it is.

In the next stage we find individuals who are convinced that they are able to experience these things, but they also know that these things are not really real.²⁸ The word *avastu* means that they are not really real. There is something else which is greater, which is really real, whereas these things are only passing phases. They are not really real even though we experience them. Individuals who follow this view are able to express their love in action.

While expressing their love, some people do not even understand what love should take into consideration. When we love a person we must see to it that we act for his good and not do what pleases him even though it may not be good for him. For instance, a drunkard may ask for a drink. We may feel compassionate and allow him to have a drink and we may even give him some money. The man will have to suffer later. This is not understanding love. It is love no doubt because we are parting with something which belongs to us. We are trying to share what we have with someone else. What we do not understand is what we should share and what we should not share. For example, a doctor may tell the mother that the child should not be given any chocolates because sweets are not good for his teeth. In spite of this the mother gives the child a chocolate. Though the mother is doing an act of love yet it is without any understanding. The important point here which needs to be understood properly is that while giving the chocolate to the child, the mother does feel a sense of pleasure and happiness. Many people will try to interpret this by saying that

the mother has given the chocolate because she is deriving happiness. But here pleasure is only a by product. Though she derives pleasure by giving the chocolate yet she does not give it for that pleasure but she gives it out of love for the child.

If utility or pleasure is the aim, if we do something not out of love but because we derive pleasure from it, then it will not be an act of love. Here I am talking of a situation where even though we may derive pleasure yet that is not our aim. This must be understood clearly because the so-called egoists will try to impress on us that we are deriving pleasure from an act, our acts are egoistic and whatever we do is not out of love. Of course, we may make mistakes while we do an act out of love. The ideal situation of course is to be creative wisely, wisdom should determine our actions instead of blindly or passionately doing an act of love. We can say that the concept of love is present because we are able to give away something without expecting anything in return. We know that the thing in itself is not real, there is something else which is higher.

The final stage is similar to the state of deep sleep.²⁹ A man of realisation not only perceives things to be unreal but all these differences are not even perceived by him as differences. He is able to see the underlying unity in all the things. This unity is based on supreme love, what is known as *param premaspad* in Sanskrit. Love is the *param* element, the supreme element. It is the supreme guiding factor. Love itself has become the supreme factor which guides us in all our actions. The joy emerges from that supremeness of love. Initially, man was selfish but this selfishness has given way to complete selflessness. Throughout the process, the emphasis is on the concept of love, on the manifestation of this love.

Sometimes people question that since they have not attained this final beatitude, how should they behave? In all spiritual practices and, for that matter, in scientific experiments we have to act 'as if'. Why do we conduct an experiment in the chemistry or physics laboratory in a particular way? The reason is that we take it for granted 'as if' the hypothesis is true. When we are asked to conduct an experiment, we do not say that we will not conduct the

experiment in the prescribed way but we will do something else. We act 'as if' it is true. After the experiment we are able to say that the hypothesis has been verified on the basis of an experiment. We have been able to verify the hypothesis because we acted 'as if', if we had not done so we could not have verified the hypothesis. For instance, if we read a recipe in a magazine we try out the recipe as if it is true. But if we begin to question while reading the recipe whether what is written is true, whether the dish will be good, then we will not be able to experiment.

In the same way we have to conduct the experiment in our life as if this final truth of unity is real. As we practice, slowly we will move towards this truth and our experiment will tell us that we are on the right path. This moving towards the truth is an important part of life. It must be remembered that all of us cannot attain the final beatitude, or perhaps even the higher stages of meditation. But we can at least start living as if this unity is true and real. We must remember that love cannot be practiced until we act as if this unity is present.

There is an interesting story. A great musician called Pushpadanta used to offer flowers to Lord Shiva and when he could not find good flowers, he would steal them from others' gardens and offer them to the Lord. One day he came across the king's garden which was not only beautiful but it was covered with a myriad of flowers. Having discovered the garden, Pushpadanta was very happy and he made it a practice to go there often to steal flowers to offer to the Lord. This theft was noticed by the king who wanted to catch the culprit but he failed to do so. So he consulted some Brahmins who told him to place a *Shiv nirmalaya* on the gate so that who ever came that way would lose all his powers and would be easily caught. The king did as he was told. As was his practice, Pushpadanta came and crossed the *Shiv nirmalaya* and lost all his power of movement. He immediately realised what had happened, he looked around and found that he had crossed the *Shiv nirmalaya*. He began to pray to the Lord. He told the Lord that he had committed a sin and would not commit it again. He prayed to the Lord to rescue him from that situation.

In the hymn that he recites he raises a very interesting point. He says that if we wait till we know the Lord fully,

as the learned know Him, then we will not be able to praise Him because He is ineffable.³⁰ If it is said that only a person who knows the Lord completely can praise Him, then no one will be able to praise Him. Pushpadanta further says that if a person has tried his best and he expresses what he has known after reaching his own limit, then he cannot be faulted.³¹ Even though a person does not know a thing completely and thoroughly yet we cannot find fault if he is describing what he has experienced. If this is true then Pushpadanta says that even his praises are right because he is merely describing what he has experienced.

The Lord should not only be praised verbally but through all the pores of our being. Through all our acts we must praise Him. Our attempt is to convey what we have experienced within. For instance, a scientist does not say that he has discovered the final truth. What he says is that he has discovered what he has told us, he has gone this far and others may go still further. And we take his word for it. No one says that until we have realised the final truth why should we talk about the intermediary steps. We have to rely on these intermediary steps as we go further and further. Similarly in spiritual life, we cannot say that only a person who has attained the final realisation can express himself. Whatever experience we have had, the amount of unity we have experienced, the degree of love that has become *paraprem* to us, the supremeness of love that we have attained that we must express in our acts. We should not feel that we cannot express ourselves because we have not attained the final realisation. The expression must be in accordance to the level we have reached. In this way the whole social fabric changes gradually.

Pushpadanta's story is only an illustration. In a sense all of us are Pushpadantas. What did Pushpadanta do? He did an egoistic act, what any man in a sensate culture would do. Even though he steals flowers to offer to the Lord, he still wants to worship the Lord. It does not matter if he has to steal. This is what all of us do, we try to get a thing anyhow and we do not bother about the means we use to obtain it. Since he is stealing without any evil intention, a time will come when he realises that using any means to obtain a thing is not right. When a person crosses the *Shiv*

nirmalaya it implies that he has tried to take something which does not belong to him.

What is it that Shiva has given us as his *prasada*? The *dharma*, the righteous action is what He has given us. When we cross the *Shiv nirmalaya* we are actually crossing those ethical fundamentals which we should not cross because the moment we cross them we become egoistical and we lose that contact with divinity. Pushpadanta realises that by trying to obtain a thing through illegal means, he has committed a crime, an immoral act which cannot possibly please the Lord. He prays to the Lord and promises never to commit this mistake again, and promises to lead a life of love and dedication as far as it is within his power to practice it. Once he prays to the Lord and begins to lead that life, he gets back his power. What we lose by committing a mistake, we get back by following the right path.

Hinduism holds another view. A father punishes his child when he makes a mistake, the aim of punishing the child is to make sure that he follows the correct path. If the father finds out that the child will not commit the same mistake again and he has realised his mistake and is sorry, will he still slap him because he made that mistake? The punishment was not for committing the mistake but for reforming the child. The same applies to us when we try to reform ourselves.

This has been expressed in a very beautiful verse in the Gita.³² The Lord says that no matter how sinful a person has been,³³ but the moment he decides to follow the path of unity and love,³⁴ and decides to love all beings as his own manifestation, he should be perceived as a good person or as a *sadhu* from that moment onwards because he has decided to follow the right path. The question of punishing him does not arise any more. When Pushpadanta realises his mistake then the question of punishing him does not arise and the way is open. What he praises pleases us. This is what he bestows on us. Everyday we repeat that particular stotra. By repeating those verses we try to remember that we are like Pushpadanta. Even though we make mistakes like him, yet we can overcome those mistakes as he did. He has shown us the way to do this. This is what happens when a person realises that divine love, he is able to show us the way.

We must practice this Vedantic realisation of unity as much as we are able to realise it. We may start on a small level in our own village. Initially, it may not be possible for us to empathise with the people of Ethiopia. But we must be conscious of that feeling when it arises. Most of our acts are not out of this realisation of love and unity. Some people are able to feel sympathy and love for those whom they have not even seen. This is not easy. The presence of another person arouses sympathy and love if we practice it. This is why our scriptures emphasise activities like feeding a guest every day. By guest we do not mean guest in the modern sense of the term, that is, some one who has written to inform us that he will come to see us. This is not what we mean by the word *atithi* in Sanskrit. The term *atithi* implies that a person has come to our town or village, but he does not know anyone nor is he related to anyone. He is in need of food and shelter. In ancient India communications were limited and people either walked or went on horseback. It usually took months to travel from one place to another place. What a person required was food and shelter for one day as the next day he would go on his way. The concept was that even though we did not know him, we would feed him and give him shelter for one night because we believed that he was a part of the human society. Today in every village we find people who are in need of this sympathy and love. Let us begin by bestowing it on them. It is only through practice that we will be able to create a non-dualistic society. The present society is a divisible society, it can be divided by its very nature.

At the very outset it was pointed out that we would not deal with a society which could be divided, we would discuss a society which was indivisible. The concept which Advaita emphasises is that of a non-divisible society, one which cannot possibly be divided. The idea is not that society can be divided and it has to be kept together somehow or other. Today, we begin with the idea that India has diversity but how do we bring about unity. We talk of national integration. These words presuppose that there is no integration, there is no nation, it is a divisible nation, diversity is its very nature and we have to bring about unity. The moment we use such words the question arises: Why should we be integrated? One person may be in favour of national integration

but another person may be against it. On the other hand the Advaitic society maintains that all divisions including divisions of the so-called nations are just arbitrary. What do we mean by the term nation? Till a few years ago Pakistan formed a part of one nation—India. Today they are two separate nations. Similarly at one time, Sri Lanka and Burma were also a part of India. Today they are separate nations. We do not even know what is going on in Burma. No one even seems to be interested. We can see for ourselves how nations are divided. Why does this division take place? The belief underlying this is not that we are indivisible but that we are divisible. And divisible to what extent? Each village, each household may feel that it is a separate entity and it is for them to decide whether they want to be integrated or not. Advaita, on the other hand, emphasises that all humanity, all life, all living beings, the whole cosmos is really indivisible. It cannot possibly be divided. Since it cannot be divided, we cannot think in terms of a division. We can only think of how to prevent a division. The question is how will we do this?

Vedanta has a beautiful answer. It says that all the contents of this world are *mayik*, they are produced from *maya*. *Maya* is inexhaustible. People generally think that the objects of this world are real and therefore exhaustible. This belief gives rise to the spirit of competition. The idea being that if we do not compete we will perish. *Maya* is inexhaustible because it is *maya*. For example, a person cooks a *gulab jamun* or a *rasgulla* for us to eat. Then he has limited the amount of *khoya* or *mawa* or *paneer-chhena*, to prepare the *rasgulla* or *gulab jamun*. On the other hand if there is a magician who shows us a *rasgulla* or a *gulab jamun*. How many *rasgullas* and *gulab jamuns* can he show? The number is infinite because the *rasgulla* or *gulab jamun* is produced from *maya*. When we say that the world is *mayik* what we are trying to say is that the power of *maya* is inexhaustible. There will never be a shortage of anything because the world is basically *mayik*. For example, a textbook of physics written a 100 years ago described how slowly the sun would cool down and human beings would die as a result of this cooling effect and there would be no light and heat available for human beings. Today we know that all those calculations were wrong. The sun has an inexhaustible source of energy.

Similarly in an atom electrons move around protons, can we say that its energy will ever be exhausted? Will we reach a stage when the atom will cease because the electrons cannot move around? This inexhaustible source of energy can be explained only if the world is *mayik*, produced out of *maya*, not out of any concrete thing.

Once we realise this inexhaustible source, we will give up the whole linear conception which we live in. Today, the conception of development is linear. We move in a line and, therefore, there is an end and a beginning. One of the greatest discoveries of humanity, scientifically speaking, is the discovery of the wheel! All our motions, all our developments have taken place because of this discovery of the circular motion. We have to re-discover the circular motion not only physically but in human civilisation as well. In human society, we have to think not in terms of a linear development, but in terms of a circular development. This wheel goes on. That is why the Puranas talk about an infinite number of creations and dissolutions moving in a wheel-like fashion. We do not have to think that our movement is only linear. This basic conception can completely change our thinking in every field.

Sometimes I give a very gross illustration. We sow a seed and a tree grows from it. We take a twig and use it as a tooth brush. That twig again becomes manure and another tree grows in its place. This is a circular motion. From the tree the twig, from the twig again the tree, the circular motion takes place. The water rises from the ocean, goes to the Himalayas or any other mountains, the water flows back to the ocean and again the circle is complete. These are examples of circular motion.

The type of society we want to build, the Advaita emphasises, is basically a circular type of society. When we produce a tooth brush or a tube of tooth paste, the motion is linear. All our technology has been developed on this concept of linear motion, which has introduced the concept of competition. All our technologies and scientific developments, based on the Advaita conception, think and work out technologies which follow a circular motion and therefore we are not afraid of exhausting anything.

This conception of Advaita based on love, is always based on this idea of giving and taking. Long back an interesting article appeared in the *Reader's Digest*. A person was travelling in the United States and he ran out of petrol. Many cars passed by and finally one stopped and gave him a jerry can of petrol. He wanted to pay him. But the man told him not to pay him but fill the jerry can and keep it with him. Whenever he came across any other person in need of petrol, he could give it to that person. A few years later the man who had given this jerry can ran out of petrol and he stopped at the same place. A car which was passing by stopped and gave him that jerry can. He recognised the can and asked him how did he get this, whether he had bought it. The man told him that someone had given it to him and had also told him to give it to anyone who was in need. This is circular motion. This is how love should be manifested.

What happens or used to happen in India earlier? A student went to a Gurukula. No fees was charged. The student went to the village and food was given to him free of charge. The person who gave food knew that today, yesterday or tomorrow, his son would also go to school, would also go to a Gurukula and somebody else would feed him. This is the conception of circular life, whatever we give will eventually come back to us, but we are not egoistically demanding it. This Advaitic conception of society is what comes out of that realisation—of the identity of the subject and the object—of the Advaita experience that we have discussed earlier.

LECTURE V

We have been discussing how the individual must live up to the particular revelation that he has had. We know that it is not possible to get the final revelation initially. But we must move on with what we have attained, not wait until the final revelation has taken place. This is what is known as living what you have attained. This is what we mean by *prabodh*—the real wakefulness. Most of the time we are not awake. We are asleep. Although we have attained certain insights we do not put them into practice in our everyday life. We do not live them. Any revelation that we get must change our life pattern, must bring about a change not only within but without. What we gain in the depth of our meditation, we must be able to communicate to all those who are around us through the expression of love.

Vedanta holds that *maya* has two powers: of veiling and revealing. It veils things, it hides the reality. But it does not merely hid it. It hides it and then reveals it again. The term reveal means to pull back the veil; the veil is pulled back and then it is replaced. That revelation is partial to begin with. We will not go into the details of philosophy here. But it is in the order of things to mention here that according to the Vedantic viewpoint, even when one is looking at a pot, it is the reality which is being revealed only partially. Even in this case one is contacting the consciousness which is being revealed, but it is not the infinite consciousness. Hence, it does not eradicate ignorance completely, but at least partially one knows something which is true, which is real. So as one moves onwards, the veil is increasingly withdrawn and until the veil is not completely withdrawn, the egotistic

nature of all our activities and feelings is not destroyed. That is exactly what we mean by *yagnya*. *Yagnya* means sacrifice. Sacrifice is in the very nature of human existence. The Vedas lay down that sacrifice is the centre of the whole universal movement.³⁵ *Nabhi* is the centre of a wheel. Krishna translates the same by saying that all activities not done for the sake of sacrifice lead to bondage.³⁶

What is this sacrifice that we are talking about? Acharya Shankara makes this very clear by quoting a passage from the Taittiriya Brahmana. Sacrifice or *yagnya* really means that which is the all pervasive Lord.³⁷ So whenever one is acting not for one's own body-mind complex, not for one's egotistic fulfilment, self-aggrandisement, one is actually making a sacrifice. Whenever one is working for the good of the whole cosmos, as one understands it, one is performing a *yagnya*. To begin with, we may work for the good of the village community only. Later, it may be the nation, or humanity, or whatever one perceives as the whole, i.e., one is moving away and sacrificing one's ego for the sake of attaining that wholeness. Whenever one gets away and sacrifices it, a *yagnya* is being performed. The prime manifestation of the Vedantic view of all our actions is *yagnya*. *Yagnya* is the first and foremost manifestation, to the extent that the Vedas go on to say that sacrifice is to be done for the sake of sacrifice alone. Sacrifice is a value in itself, just as modern society emphasises that one has to serve oneself for one's own sake. The idea is that whenever one is acting for one's own self one need not ask any questions, it is taken for granted. Whenever one is acting for someone else, then the question arises is he doing something which is different from what is considered normal. One may appreciate it, one may consider it as something very superior, but it is still not normal. Vedanta says that actually sacrifice is in the very nature of things. The *yagnya* way of perceiving things, the sacrificial way of perceiving things, is totally opposed to the modern social view where the self is the centre, self-aggrandisement is the main objective in life.

Sacrifice is a very interesting word. It means making something sacred. The same connotation is implied when we use words like *ashvamedha*, *gaumedha*, *purushmedha* and *sarvamedha*. The term *medha* means to purify. When we talk about *ashvamedha* we are talking about purifying the horses.

What is a horse? The senses through which we act are really like horses.³⁸ They have to be purified. *Gaumedha* refers to the mind through which we gain all knowledge and this has to be purified. *Purushmedha* means that the soul itself has to be purified; and *sarvamedha* implies that the whole universe has to be purified.

The conception of sacrifice is to make whatever we give out absolutely pure. It is entirely different from the attitude underlying the concept of charity that we have become accustomed to. We give in charity what we consider is not quite useful to us. We do not give our best suit away in charity. We take the trouble to select an old suit, one which we are not going to wear. No doubt this is also giving and it is better than not giving at all. But in sacrifice we give what we consider best.

In Sanskrit, we have two conceptions—*danna* and *daya*. *Daana* connotes giving to someone who is superior to us, who can make better use of a thing. On the other hand, *daya* has more or less the same connotation as the term charity—we give something which is not up to our standards. In sacrifice, on the other hand, we do not give away something which we do not desire and which we consider inferior. On the contrary we have made it so sacred, so pure that we think that it is the best that we can offer. This idea of sacrifice, i.e., giving our best is a fundamental conception which makes the Vedantic view totally different from the modern social viewpoint.

In our own age, we have the example of Vietnam, a very poor country with practically no weapons compared to the military strength of the United States. It was able to defeat the United States in spite of its formidable strength. Why could not the Americans suppress the Vietnamese? The answer lies in that very idea of sacrifice. They were not in possession of things but they had the spirit of sacrifice. The same spirit can be seen, to some extent, in our fight against the British. We had no weapons, but we had the spirit of sacrifice. We must learn to sacrifice momentary material gains for permanent moral conquest. These material gains do not leave any residue which can make the fabric of our existence strong. Moral conquest, on the other hand, strengthens us and gives us something to live by. It is

something which will always be with us, leading to strength, energy and the conception of fulfilment. The moment the idea of sacrifice emerges we move away from the idea of exploitation.

Modern society is basically a society of exploitation. The entire structure of industrial civilisation is based on the idea of exploitation. To begin with it may be exploitation of the natural resources. In this case the idea is what we can get from nature rather than what we can give to nature. The same tendency is seen when we exploit economically. Marx has made this concept of economic exploitation very clear. Today, we are quite conscious of economic exploitation and we all feel that it should not take place. But we are not yet conscious of emotional exploitation. We try to exploit a situation emotionally. What happens? A particular issue is raised. People's emotions are whipped up. They are emotionally aroused and they elect a person, whom they would not have elected otherwise. On that particular emotional level, we are able to exploit people. Even in our everyday relationships, a husband may try to exploit the feelings of his wife. Or a wife may want to exploit the feelings of her husband. There is intellectual exploitation as well. For instance, in communist countries certain literatures are banned and common people do not have access to them. People will get only that kind of knowledge that the state wants to give them. This intellectual exploitation leads to Nazi movements, national socialism, etc. Basically, these movements were nothing more than intellectual exploitation. Certain ideas were continuously drummed into a particular group so that the reactions of that group were controlled by a few individuals.

In an industrial society consumerism is very important, therefore it is based on consumerism. All the advertisements, all the propaganda are essential to exploit other people mentally. This is also a kind of intellectual exploitation. Then there is social exploitation. We exploit a particular group because we can obtain certain advantages in terms of votes, etc. We are not concerned about the good of that particular group, but we are only conscious of how we can exploit that group. There is religious exploitation as well. When we talk about Jihad or other such religious

problems, we are not trying to enlighten people about real religious values, but we are trying to exploit the feeling which a person has for a religion. There are various types of exploitation in our modern society and the whole society is based on that conception of exploitation.

Sacrifice is an anti-thesis of exploitation, to the extent that the Vedas say that if a person cooks food just for himself without the idea of sharing it with anyone else who is near him or is friendly to him, he is actually consuming the sins which are being committed in eating that food.³⁹

The same idea has been discussed in the Gita. A person who cooks food for himself is eating nothing but the sins.⁴⁰ Some of you may be able to recall your childhood. Supposing all the members of the family had gone out and your mother was alone, she would not cook for herself. She would eat a little gruel or *khichri*. The underlying belief was why cook for oneself. But if children had to be fed, or if the family had to eat, she would cook a lot of things.

Earlier, most families had their own deity. Food was cooked and first offered to the Lord. The idea being that food was cooked not for ourselves but for the sake of the Lord who symbolises the cosmic spirit. Only after offering Him food we ate the remnants of this sacrifice. The same idea was present in all other activities. While laying the foundation of a house, the first question was where should the shrine be? Today things are just the opposite. When we discuss the plans of a house with an architect, we discuss the bedrooms, the drawing room, the dining room. And only after the house has been constructed that we think of a place to do worship—either under a staircase, or somewhere else a small niche is found to place the deity. The idea here is that we are going to build a house for our own self. Earlier, it was considered essential to have a guest room in the house because guests were always welcome. Today, even one's own parents are treated like guests and it is desirable if they do not come at all. However, if they do decide to come, they should stay for a few days like a guest and then go their way. If that is how we feel about our own parents, where is the question of feeling for others. Anybody who comes cannot be welcomed in such a house. I know there are economic constraints, but what will we do if we were to have a child.

We have to think of his accommodation, food, etc. These ideas of sharing should become a natural part of our life style. This is what we mean by the word sacrifice.

The entire modern social outlook is based on exploitation whereas the attitude which Vedanta emphasises is the attitude of sacrifice, the attitude of *yagnya*. We live for the sake of *yagnya* and not for any material gain here and now for our own body-mind complex. The Vedantic conception of society has no room for any type of exploitation. By exploitation we do not merely mean economic exploitation, even though in modern times the term connotes economic exploitation. In no sphere should there be exploitation. Instead society must be based on the idea of sacrifice, the idea being emphasised is what we can give and not what we can get. This idea should dominate all our relationships.

The moment we talk about exploitation, some people may say that we must first fight against a particular exploitation before fighting against other exploitations. This is again another way of exploiting—exploiting the feeling that we have against a particular exploitation. Some people may want to get rid of economic exploitation before thinking of other kinds of exploitation. For instance, we may promise to free someone from economic exploitation. And then we will exploit him intellectually and emotionally because we have promised to save him from economic exploitation. Later, we will think of other exploitations.

Exploitation is a way of thinking. It does not exist somewhere outside. It is how we take life, how we react to life. It is a form of habit. For example, a father may ask his son to fetch him a glass of water. The son, in turn, may ask his younger brother to bring a glass of water for the father. This is the habit of exploitation. Because one is senior, one can order one's younger brothers or sisters. The attitude is not what one can do for one's brother, but what one can get from one's brother. The father has asked the elder son to fetch a glass of water, and he must do so like an obedient servant. He could have asked the younger son also, but he did not. So exploitation is basically the way we look at things. If we look at things with the intention of taking advantage of a situation, we are acting as an exploiter. And if in any given situation, we think about what we can give

to society, what we can give to others then we move away from exploitation and go towards sacrifice. We have to get rid of this habit. This exploitation is in our minds and we must get rid of it from there. Because we see exploitation outside, we feel that it takes place in the external world.

There is an interesting story. Once a queen had gone to take a bath by the side of a pond. She kept her necklace on the bank and went for a bath. As soon as she finished bathing and came back, she found that the necklace was missing. Immediately she asked everyone to search for it. In spite of all efforts no one could find it. And it was even more surprising since nobody was around. Everyone thought that it might have fallen into the pond. People dived into the pond to look for it. But all attempts proved unsuccessful. Later someone saw it floating in the pond. The queen requested the king to ask the divers to retrieve the necklace which they could now see. But no matter how hard they tried, they could not retrieve it. Everyone thought it to be very peculiar that though they could see the necklace yet they could not reach it. Meanwhile a person who was passing that way enquired what the matter was. He was told about the lost necklace which could be seen floating in the pond but was still beyond reach. The man was intelligent, he thought over the matter. He said that if none of the divers could find it then obviously it was not there. It must be somewhere in the opposite direction because its reflection must be falling on the water. He began to trace it backwards and he saw that near the reflection of the necklace was the reflection of a branch of a tamarind tree. He tried to locate that tamarind tree and found it nearby. He climbed the tree and found the necklace hanging from a branch. Some bird had taken the necklace, thinking it to be something edible because it was shining and after discovering that it was not something edible, had left it there. The necklace hanging from the branch of the tree was being reflected. All the time people were trying to retrieve the necklace from the pond, while it was only being reflected in the pond.

Similarly we see exploitation in society and we feel that exploitation exists in the external world, and if we remove it from there, it will no longer exist. Actually exploitation exists in the minds of men, and unless we remove it from

the mind, it will persist. What happens is that we substitute one type of exploitation by another type of exploitation, instead of getting rid of exploitation itself. Exploitation will disappear when we realise that all the universe and all the souls everywhere are nothing but God Himself.⁴¹ So whom will we exploit? We can only exploit ourselves when ever we try to exploit someone else. When this realisation comes, sacrifice becomes the natural mode of thinking. We no longer see others as different from us, we realise that it is the Lord Himself who is being manifested in all beings. This realisation does not dawn suddenly, it comes slowly through continuous practice. Acharya Shankara points out that what ever a man who has realised himself finds natural must be practiced with effort by those who want to attain that state.

We have been trained to think of exploitation as natural. I have deliberately used the word trained for a child is not by nature exploiting, but as he grows up we imprint upon him that survival and growth are results of exploitation. Every being is born in a particular environment. It is true that each one has his own individuality. We are always in a group and continuously we react to each other. Only 15 per cent may be our own contribution in our own mental make up; 85 per cent is due to the particular social environment, the particular patterns which are being continuously impressed upon us. Living in an egoistic society we become egoists. Living in a sacrificial society we become men of sacrifice. In India we can easily see this. What was the reason that during the independence movement we were able to make great sacrifices for the sake of the nation? What is the reason that suddenly within a period of thirty years the very idea of sacrificing anything for the sake of the nation seems to be like a distant dream? Why has this change come? The answer to this is that the whole social fabric at that time was permeated by the thought—how much can each contribute for the sake of the nation. On the other hand, after independence the attitude is what can we get out of the nation. Certain people at the helm of affairs began to drum this idea continuously. They emphasised that we must consciously think about what the state can do for us. Slowly, this idea was imprinted on our minds. All the time we are preoccupied with what the state is doing for us, what the nation is doing for us. No one questions himself what is he doing for the sake of the nation.

The same is true of religion. Today we do not ask ourselves what are we doing for the sake of religion. Rather we ask what is religion doing for us. We say that temples have funds, why do they not use those funds for our economic growth. Do we have any duty towards the temples? No, because we do not have time to go to the temple. We do not even believe that going to the temple is of any use. And most people only go there to condone for their sins. In spite of this we want the funds which are available in the temples. The same attitude underlies our feelings towards the nation.

Slowly, habits have changed. But now we have to reverse the process. A sacrificial society alone can produce individuals who have the spirit of sacrifice. A few people who possess the spirit of sacrifice should come forward. They should try to preach to all those they come in contact with. But what do we mean by the term preach? As was pointed out earlier, preaching is not merely what we say, it is what we live. Only when we live the spirit of sacrifice, that it starts appealing to others. It is only through living a principle that another individual can be changed.

To develop this spirit of sacrifice, we must develop the spirit of dependence on the Lord, dependence on Shiva. Now we feel that the whole society and the whole cosmos is something inert. It is not inert. Gradually we will develop this idea that the whole universe, the whole cosmos, the whole environment, which is acting with us, is pervaded and controlled by Shiva. Since He, a conscious being, is controlling we have nothing to fear. We have only to be sure that we are exerting our outmost to deserve His care. We must ask ourselves: are we doing something by which He will be able to take care of us? Or, are we fighting against Him, working against Him? We can understand this better with the help of an illustration.

When a person is drowning and another person tries to rescue him. What happens? Instead of trying to get help, he tries to catch hold of the person who is trying to rescue him. And that is why if the rescuer does not know how to save a drowning person, he may also be drowned. The rescuer always pushes the person he is trying to save towards the bank but never allows the latter to hold him, because if the latter held him strongly then he would not

be able to swim himself. So he must be allowed to push the drowning person towards the bank and not the other way round. Similarly we must allow Shiva to give us protection rather than trying not to help Him in giving us protection. What is it that helps Him in giving us protection? It is definitely by practicing this conception of sacrifice. If we do not possess the spirit of sacrifice then we want to know what we can get out of the Lord rather than what we can do for the Lord. If we do not believe in this concept then the Lord will not be able to protect us because we will become more and more egotistical.

When most of us pray to the Lord we do not ask Him how we can be of use to Him, how we can help Him, how we can be ethical in our conduct all the time. We do not pray for all this. We pray for material gains and even unethical gains. For example, if we know that we will lose a case because it is illegal we will pray to the Lord that we should win it somehow or other. Even though we know that it is an immoral case, we still want Him to help us in those circumstances. Naturally, the Lord does not help us. And when the Lord does not help us, we begin to wonder why He does not help us. We feel that in spite of the fact that we prayed so hard nothing happened. The fact is that we are not allowing Him to help us. So we should always ask ourselves the question—are we exerting ourselves to be in His care or are we working against Him? It is only through this that we will be able to reach the stage of *abhaya* or fearlessness. Unless we become fearless, it is not possible to follow this idea of sacrifice. All the time we are afraid. Modern society exploits this fear and tries to control us through this fear. Everyone is trying to impress upon us that if we do not act in a particular way then we will be destroyed.

Once I read the Memoirs of Khrushchev, whether they are authoritative or not, we do not know. Khrushchev has recorded a very interesting incident. He recalls that Stalin in his last days was once standing in the balcony and humming to himself that the picture was complete now because he did not even trust himself any more. Stalin never trusted anyone. He thought that everybody was either siding with the British or with the Germans or with the Americans. Suspecting everyone had become his very nature. He was humming to himself that now he did not even trust himself

any more: whether he was doing all this for the sake of communism or merely for his own power.

Continuous fear is imbedded in us, and everyone tells us that we will be destroyed if we do not follow a particular path, and in the process we move away from sacrifice towards self-aggrandisement. This fear is constantly imprinted on our minds through newspapers, magazines, radio, television and other media of mass communication. It may be fear of nuclear war or it may be fear of ordinary things. We have to see through this whole series of fears. Whether it is the army, or the police, their aim is to emphasise that if it had not been for them, everyone would be destroyed. Once we know that there is a greater spirit to save us, we need not fear and depend on others to protect us. Do we ever realise that a tiger or a lion has no friends since he kills all the other animals in the forest. In spite of this he sleeps without any police or any army around to protect him. If a tiger or a lion can relax and sleep peacefully, are we so helpless that we need complete protection all the time? Because that fear has been imprinted on our minds, we are afraid all the time.

If we examine our scriptures, we often find descriptions of the fight between the devas and the asuras. The story is more or less the same. The demons always win initially. Then the devas pray to the Lord who comes to their protection. The final victory is always of the devas. But the important point is that initially they are always defeated. That is the very nature of our own mental life. Whenever we want to do any ethical act, we are reluctant to do it initially. We are afraid. But once we have become conscious of the fact that there is a greater reality—Shiva is there to give us protection—only then we become courageous enough to be ethical and moral. The same is true of our social attitudes. We should realise that though the devas may be defeated in the beginning but through the help of Shiva they always win eventually. If, at any time, we are able to revive this idea in us that there is a greater force facilitating the sacrificial process, then we will be able to sacrifice and eventually succeed. By continuously taking shelter in the Lord, we will develop that spirit of *abhaya*. In our dealing with other people we will not be guided by *bheda* or difference but by identity.

In the Gita, there are two instances where the Lord refers to those people who are continuously doing good to others. At one place he refers to those people who have overcome the idea of duality, of this worldly difference being *really* real.⁴² At another place He refers to those people who can see *sama*, that is, the Lord everywhere with equanimity.⁴³ They alone can do good to others.⁴⁴ To do good to others is possible only after we have overcome this idea of duality, this idea of difference, the idea of *bheda*.

No matter in which society Advaita is emphasised, that society has always grown and emerged victorious. Whereas a society which emphasises *bheda* is always conflict ridden. The moment we try to emphasise and consider the *bheda* really real, conflict arises. If two are really two they will always be in conflict; and a conflict afflicted society, unless cured of the conflict, is bound to be annihilated. Unfortunately during the foreign regime in India, the conception of *bheda* was imposed on this social pattern and everything was divided. We have not been able to get rid of this division even after independence.

Sometimes I feel, I may be wrong and I hope I am wrong, that there are certain powers in our own country who want to divide our society. I am not talking about other countries who have a vested interest in maintaining this division. This is eating away the very vitals of our society. Our society is becoming weaker and weaker because of this conception of difference. As noted earlier, there will always be difference, but if the unity is real, and the division is apparent, then the society grows. But if the division is real and the unity is apparent then there will always be conflict within a society because the duality is real. That is why we have not talked of a society belonging to a particular period of history. We refer to our society as Sanatan society. Sanatan means *sada bhava*, that is, the one which continuously rejuvenates itself. Therefore, living the ideal here and now is emphasised. The emphasis is not on dry contentions.

Sanatan Dharma never believed in any proselytising. Even today it does not believe in this. Why? Because we do not feel that by using a label anything of worth can be achieved. There are people in India who are labelled Mohammedans. But if we look closely we see that basically they

are Hindus. How is that possible? According to Islam, there can be no worship of any kind, particularly of a dead person. But in India the worship of graves, the *kabar pooja* of the pirs is very important. Why is this important? The reason being that worship is in the very nature of things, it is imbedded in our society. We may change their labels, but essentially they remain the same.

Vijayalakshmi Pandit recalls in her Memoirs that when she was Governor in Bombay, she had a cook. One day he appeared to be very worried. Upon inquiring it was found that he was worried because he could not find a suitable match for his daughter. She writes that she was rather surprised as he was a Christian and finding a Christian bridegroom should have been no trouble. The cook told her that it was very difficult to find a boy of a Saraswat Brahman clan who was a Christian. She wanted to know how he could be a Christian and a Saraswat Brahman at the same time. He answered that he was a Christian by religion and a Saraswat Brahman by caste.

We can change labels but by changing labels things do not change. The attitude towards life does not change. It is not possible to accept the Harijan as an equal, even though he is labelled a Christian or a Mohammedan. The same is true of everything else. And that is why we never tried to change labels. There were people like Rahim and Raskhan who were devoted to Krishna, but we never tried to change their labels and say that they were Hindus. Though we could have easily done that, but we let them develop their tendencies as they liked, because it is the individual who has to change and not merely the label which has to be changed.

We believed that the power of a group accrued from the power of each individual in the group. This is something akin to a rope. If we want to increase the strength of a rope then we must increase the strength of every thread in it. Only then the rope will become strong. Similarly if we want to develop a society oriented towards non-dualism, oriented towards unity and sacrifice, each individual must be trained and properly developed accordingly.

All reformation, according to Vedanta, must start from the heart of man. A man's heart must be changed. Only if we can change a man's heart can we change him. A change in

his feelings and his mode of thinking will bring a change in society. It is very easy to talk about reformation as if it is something external which can be imposed. It cannot be imposed. It has to grow from within. That is why Advaita (non-dualism) must be felt, this sense of identity must be felt within. For example, a *sahridya* goes to a drama, say, Harishchandra. He has heard the story of Harishchandra several times. But when he sees the acting, he feels the pangs which were felt by Harishchandra or his wife or his child, Rohit. Because he is able to empathise, therefore, he is *sahridya*. There are some people who go to a drama but they are not able to empathise with the actors. The same thing is true of our own lives. There are people who do social service without any feeling within. This may be social service, it may be charity, but this is not the experience of Advaita, that unity which we are talking about. It must be felt in the heart. We must be able to feel the pain of others, only then the sacrifice becomes natural, because that pain has become a natural part of our lives.

In Banaras there is a place called Pishach Mochan. An avadhoota used to stay there. Once he was wounded but he did not apply any medicine and as a result big worms entered that wound. These worms were big enough to fall down. Every time they would fall down he would put them back on the wound. When he was asked why he was doing this, he replied that they had nothing to eat and if they fell down they would die. When he was told that they would harm him if he placed them on the wound, he replied that they could only harm to some extent but he would not die because of them. This is what is known as Advaita being felt in the very core of our being.

As I pointed out earlier, I do not expect that every member of society or even a large proportion of society can attain this state. But this state becomes the light house. We must know how much empathy must enter our being, into our way of feeling, to attain this state of Advaita.

Acharya Shankara has expressed this idea of society, which we have tried to elaborate to some extent, in one of his stotras.⁴⁵ Every member of society should try to ensure that he does his share to protect *dharma*.⁴⁶ *Dharma* has been compared to a bridge. The word *dharmasetu* appears in the

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. *Dharma* is that which forms a bridge between our selfishness and the complete spirit of God dedication. All other things about *dharma* are only detailed analysis to show us how we have to practice it. Basically we are centred in our body-mind complex but we have to reach that state where this body-mind is of no value to us. These are two shores and *dharma* is the bridge which takes us across. Whenever any *adharma* enters our mind, an unrighteous thought crosses our mind, we must immediately obliterate it.⁴⁷ We must not allow it to linger on.

There is *karma pash*, that is, whenever we do an act, our immediate reaction is what fruit will this act bring.⁴⁸ We must cut this thought at the very root. We must act out of love, we must act because sacrifice has become our nature, and not because we will get something out of it. This alone can give us peace. If we follow this path in this particular way, then only we will be able to attain that state.

We began by analysing what we meant by modern society; we analysed the major premise of modern society: sensuous knowledge is the only real knowledge. We started with that base because that is the base of modern society. Fulfilment of selfish desires is the main force which holds society together. We found that the major premise of modern society is absolutely wanting in essentials, because it does not give us values towards which we can move. Modern society has given us technology and other developments by which we can attain a lot but attain towards what? It does not tell us anything about this. Thus, it is found absolutely wanting in this essential aspect, that is, giving direction to society.

Analysing the Vedantic view, we found that it has given us three fields—*Marya*, *Narya*, and *Divya*. Through these three field concepts, it gives us the three views connected with them. One view is in which the world is real in itself and as we see it. That is what we call the *lokik* view following Acharya Gaudapada. Then there is *sudham lokik* view, when we analyse we find that things are not really real as we perceive them to be, though the perception is real. That is the second stage towards which we move. In the final stage we know that neither the thing as we see it is outside,

nor even the perception is outside, it is identical with us. These three fields and how they are adopted by the individual were discussed in detail.

There is a triple stream of experience. These streams are the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state. To attain that final stage we discussed how by practicing the different modes of meditation we are able to contact reality as it really is. Even though that final revelation has not taken place, we should live slowly whatever has been revealed. Wherever we are able to identify with the greater whole, we should start practicing it here and now, because it is only by continuously practicing that we will be able to develop the sense of unity. Thus we find that this Vedantic conception of Advaita is on an experiential level. It is based on experiment, it can be experienced by us. It is not accepted because it is written in some text. Only by re-living it does it become relevant in our lives. Thus Vedanta is relevant in our everyday life in modern society because it is able to give us an experimental basis on which we can build our philosophy of life.

We began with the question 'Is Vedanta Relevant?' and we found out that Vedanta is absolutely relevant. Unless it is able to show the way, we feel that the whole modern society all over the world will come to naught because it is continuously being attacked by the fear psychosis and that fear psychosis is eating away the very vitals of the whole social fabric.