PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

by

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CALCUTTA

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

WORKS BY

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

SONGS DIVINE

REINCARNATION

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

DOCTRINE OF KARMA

HOW TO BE A YOGI

DIVINE HERITAGE OF MAN

SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT

IDEAL OF EDUCATION

INDIA AND HER PEOPLE

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SCIENCE OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

OUR RELATION TO THE ABSOLUTE

ATTITUDE OF VEDANTA TOWARDS RELIGION

HUMAN AFFECTION AND DIVINE LOVE

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HIS WORK, ETC.

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PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

I

"May we hear that which enlightens our minds, may we see Divinity everywhere, may we feel the presence of the Almighty within us and all the actions of our bodies and minds be in the service of that Almighty Being; may we have peace unending."

It is very difficult for me to give you an idea of the philosophy and religion of Vedânta. It is so vast that it takes a long time to go into detail touching all points that would be interesting to us all. In fact, it is the philosophy which solves the problem of life and death. The Vedânta philosophy is the oldest philosophy in the world, and not a new philosophy as it is sometimes improperly called. You have heard about the New Thought movement in this country (America). This is nothing new, although it is called by that name, but in reality, it is the religion which teaches that we have existed before.

Jesus the Christ said in his teachings: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free:"[1] In this teaching we find two words: *truth* and *free*. Now,

1. St. John, VIII, 32.

what is truth and what is freedom? These questions often arise in our minds. Everybody tries to explain *truth* from his own standpoint. In fact, all the various teachers of sciences, philosophies, and religions are advocating and trying to explain what *truth* is. No movement has ever been started to explain falsehood or untruth. Now, all religions, whether Mohammedan, Buddhist, Jain, Hindu, or Christian, or any other *ism* in the world, whether they teach God personally or not, have tried to show the universal Truth. In fact, the worship of God means the worship of eternal Truth. Now, in what way does the worship of eternal Truth bring freedom? That is a point that very few people do understand. Freedom is a goal. But it is not the freedom of body. Anything mortal or contingent cannot enjoy absolute freedom or permanency, because it is not eternal and is subject to limitations. The soul which is eternal and distinct and separate from the body can attain to freedom from the bondage of limitations, and that freedom is the goal which is freedom of soul or absolute freedom. That is the state where divinity and humanity become one. Jesus the Christ said: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."[2] That perfection means *being and becoming Divine*, and it comes from the knowledge of Truth. Without the knowledge of Truth that perfection cannot be reached. So, first of all we shall try to explain what the *truth* is and the methods by which freedom and perfection can be acquired.

2. St. Matthew, V, 48.

Truth is one; it cannot be many. By studying all sciences, philosophies, and religions of the world you will find that *truth* is absolute and one, and the manifestations of *truth* are multiform, but beyond them all the reality is one, and through whatever manifestations we try to reach the *truth* we attain to the same goal in the end. We must march towards the one God, the eternal Truth. God is universal, whether you may call Him Allah, or Christ or Buddha or *Brahman,* but *truth* is one just as the substance water may be called by various names by different peoples. In England they call it *water,* in Germany *wasser,* in France they call it *eau,* etc., but when speaking in these different languages the calling it by different names does not change the substance. Similarly, the same eternal unchangeable Being, worshipped under various names by different nations is one although through ignorance we may not understand the essence or the Spirit that is referred to by these various names. Truth is one, and that one Truth must be worshipped in spirit and by the spirit. Falsehood cannot worship truth because falsehood does not exist in reality. Anything unreal or untrue cannot know or see the truth. Truth can only see the truth face to face. That which is unreal is like darkness; it vanishes when it touches the light of truth; so the body cannot worship the truth. It is the soul that can worship the truth because the soul is eternal and Divine.

We do not understand what the soul is, but our religion teaches the method by which we can understand that we are souls and we are spirits and not mortal bodies. The identity of the soul with the body prevails from ignor-

ance, the ignorance of our true Self. *The moment we can understand that we are souls we become free from the bondage of the flesh and the bondage of ignorance,* and all passions and desires of the flesh and everything immoral vanish, and we realize the state which cannot be described in words, but the best word we can use to describe it, is the state of Godconsciousness. Reaching this supreme state you will feel a perfect communion with Divinity in and through all actions of your daily life. Every act of your daily life will then become an act of worship, whether it is cooking a meal or sweeping the floor. In fact, these are no less acts of worship than to give your brain and mind to God for a few hours sitting in a quiet place. Your body and mind will be then the playground of the Almighty and you will then realize that supersensible state of Godconsciousness; you will then say as St. Paul said: "We live and move and have our being in God." There is no exaggeration in saying that the presence of the Divine is in man when he is in the state of Godconsciousness. It is not a myth; it is not a miracle, it is not a wonder but it is a fact and it is a reality. It is a reality to those who have been fortunate to attain to such a blissful and divine state. Some will laugh and others will deny it, but such a state can be reached and reached even in this life. Our salvation does not begin after we have passed into the grave, but it begins in this life. The attainment must be in this life when we are in the flesh and blood. Those who have a kind of belief that we may live in any way in this world, whether moral or immoral, and that if we take the name of the Lord we will be saved,

will produce no good unless they actually become conscious of the Divinity within themselves.

Whatever we do in this life and whatever we think in this life, will produce results and these results will come back to us again. Our present life, as we know from your everyday experiences, is the result of the past. So, our future is the effect of our present works. You make your future by your own thoughts and deeds. What you will do to-morrow, you make to-day; so the present is the result of the past, and the future will be the result of the present. If we live a moral life we shall be happy, but if we live a wicked life we shall be punished. "God does not punish the wicked nor reward the virtuous, but we punish ourselves and reward ourselves by the law of action and reaction." All acts produce results. If we are wicked we suffer; if we are virtuous we are happy and these are the unavoidable results of the *laws of action and reaction.* Temptations are not sent to us by Satan, nor are punishments sent by God, but they are the results of our own acts. We cannot blame Satan and nor we can blame God, but we ought to blame ourselves and live better lives. Then we shall find that these various troubles that come upon us will be a thing of the past and our lives will be full of sunshine and happiness and we shall feel radiant with joy and Divine glory. The various religions of the world have taught there is a heaven and there is a hell, but all these are only mental conditions. We can enjoy heavenly pleasure in this life and we can endure sufferings of the darkest hell in this life, but these are mental states, just as when we have nightmare we get frightened and see all kinds

of horrible things. Similarly, we can have that state of nightmare or hell in this life, and then we should know that we are going through the sufferings of hell.

Here I like to repeat it again that there are no such places as heaven and hell. They are very attractive to those who believe in those things, but others would not care for any such conception. We create our own heaven and hell according to our own thoughts and deeds. God is not responsible for all these. We have come to this world to fulfil the purpose of life and we ought to understand what that purpose is. No one is sent, but everyone has come to this world because he had a desire to come and fulfil certain desires which can only be fulfilled on this human plane and, therefore, he has taken on the frail human body. So, everyone is responsible for his own coming and the good or bad results of his own deeds. In truth, we are beyond this mortal body and the body cannot limit the immortal soul. When we realize that our souls are separate from the body, then we know ourselves, then we know the true nature of our *being*. And then we understand really the aim and object of philosophy and religion which explain the eternal Soul or the infinite Being that forms the background of our apparent life.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

II

The old prejudice that the Hindus were idolatrous heathens, that they had neither religion nor philosophy, is gradually vanishing even from the minds of the orthodox Christians. The Christians have learnt to-day that India is the land of mysteries, of religion and philosophy. Among many of the Oriental scholars in the West we find men like Prof. Max Mueller, Paul Deussen, as well as persons of advanced thought who have already come to the knowledge that from ancient times India has produced a nation of philosophers, and there is to be seen almost all the phases from the lowest to the highest, of philosophy and religion that are to be found anywhere, either in the ancient or the modern world.

Well has it been said by Victor Cousin, the great French philosopher, whose knowledge of the history of European philosophy was unrivalled, that "India contains the whole history of philosophy in a nutshell". Again he says: "When we read with attention the poetical and philosophical monuments of the East, above all those of India, which are beginning to spread in Europe, we discover there many a truth and truths so profound, and which make such a contrast with the meanness of the results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend

the knee before the philosophy of the East, and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy." Prof. Max Mueller said: "No phase of religion, from the grossest superstition to the most sublime enlightenment, is unrepresented in that country." You will hardly find any other country in the world where, from prehistoric times down to the present day, religion and philosophy have played such an important part in forming the character of a nation as it has in India.

Indeed, the students of the various systems of philosophy of ancient and modern India find in them the rational solutions of vital problems concerning the origin and source of the universe, the cause of all phenomena, the real nature of the soul and its relation to the Eternal Being. They also realize that in these solutions the ancient Vedic seers of Truth (Rishis) anticipated as though the final conclusions of a Plato, a Spinoza, a Berkeley, a Hume, a Kant, a Hegel, a Schopenhauer, a Spencer, a Darwin or a Haeckel, even centuries before their existence.

In fact, the natural tendency of the Hindu mind from the very beginning has been to search after the unchangeable Reality of the universe, to trace the cause of the world of phenomena, to solve the problems of life and death, to understand the purpose of our earthly existence, and above all to know the true relation of man to God as well as to all the organic and inorganic objects of the world.

Animated by intense search after Truth and guided by their unsweving love for it, the Hindu thinkers

discovered many laws of nature and described them in scientific terms without fearing any persecution from any source. They understood the process of cosmic evolution and its purpose so clearly that even Professor Huxley could not help admitting it when he said: "To say nothing of the Hindu sages, to whom evolution was a familiar notion long before Paul of Tarsus was born." Referring to this point Sir Monier Monier Williams says: "Indeed, if I may be allowed the anachronism, the Hindus were Spinozites more than two thousand years before the existence of Spinoza; and Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time, and before any word like 'evolution' existed in any language of the world."[1] This statement is absolutely true, as we find the theory of evolution was described in the Rig Veda, the most ancient scriptures of the world.[1] And upon this doctrine of evolution the whole philosophy and religion of Vedânta are based.

Although Vedânta philosophy is one of the oldest systems of philosophy in India, still it harmonizes with the ultimate conclusions of modern science in describing the process of cosmic evolution from one primordial substance into the existing variety of the universe. This process, according to Vedânta, must have taken millions and millions of years to give our planet the suitable conditions for human life as we see to-day around us.

1. Sir Monier Monier Williams: *Hinduism and Brâhminism*, p. 12.

Vedânta philosophy teaches that there is one reality, one life, one spirit, one intelligence, and one mind in the universe, of which the individuals are nothing but so many manifestations in time and space. This one Reality has been called by different names by different, philosophers and mystics. It is named *Bràhman* in Vedânta. The same Reality which is one without a second (*'ekamevâdvitiyam'*) is called Jehovah by the Jews; the Father in heaven by the Christians, Allah by the Mohammedans, and Buddha by the Buddhists. The names vary but the Substance is ever the same. To understand this unity of Being, under a variety of names and forms, has always been the highest ideal of all philosophies and religions of the world. But history of different nations shows that no other philosophy has ever succeeded in demonstrating this *oneness* clearly as it has been done by Vedânta. It also explains through this spiritual oneness the true basis of higher ethics. Christ said: "Love thy neighbour as thyself;"[1] but he did not give the reason why should we love our neighbour as our self. The answer was given in Vedânta—because, in Spirit we are already one with our neighbour.

Wherever the higher ethics of Vedânta is taught and practised there cannot prevail war, quarrel, fight and inharmony, but on the contrary, there exists the kingdom of Heaven spreading the benign rays of harmony, divine love, brotherhood and everlasting peace,
About two thousand years before the birth of Christ, philosophical conventions, public demonstrations and

1. St. Matthew, XXII, 39.

religious congresses were held in India under the auspices of the reigning monarchs, and in these congresses of religions and philosophy and religious discussions, parts were taken by kings, emperors, warriors, merchants, peasants, toilers, as well as by the lower classes. As early as the Vedic period, there have been recorded some of the most difficult problems and questions which were asked by these ancient seekers after Truth, and these questions have been handed down to us in their original form.

They asked : "When death swallows the whole world, what Deity shall swallow that?" "What part of mine exists after death?" "What becomes of the vital forces when a man dies?" "What is the nature of the soul?" "What is the essence of our being?" "What is the foundation and support of the phenomenal universe?" "What is that which is everywhere, yet is independent of everything?" In trying to answer all these sublime questions and to solve difficult problems, the ancient seekers after Truth discovered the laws of thought and traced the causes of physical events, step by step, applying the laws of logic and reason. This was the beginning of philosophy in India. The minds of these ancient seekers after Truth were free from the limitations of prejudices, doctrines, dogmas, religious creeds or beliefs. They never asked such questions as "What is your belief?, What is your faith? Do you believe in a personal God or not?" That was not the question; but the burning question of those days was how to know the Reality of the universe, how to trace the cause of all phenomena, that was the point, that was the chief aim. The ancient seekers

after Truth did not care for anything which was related to our earthly existence or mundane affairs.

About that time the philosophic and religious problems began to ferment in the atmosphere as strongly and universally as it is in Europe and America at the present time. Some of the answers which were given to these difficult problems by the unbiased thinkers of those days are still standing, as though they anticipated the conclusions of Plato, Berkeley, Spinoza, Kant, Haeckel, even centuries before their names were heard of. In the Buddhistic period, nearly 600 years before the birth of Christ, we find in India there arose different systems of thought,—dualistic, atheistic, monotheistic that we find in the Western countries nowadays. The natural tendency of the Hindu mind was, from the beginning, to know the source of phenomena, to understand the problem of life and to solve the purpose of our existence on this plane, to trace the cause of the universe and to know the true relation that exists between the individual soul and the Supreme Being, the sole object of our worship. Imbibed by that one motive, they searched after Truth and guided by unswerving love for Truth, these ancient thinkers discovered many laws and established them logically and scientifically.

The toleration regarding religious beliefs that has been shown in India is greater than that known in any other part of the world; no persecution there has ever happened on account of religious beliefs. If we read the accounts of Asoka the great who reigned from 273

to 232 B.C. we will find in his Inscriptions what great toleration then was shown! There it was mentioned that no one should ever interfere with or persecute another on account of one's religious belief, and such was India's toleration. During that time the Hindus discovered the process of gradual cosmic evolution; they understood that process and explained it through logic and reason. In their attempts to solve the mysteries of the phenomenal universe, these ancient Seers developed six schools of philosophy, (*Sada-Darshana*) each having several branches of its own. One school of philosophy (*Vaishesika*) explained the phenomena of the universe by the atomic theory, the combination of atoms and molecules into matter, and explained the mechanical process of formation of the universe. Another school (*Sânkhya*) explained the phenomena by the doctrine of evolution and answered all the questions aroused by the atheistic thinkers of those days. Among those schools was found one philosophy which has reached the highest climax of philosophic thought that the human mind can possibly reach, and that is known as the Vedânta philosophy.

A careful study of these different systems of philosophy will show that they contain all the truths known by the Greek philosophers of ancient times. Proof. E. W. Hopkins says in his *Religions of India*: "Both Thales and Parmenides were indeed anticipated by Hindu sages and the Eleatic school seems to be but a reflection of the *Upanishads*. The doctrines of Anaximander and Heraclitus were perhaps not known first in Greece".

Frederic Schelegel said: "The divine origin of man

as taught by the Vedânta is continually inculcated to stimulate his efforts to return, to animate him in the struggle and incite him to consider a reunion and reincorporation with Divinity as the one primary object of every action and reaction. Even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, the idealism of reason as it is set forth by the Greek philosophers appears in comparison with the abundant light and vigour of Oriental idealism like of feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noonday sun, faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished".[1] It is true that there have been many systems of philosophy and the philosophers have tried best to give a philosophical foundation to religion, but almost all of them have failed in their efforts to harmonize all the different systems of philosophy that we find in Europe and that have been classified as materialistic or agnostic, atheistic or idealistic. Materialism tries to trace the origin of the soul in insentient matter. It teaches that what we call intelligence, soul or consciousness, is the result of the combination of matter and forces; hence there is no creator. Consequently, in materialism there is no need of any form of religion, no necessity for the worship of God, nor is there any need of a belief in any kind of scriptures or personality. The explanation which materialists give is one-sided and incorrect, because it tries to deduce a cognizing subject from that which exists in and for its cognition. It is foolish to attempt to explain in that way. We are known to ourselves more than we know anything else and if we

1. Frederic Schlegel, *Indian Language, Literature and Philosophy*, p. 471.

try to explain ourselves by that which is less known to us it will be simply abused. Others, on the other hand, try to deduce the object, the matter from the subject, the conscious ego; this explanation is also one-sided and unsatisfactory. Many of the idealistic thinkers, like Berkeley and Hume have tried their best to show that material objects were produced by the subject or ego; none of these however have succeeded in showing the true harmony between philosophy and religion. Kant's great contribution to philosophy is the supposition of phenomena from things-in-themselves. We see a chair; is there anything in itself behind that which we see? According to Kant, the universe in space and time is a mere representation possessing no independent reality and it exists only when perceived; as long as we perceive a thing it is there, when we do not perceive it, it does not exist, and that perception is an act or creation of ether-force phenomenal. Kant said: "As force it has sound and substance, there must be a background or noumenon upon which all these pictures are placed". The Post-Kantian philosophers, like Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling holding to the spontaniety of the conscious self, developed their systems of philosophy which are known as Speculative Idealism. But did their explanations satisfy the minds of all thinkers? No. After them came Schopenhauer. He upset the whole theory of idealism by his own theory; he called that transcendental thing-in-itself by the word *Will.* This *Will* is not conscious and personal will, but it is the unconscious and universal force and this *Will* is the cause of the universe, the cause of mind and matter, subject and

object. He said that everything is but the philosophy of "the unconscious" and is ended in materialism; amongst all the German speculative philosophies a reaction came and from that the agnostic philosophy of Spinoza came up. He said that "the realm of our senses is the knowable realm and that which is beyond it and cannot be perceived, is the unknowable," and drew a sharp line of demarcation between knowable and the unknowable; beyond the Absolute there is the truth.

Herbert Spencer meant by philosophy the natural science, or knowable, or general science of phenomena. His definition of philosophy was: "Science means knowledge partially unified, while philosophy means knowledge completely unified." Having made this distinction, Spencer limited the principles of philosophy to the phenomenal cosmos. He said: "Beyond the knowable is the unknowable, but in that realm of the unknowable laid the solution of all the principles regarding the nature of the soul, of the heavens, of God and of everything." According to Spencerian school, that which cannot be perceived by our senses, that which cannot be understood by the intellect, will never be known. Consequently, his solution of the problem regarding the soul, or life, or God and the ultimate Truth of the universe will always remain unknowable. The students of this school of philosophy have thrown overboard all the aspirations of human souls; the attempt to know the true nature of the soul has been given up and the worship of God has been discarded from the routine of everyday life and the study of ethics has taken its place; their grounds for ethics has been given impor-

tance—that is the utilitarian ground—we must be moral and virtuous for posterity and for society; we know that the aim of nature is the preservation of species; we must have a large number of posterity and lead a virtuous life for their sake.

A student of Vedânta does not remain contented with these utilitarian schemes of a moral and ethical life. He will say: "Why should we remain moral if nothing remains of us after death, why should we not do all wicked deeds if by doing that we gain pleasure in this life, and why should we not teach our children to do the same?" The utilitarian schemes do not satisfy the aspirations of human souls; Vedânta, on the contrary, gives a better explanation, which we will see later on. The study of Vedânta is the search after spiritual Truth and the Reality of the universe and the laws which lead us from the realm of the unknowable to that of the knowable; and shows what relation the soul bears to the absolute Reality of the unknowable. Its chief aim is to go to the unknowable first and find a solution of everything there, because all the solutions of all the difficult problems of life and death cannot be found in the realm of phenomena; we will have to go above this, and that is the peculiarity in the system of Vedânta. It teaches that there is one absolute Being and that absolute Being is the substance of the universe. It is not an unconscious something, but the source of knowledge, basis of consciousness. It is one, not many; it is beginningless and endless and beyond time and space; it is the same as the "Good" of Plato, "transcendental thing-in-itself" (*Ding-an-Sich*) of Kant,

"Divine, Essence" or "Father in heaven" of the Christians, the "Allah" of the Mohammedans and the "True nature" of the Buddhists. It is all-pervading, without subject or object, and is beyond these both.

The Vedânta philosophy is loftier than the Kantian system, because it shows the phenomenal nature of the Kantian ego which Kant realized as the source of truth and the forms of intuition and vagary of thought have been placed with phenomena. It is more sublime than the philosophy of Kant, because it has recognized the identity of the objective reality, which Kant did not. There have been many systems of philosophy in Europe which denied the existence of the phenomenal world as presented to us, but none except the Vedânta philosophy has ventured to deny the existence of the apparent ego, as known to us, and in this respect Vedânta has its unique position in the history of the philosophies of the world. It has revealed and lifted the true nature of the ego from the body at death and united it with the absolute divine Being which is immortal, unchangeable, pure and perfect.

Having united heaven and earth as well as man and God as *Brahman* and *Atman* Vedânta has not destroyed anything of the life of the phenomena. It has given us a God for worship who is the same as the Father in heaven, or the Father of the universe; both the efficient and material cause of the universe, the same as the God of all other religions. It has accepted all the ultimate conclusions of modern science but at the same time it says that the true philosophy is not mere to

ascertain the conjunction of events which constitute the order of the universe, or to record the phenomena exhibited to our observation and refer them to the general laws. But its duty is to lead the individual mind through the realm of the knowable to the realm of the absolute, to bring it face to face with the Absolute, and there to show the proper solution of that true principle of life. No other system of philosophy, whether that of Plato or Kant or Hegel or Schopenhauer has ever reached this height of philosophic thought.

True philosophy must give a theory which will be the simplest in its nature and at the same time will explain all the principles which are left as insoluble by science, knowable, and at the same time will harmonize with the ultimate conclusions of science, as well as establish a reilgion which is universal, and which is not limited by sects or doctrines or dogmas.

True philosophy performs three functions: first, it corresponds with the final results arrived at by the different branches of science and, taking up these results, makes wider generalization. Second, it must go into the realm of knowledge and trace its source; where do we get this knowledge, know this thing and that thing, sense cannot trace it beyond the realm of our senses. This is the function of philosophy; when it performs this function it is called *Darsana,* sometimes called metaphysics. It is true philosophy because it deals with being, deals with things going beyond mere existence and it traces their relation to the facts of knowing. Its theory of knowledge must explain everything. When we try to explain a thing, first of all we must know

that it exists, whether outside of us or in relation to our knowledge or in relation to ourselves. That function must be performed by philosophy. True philosophy also performs a third function: it must lead the individual mind beyond the realm of the phenomenal, or knowable, and it must raise up the soul from the dark abyss of selfishness, ignorance and self-delusion and make it realize its divine and absolute nature. The religion which cannot perform this or make us feel what we truly are, is not worthy of its name. A philosophy which does not bring us within close communion with the ultimate Truth, which is divine and absolute has not performed its third function.

Of the tree of knowledge, philosophy is the flower and religion is the fruit. Philosophy is the theoretical side of religion and religion is philosophy in practice. The philosophy and religion must be always in perfect harmony, because they both deal with the highest Being. There is no other system of philosophy in the world which performs the function of synthesis so satisfactorily as does Vedânta philosophy. It is therefore, all-inclusive: it includes science and metaphysics as well as the highest form of monistic religion, the religion which underlies all dualistic and special forms of the religions of the world. That is why Prof. Max Mueller has said: "Vedânta is a philosophy as well as a religion".

The fundamental principle of Vedânta philosophy is its realization of *Oneness*. I have already said: "True philosophy must form a theory simple in its nature and explains everything." There cannot be anything simpler than Vedânta, and it does succeed wonderfully by the theory of *oneness* that the true nature of soul and

God are one. The soul is divine and perfect. It is not the result of the combination of matter and forces, but it is the source of intelligence, existence, and the basis of consciousness. It is indestructible. It is beginningless and endless. It has not been created by any extra-cosmic Being but existed in the beginningless past and will exist for ever. "Fire cannot burn it, air cannot dry it, water cannot moisten it, swords cannot cut it, it is above all changes, beyond good and evil."[1] Good and evil cannot touch the true nature of our soul, it is undisturbed by evil and its results. We are not born in sin and and iniquity, but we are children of that absolute immortal bliss. We must know it by realizing our true nature. We should realize God and know everything of the universe, because whatever is in the microcosm is also in the macrocosm. First know yourself, because it solves the old problem asked by Socrates of the Delphic oracle, "What is the highest knowledge?" "Know thyself" was the answer, and that answer will also be found in Vedânta.[2]

At the same time, we find that the laws of nature are uniform. As regards ethics, why should we be ethical, why should we not commit wicked acts? Because of *oneness*. Jesus the Christ taught his disciples that they should love their neighbour as themselves, and here the word "self" is meant by him as the true Self. Why should we love our neighbour as ourselves and not as our enemies? Vedânta gives the answer: Because we are one with our neighbour in spirit and injuring him we injure ourselves. Love the neighbour, not be-

1. *Bhagavad Gita*, II, 23.

cause of his beauty or form, or virtuous deeds or merits, but because of the soul. We must realize that oneness in the soul and that will be the foundation of ethics. Whatever you do not wish to do against yourself you should not do against another, that gives a more solid foundation and a better explanation than the 'golden rule.'

According to Vedânta the soul is deathless. Death means the change of bodies. It is not that after death we shall have to suffer in purgatory until the last day of Judgment, when we shall be called by some voice; but after death, the individual soul will continue to exist and to reap the results of the actions, either in this realm, or in some other. That is more comfortable. The dreary and gloomy nature of death appears brightly illumined when the light of Vedânta shines upon it; the sting of death becomes pleasant when clad in the armour of knowledge, worn by the true Self of the student of Vedânta. In this life he enjoys happiness and peace, and conquers death; he has no fear of death. Almost all religions of the dualistic nature have their foundation on the fear of death and punishment after death, but that cannot be the true foundation, because there is no such thing as death. The soul is deathless. Consequently, there is no scheme of salvation from eternal perdition in the religion of Vedânta.

The religion of Vedânta makes us free from all bondages. There is another peculiarity, it recognizes the different tendencies of people, and leads every individual to the highest degree of Godconsciousness, by different paths, which are suited to each. It classifies human nature under four great divisions, and the sub-

divisions of these four cover almost all mental conditions of all classes of people, and then it directs them through these different paths to reach the goal. They will all reach perfection sooner or later, even in this life or in the next. These different paths are called by the word *Yoga*.

The first of these paths is Karma Yoga, or the path of right work. Karma Yoga teaches how to work in this life. We have come to this world to work, but is there any way to transform all the works of our daily life into the acts of worship; can we reach, the highest goal through those works? Vedânta says, "Yes; by knowing the secret of work. Find out the secret; do work for results, but work for work's sake, and reach the highest goal and thus you will become conscious of your divine nature in this life".

The second path is of Bhakti. It is to reach perfection through the process of devotion and love. It appeals to one who is of emotional nature who tries to realize the Truth, the Divine nature, Godconsciousness through emotion. It teaches one how to transfer this human love into Divine love and fulfil the purpose of life, both here and hereafter.

The third path is Râja Yoga. It is fitted for those who are meditative in their nature, who know how to concentrate their mind. All truths can be understood by the power of concentrating our minds. We must learn how to concentrate first, then direct all the mental energy toward our true Self and that will culminate in the revelation of the Absolute will and then we shall know everything by knowing our true Self at the same

time. Râja Yoga includes all the different methods by which we can develop our psychic powers. It explains the mysteries of the miraculous deeds performed by all the great psychic workers and spiritual teachers, such as Jesus the Christ and others. All the great miracles performed by Mental healers, Faith healers, and the men of such cults, they all have been taken hold of and classified by science, and that science is called the science of Râja Yoga.

The fourth is Jñâna Yoga, the path through discrimination. It appears to those of philosophic nature, whose minds are more discriminative and they reach the highest goal through this. Thus you will see that there are so many different paths and the end and aim of each of these lead the religious inquirers to God-consciousness. We must realize our divine nature. Christ said: I and the Father are one.[1] In other scriptures we also find: "Divinity, is in your soul, and when that is realized, the purpose of Vedânta is fulfilled". As on the one hand, it has given the highest philosophy, so on the other, it has given the highest form of religion, and that form of religion underlies all the special forms and is the true solution of all the problems of life and death. Death becomes easy when we understand that one principle. Therefore, it is said in Vedânta: "That one Self must be known, we must try our best to realize that divine Self; we must think constantly of it, concentrate our minds upon it, meditate upon it and stop not until the goal is reached".[2] We must try our best to express that

2. *Mundakaponishad*, II, 25.

oneness in the actions of our daily life.[2] Let our hearts throb with this idea of oneness; let every nerve cell pulsate with that idea of oneness, and whatever we do in this life, may that action be in perfect harmony with the action that proceeds from the universal will, which is Divine will and feel that Divine omnipresence in and outside of us. "He who sees oneness in and through everything knows that Divinity exists in one and all. He overcomes envy and looks equally all. For, he has realized the highest, has understood the secret. And so, the peace and joy come unto him that never end but remains forever and ever."[3]

1. *St. John*, X, 30.
2. *Vrihadâranyakoponishat*, II, 4, 5.
3. *Bhagavad Gitâ*, XIII, 29.

CHAPTER III

VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

MANY people have the erroneous idea that by Vedânta philosophy is meant a philosophy confined exclusively to the Vedas, or sacred Scriptures of India. But the term *Veda* in the present case is used to signify, not a book, but "wisdom," while *anta* means "end." Vedânta, therefore, implies literally *'end of wisdom.'* And the philosophy is called Vedânta because it explains what that *end* is and how it can be attained. All relative knowledge ends in the realization of the unity of the individual soul with the ultimate Truth of the universe. That ultimate reality is the universal Spirit. It is the infinite ocean of wisdom. As rivers running across thousands of miles ultimately end in the ocean, so the rivers of relative knowledge, flowing through the various stages of the phenomenal universe, ultimately end in the infinite ocean of existence, intelligence, bliss, and love.

To realize this unity must be the aim of all true religion. But the religious history of the world shows that no other nation has ever at any period understood it so clearly, or preached it so boldly, as did the sages among the ancient Aryans who inhabited India. For nearly five thousand years, indeed, India has held in her bosom the sublime idea: "Truth is one, but the means of attaining it are many." In the Rig Veda, the most ancient of all known scriptures, we read: *"Ekam sad*

Viprâ vahudha vadanti"; i.e., "That which exists is one, men call it by various names." The Jews call it Jehovah; the Christians, God or Father in Heaven; the Mohammedans worship it as Allah; the Buddhists, as Buddha; the Jains, as Jina; while the Hindus call it *Brahman*.

Upon this fundamental Truth rests the whole structure of Vedânta teaching; and students of comparative religions are coming to recognize that because, more than any other religion or philosophy of the world, it insists upon this doctrine of the unity of existence under a variety of names, it offers, as can no other, an adequate foundation for all the different phases of dualistic, qualified non-dualistic, and monistic systems of religious thought. Vedânta, indeed, may be said to establish a universal religion, which embraces all the special religions of the world.

This uniquely universal character, moreover, is still further emphasized by the fact that it is not built round any particular personality. Any religion or philosophy that depends for its authority on a specific personality can never satisfy the demands of a universal religion. In order to make a system of philosophy or religion universal, the first thing necessary is that it be absolutely impersonal. So long as there is a founder of a religion, so long is it limited by the personality of of the founder, it cannot be universal, as we find in special religions like Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and other kindred faiths. The followers of each of these great religions, forgetting the principles, become attached to the personality of the founder and

refuse to recognize any other. This results in the discord, conflict, and persecution with which the pages of religious history are filled.

The system of Vedânta has many phases. The dualistic phase includes the fundamental principles of all the dualistic or monotheistic systems, such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and all systems that advocate the worship of the personal God, or devotion to any Divine ideal.

The qualified non-dualistic phase embraces all the systems which teach the immanency and transcendency of God. It includes all such ideas as "God dwells in us as well as in the universe"; "We live and move and have our being in God"; "He is the soul of our souls"; "We are parts of one stupendous whole"; "We are the sons of God, the children of immortal Bliss," etc. But the monistic phase of Vedânta is the most sublime of all. Very few thinkers can appreciate the grandeur of spiritual oneness. Yet herein lies the solution of the deepest problems of science, philosophy, and metaphysics, and the final goal of all religions. It alone explains how it is possible for one to say: *I and my Father are one.*

Vedânta is a system of religion as well as a system of philosophy. There are, it is true, many systems of philosophy in Greece and Germany, but none of them has succeeded in harmonizing itself with the religious ideals of the human mind; or has shown the path by which man may attain to Godconsciousness and emancipation from the bondages of ignorance, selfishness, and all other imperfections, in so rational a way as has

the Vedânta philosophy in India. It does not ask anybody to accept or believe anything which does not appeal to reason, or which is not in harmony with the laws of science, philosophy, and logic. But in India, it must be remembered, religion has never been separated from science, logic, or philosophy. As a consequence, Vedânta, ancient as it is, is none the less in strict accord with the ultimate conclusions of modern science, preaches the doctrine of evolution, and still has room left for all truths which may be discovered in future.

Another notable feature of Vedânta is that it does not prescribe to all one special path to reach the ultimate goal of every religion. On the contrary, it recognizes the varying tendencies of different minds, and guides each along the way best suited to it. It classifies human tendencies into four grand divisions, which, together with their subdivisions, cover almost all classes of people; and then it sets forth the methods which may be helpful to every one. Each of these methods is called in Sanskrit *Yoga*.

First is Karma Yoga. It is for the active man, for those who like to work and are always ready to do something for the help of others. In short, it is for the busy, everyday working man or woman. Karma Yoga teaches the secret of work, and tells us how we can turn our daily tasks into acts of worship, and thus reach perfection in this life through work, and work alone. It is essentially practical and absolutely necessary for those who prefer an active career, for it will teach them how to accomplish a maximum of labour with a minimum loss of energy. The larger part of the mental

energy of the majority of people in this country is needlessly wasted by the constant rush of their daily lives, which is merely the result of lack of self-control. Did they know the secret of work they would not only avoid this waste, which is the cause of the many nervous disorders to which they are at present subject, but would actually lengthen their days. Karma Yoga reveals this secret, and opens the way to complete self-mastery.

The next method is Bhakti Yoga. It is for such as are of an emotional nature. It teaches how the ordinary emotions can bring forth spiritual unfoldment of the highest kind and lead to the realization of the ultimate ideal of all religions. In a word, it is the path of devotion and love. It explains the nature of divine love and shows us how to turn human love into divine, and thus fulfil the purpose of life both here and hereafter.

The third is Râja Yoga—the path of concentration and meditation. The field of Râja Yoga is very vast. It covers the whole psychic plane and describes the processes by which the psychic powers are developed, such as thought-reading, clairvoyance, clairaudience, the evolving of finer perceptions, the going out of the body, the curing of disease through mental power, and the performing of all such acts as are ordinarily called miracles. All the psychic powers which were displayed by Jesus of Nazareth and his followers, and which are used to-day by Christian Scientists, mental healers, faith-healers, divine healers, and the various other kinds of healers, have been displayed from ancient times by the Yogîs in India.

Râja Yoga takes these psychic powers and phenomena, classifies them and makes a science out of them. It also teaches the science of breathing. The wonderful effects of breathing exercises on mind and body are not unknown to the mental healers of the West. If, however, Râja Yoga deals scientifically with the psychic powers, it does not cease to warn its students that the attainment of any of these powers is not a sign of spirituality. This is a great lesson which the mental healers and Christian Scientists of this country (America) especially, will have to learn from the Yogîs of India. Little brains and weak intellects easily turn away from the path of spiritual truth when some psychic power begins to manifest itself; and they think that they have reached the highest state of spirituality, because they have the power to cure headache or heartache. Râja Yoga, however, teaches that the exercise of psychic power and the making a profession of it are great obstacles in the path of spiritual advancement. Its principal aim, on the contrary, is to lead the student, through concentration and meditation, to the highest state of superconsciousness, where the individual soul communes with the universal Spirit and realizes the unity of existence, eternal peace, and happiness.

Jñâna Yoga is the fourth method. It is the path of right knowledge and discrimination. This is for those who are intellectual, discriminative, and of a philosophical nature. Thus we can see in some slight degree how universal is the scope of Vedânta. It also explains the fundamental principles of spiritualism; it tells us how the soul exists after death and under what conditions; what kind of souls can communicate with us, and what

becomes of them afterwards; how the earth-bound souls, being subject to the *law of Karma* or causation, reincarnate on this earth, taking human form again and again. It explains the science of the soul; and it expounded the law of correspondences ages before Swedenborg was born.

The religion of Vedânta accepts the teachings of all the great spiritual teachers of the world, recognizes them as incarnations of Divine Spirit, and leaves room for those who are yet to come for the good of humanity.

Vedânta explains the basis of ethics. Why should we be moral? Not because some one has said this or that; not because it is written in a certain chapter of a certain scripture, but because of the spiritual oneness of the universe. If you injure another, you injure yourself. If you are wicked, you not only do harm to yourself but also to others. It also explains through this spiritual oneness why we should love our neighbour as ourselves, because in spirit we are already one with that neighbour.

The ethics of Vedânta bring peace and harmony to the religious world. Wherever Vedânta reigns, religious toleration and co-operation among all sects prevail, and religious persecution ceases for ever.

A student of Vedânta does not belong to any sect, creed, or denomination. He is neither a Christian, nor a Mohammedan, nor a Buddhist, nor a Jain, nor a Hindu; yet in principles he is one with all. He can go to a church or a mosque or a temple. He is a follower of that nameless and formless eternal religion, which

underlies all the special religions of the world; and as he grows into a deeper and deeper understanding of this universal religion, he cannot but declare, as did say Prof. Max Mueller: "Vedânta has room for almost every religion; nay, it embraces them all." And so it must, because its whole teaching is based on those all-inclusive words of the Blessed Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gitâ*: "Whosoever comes to me through whatsoever path, I reach him; all men are struggling in the paths which ultimately lead to me the eternal Truth."

CHAPTER IV

TEACHINGS OF VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

It is necessary to mention some of the fundamental principles of the Vedânta philosophy, so that the reader may be able to learn a little of what this ancient philosophy of the Hindus teaches. Some people may think that, like all sectarian philosophies, the Vedânta philosophy also limits the scope of human knowledge by asserting that there is an actual "end" and no one can go beyond it. But this philosophy never means that; it tells us rather to realize the eternal Truth of the universe and to become one therewith. It teaches that revelation is not given once and then left to stand for all time, but that it dwells eternally in the heart of man, being ever from within and never from without. It teaches that science, philosophy, and logic must not be separated from religion; that what is unscientific, unphilosophic, or illogical, cannot be truly religious.

Vedânta philosophy teaches that religion does not mean a belief in this creed or that dogma, in this book or that person, but it teaches that religion is the *science of the soul.* It gives a scientific and philosophic basis to religion. It says that every soul is divine and a child of immortal Bliss, that we must become conscious of our Divine nature and become perfect in this life, manifesting Divinity in and through all the actions of our everyday life. It points out the various methods by which we

can unfold our higher nature and mould our conduct of life in the highest form. It teaches the secret of *work*, the secret of *devotion*, the secret of *concentration* and *meditation*, as well as the secret of the *highest wisdom*. The Vedânta philosophy explains the purpose of life and how it can be fulfilled. It is based upon the doctrine of evolution and teaches that through the natural process of evolution each soul is bound to attain at last to the highest stage of spiritual development, and become perfect sooner or later. It recognizes the different stages of the spiritual evolution of the individual soul of spiritual childhood, youth and maturity, and explains scientifically the immortality of the individual soul. It teaches that the soul of man existed in the past, exists in the present, and will exist in the future, continuing to exist after death, manifesting again according to its desire, tendency and powers, either on this earth or on some other planet. The Vedânta philosophy holds that our present is the resultant of our past, and that our future will be the result of our present. It maintains that we ourselves are responsible for all the pleasure and pain, happiness and misery of our present life; that we create our own destiny and shape our future by our thoughts and deeds. It teaches that we are at present bound by the law of action and reaction, of cause and sequence. The Vedânta philosophy says that God does not reward the virtuous, nor does He punish the wicked; but that reward and punishment are the reactions of our own actions.

The Vedânta philosophy has three grand divisions: first, the the Dualistic (*Dvaita*); second, the Qualified non-dualistic (*Vishistâdvaita*); and third, the Non-

dualistic (*Advaita*). By these three it includes within its all-embracing arms the various systems of religion that exist in the world, together with all their creeds, sects, and denominations. It has no quarrel with any system of philosophy or religion. It believes in an intra-cosmic, eternal Being, who is personal as well as impersonal. The personal aspect of that Being is called *Isvara,* the Creator (i.e., the Projector) of the universe, who is worshipped by all nations under different names: by some as the Father in heaven; by others as Divine Mother; by some as God; by others as Jehovah, Allah, *Brahman,* Hari, Buddha, or Lord. The impersonal aspect is called *Brahman* by the Hindus, *Will* by Schopenhauer, *The Unknown and Unknowable* by Herbert Spencer, *Substantia* by Spinoza, *Oversoul* by Emerson, *The Good* by Plato, and *The Absolute* and *The Noumenon* by others.

The Vedânta philosophy is not pessimistic, like Buddhism. It does not teach that the whole visible universe is an illusion as the *Mâdhyamika* school of the Buddhists misunderstands the spirit of this philosophy not knowing the real meaning of the word *mâya.* Its true meaning is *relative, conditional* or *phenomenal existence,* and not illusion. Prof. Max Mueller understood this when he said: "For all practical purposes, the Vedântist would hold that the whole phenomenal world, both in its subjective and objective characters, should be accepted *as real.* It is as real as anything can be to the ordinary mind. It is not mere emptiness, as the Buddhists maintain. And thus the Vedânta philosophy leaves to every man a wide sphere of real usefulness and places him under a law as strict and binding as

anything can be in this transitory life. It leaves him a Diety to worship as omnipotent and majestic as the deities of any other religions. It has room for almost every religion, nay, it embraces them all."

The Vedânta philosophy does not recognize caste, creed, or sex in the soul of man. It teaches the equality and sameness of the true nature of all human beings. The one peculiarity of the teachings of Vedânta philosophy lies in the universal toleration for active co-operation with, and acceptance of all the various phases of, religious thoughts in the world. It says that there is one universal, religion in the world, which cannot be confined by any name authority, nor by any personality or book. Christianity, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Hinduism, and all other *"isms"* are but partial expressions of that underlying; universal religion. It teaches that all such *"isms"* are but so many paths leading to the same goal. It teaches: "As rivers rising from different mountains run, crooked or straight, toward one ocean, so all these various creeds, sects, and religions, starting from different points of view run crooked or straight toward one Infinite Ocean of Truth, which we call 'God'."[1]

The Vedânta philosophy is not built around any particular person, or special revelation. Its ethics includes all the ethical laws discovered by all the great prophets and

1. *Yathâdriprabhavâ nadyah parjanyâpuritâ prabho, vishanti sarvatah sindhum sadvatvam gatayo'ntatah."—Bhâgavatam*, X, 40, 5.

religious teachers of the world, Christ, Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha and others. Moreover, it gives a rational explanation of the moral or ethical nature of man, as distinguished from his true spiritual nature, and it explains the moral and spiritual laws that govern the destiny of each individual soul.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION OF VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

VEDANTA is a philosophy and a religion. As a philosophy it inculcates the highest truths that have been discovered by the greatest philosophers and the most advanced thinkers of all ages and all countries. From the time of Socrates and Plato down to the time of Kant, Schopenhauer and Ralph Waldo Emerson the history of Western philosophy has not given to the world any truths or principles higher, more universal or more practical than those which we find in the teachings of Vedânta. The principles of this philosophy can be carried into practice in the daily life of every individual. Unlike other philosophies, Vedânta does not deal with mere speculations. It is the best friend in time of distress, it is most comforting in sorrow, and it uplifts the soul above all the trouble, anxiety and worry which may arise from failure in business or from other causes. There is no other philosophy in the world which teaches so perfect a method to gain self-control, peace and happiness as Vedânta. The earnest and sincere students have verified this in their daily lives; it may therefore be said that as a philosophy the teachings of Vedânta are most practical and helpful as well as sublime.

As a religion, again, Vedânta is unique and universal. It claims to supply the spiritual needs of all classes of people in all climes and all ages. Although it is not

confined by any particular creed or sectarian doctrine, still it never denounces the creed of any religion and never destroys the faith of any sectarian. Nor does it prescribe one particular form of worship, ritual or ceremony for all classes of people. It gives absolute freedom to its students to choose any path, whether dualistic, ritualistic, qualified non-dualistic or monistic with all their phases and differences. The one peculiarity of the religion of Vedânta is that as on the one hand, it encourages those who do not care for any ritual, ceremonial, symbol or other external forms of worship, so, on the other, it provides all forms, rituals, ceremonies and symbols for those who need them and find them helpful at the time of devotional exercises. If a devotee gains help through prayers, Vedânta tells him to pray, yet it does not maintain that prayer is the only form of worship for all. If any student finds help from such symbols as altar, incense, candles, flowers, Vedânta does not discourage him, but on the contrary, it explains the spiritual meaning of such symbols, tells him how to use them and shows him the way to reach the ultimate goal of all religions by the path of devotion and love.

Some cannot concentrate their minds upon abstract ideals, cannot worship the absolute Spirit except through concrete forms and symbols. It is perfectly natural. Because our minds receive deeper impressions from concrete tangible objects. Any system of religion which discourages this class of people is as one-sided and imperfect as that religion which forces everybody to accept one set of rituals, symbols or one particular form of worship, prayer or devotional exercise. The

religion of Vedânta strikes the happy medium by dividing the devotees according to their tendencies, powers and capacities, and by giving to each what is especially helpful for him in the path of spiritual progress. Those who have strong dislike for rituals and symbols can belong to the religion of Vedânta just in the same manner as those who accept rituals and perform devotional exercises. Those who are purely intellectual and philanthropic can through the teachings of Vedânta purify their intellect and devote their whole life to doing good to humanity. Those who are ritualistic will find in the universal religion of Vedânta ample opportunity to perform rituals and ceremonies, to use external symbols and different forms of worship to suit their natural tendencies. A true follower of this universal religion does not denounce any creed or sect, does not find fault with sectarian doctrines and dogmas, but tolerates and accepts all forms of worship and of devotional exercises. He does not criticise others, but understands that what may be good for him may not be good for another, and what is helpful for others may not be helpful for him. The Vedânta religion stands like the house-mother of several children each of whom she feeds with that kind of food which he can easily digest, its fundamental principle being the universal acceptance of all sectarian and doctrinal varieties. Therefore, it is ever ready to give to each of its followers the spiritual food suited to his tendency, power, taste and capacity.

Vedânta philosophy explains the spiritual meaning of the various symbols that are used at the time of worship. The altar, for instance, stands for the altar of the heart.

This altar should be dedicated to the supreme Spirit which is the Soul of our souls and whose nature is absolute Existence, Intelligence and Bliss. To whom is the altar of the universal religion of Vedânta dedicated? To the self-effulgent light of the sun of Infinite wisdom which dispels the darkness of ignorance in the human heart, and whose name is the eternal word *Oum*. It is not meant for any individual person, but for the Infinite Spirit which is the source of all personal manifestations and Divine incarnation. A worshipper of Christ should think of Christ upon this altar, a worshipper of Buddha, Krishna, Shiva, Vishnu, Jehova or Allah should think of his Ideal as seated upon this symbolic altar of the heart. In the same manner the worshipper of Srî Râmakrishna, or of the Divine Mother, or of the supreme Spirit under any other name, should place Him or Her upon the same altar. In every case, however, it should always be remembered that this altar stands as the symbol of the heart of the worshipper. Here it may be asked, will this not create confusion? The answer according to Vedânta is "No." Because Vedanta teaches unity of Divinity under variety of names and forms. The same eternal One is worshipped as Jehovah or Father in heaven, as Ahura Mazda or Divine Mother, as Christ or Buddha, as Allah or Vishnu, as Krishna or Râmakrishna. These names and forms are merely the manifestations of the one nameless and formless infinite Being to whom the Vedânta altar is dedicated. The Vedânta altar is absolutely unsectarian and universal. It is one, yet it stands for many—may, for every individual heart.

The light of the candle is the symbol of the light of the intellect. It is the light of the pure intellect that reveals the spirit seated upon the altar of the heart. Purified heart and intellect must be united before spiritual realization is attained.

Flowers are symbolic of the good thoughts and pure feelings which should be offered to the supreme Spirit. When fruits are offered, they stand for the fruits of our works.

First sit in silence before the altar until you realize the spiritual meaning of the symbols; then place the flowers, light the candles, burn the incense and sit in meditation closing your eyes. Think of the altar of the heart, dedicate it to the supreme Spirit under any name or any form which appeals to you, offer the flowers of good thoughts and pure feelings to your chosen Ideal, and concentrating your mind upon that form, repeat the name mentally and commune in Spirit with the Divine Ideal through meditation. This is the pure and simple form of worship in spirit which the universal religion of Vedânta offers to all devotees of all sects and creeds. Here is the common, universal background of all forms of worship, whether Christian or Mohammedan, Hindu or Buddhist.

There are, it is true, some Protestant, Mohammedan and Hindu sects who object to external symbols, but they do accept the spiritual meaning of these symbols. No one has ever denied the worship of the almighty Spirit upon the altar of the heart. All external worship is only preparatory to the internal worship by meditation which in turn cluminates in Divine com-

munion and Godconsciousness. Those who cannot meditate will find great help by starting with the beautiful symbol of the altar of the universal religion of Vedânta philosophy.

Meditation is the most important step in the path of spiritual progress. In this age of commercialism and materialism when everybody is mad after worldly pleasures and material prosperity, the followers of Vedânta should make it a point to spend at least half an hour every day in feeding the soul with the nectar of Divine communion which can be acquired through meditation. No spiritual enlightenment or realization has ever come to anyone without meditation. All the great spiritual leaders like Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Chaitanya, or Râmakrishna advocated and practised meditation. In fact, through meditation they reached Divine communion, Godconsciousness and ultimately became the Saviours of mankind. Therefore, in the religion of Vedânta meditation is so strongly emphasised. The worship of the Supreme is impossible without meditation, but the method of meditation may vary according to the nature and tendency of the individual.

Daily meditation should be parctised in a quiet place which is kept free from all worldly thoughts and gossip and where there are such pictures as will rouse the devotional feelings in the heart of the devotee. Those who can afford it, should set apart a room in their home for this purpose and should never allow the atmosphere of the room to be impressed by impure thoughts or worldly ideas. It should be considered as a private

household chapel. The effect of meditation in such a room will be wonderfully uplifting. When the mind is disturbed by passion, anxiety, worry or worldly trouble or sorrow, if the devotee go and sit there for a few minutes, he will surely obtain peace, comfort, happiness and the blessing of the omnipresent Divinity.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION OF THE HINDUS

THE religion of the Hindus is as old as the first appearance of the Aryans on the fertile country of northwestern India. It is the unanimous opinion of all the Oriental scholars, that the forefathers of the Aryans who inhabited India were, in prehistoric times, the common ancestors of the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Anglo-Saxons, and all of those who are now known as the descendants of the Aryan family. A modern orthodox Hindu, who lives on the bank of the Ganges, and dislikes to associate with a European calling him a *Mlechha,* does not know that the socalled *Mlechha* has only a more distant blood-relationship to him than his own brother or sister, and that he differs from him only in manners, customs, and modes of living. The same Aryan blood flows to-day in the veins of a full-blooded German, Frenchman, Anglo-Saxon, or an American, who despises a Hindu because of his brown skin, or his religious beliefs, and calls him a *heathen,* not knowing that the socalled *heathen* is of his own race and that he still upholds the unparalleled religious ideas of his ancient Aryan forefathers. An educated German, or a liberal-minded American of to-day, more closely resembles in his mode of thinking, in his intellectual pursuits, in freedom of thought and in spiritual ideals, an educated Hindu of the present time, than he does a Jew or any other descendant of the Semitic race. However, different a Hindu may

appear to an American externally, it should always be remembered that both are descendants of the common Aryan stock.

The word *Hindu* is of comparatively later origin in the history of the Aryan family. It was at first used by the Persian invaders of India, but it has never been adopted by the Indo-Aryans themselves. The proper name of the nation which inhabits India is *Aryan.* Even to-day, the socalled *Hindus* call themselves *Aryans.* Their religion is neither Hinduism nor Brâhmanism; these names do not mean anything to the, being given by foreigners, not by natives of India. They call their religion *Arya Dharma,* that is, Aryan religion, or the religion of the ancient Aryans; or *Sanâtana Dharma,* the eternal religion. When the Persian invaders came to the north-west of India, they found the river Indus, in Sanskrit *Sindhu,* and called that river *Hindu* instead, and those who inhabited the east side of that river, *Hindus.* Afterwards their religion was called Hinduism by the Mohammedan and Christian invaders. The word Brâhmanism is of a still later origin, being an invention of the Christian missionaries. It is the general belief in the West, that the ancient Hindus, or rather the Indo-Aryans, were uncivilized people, that they had no religion of any kind; but the students of the Rig Veda, which is now considered by scholars as the oldest revealed scripture of the world, are well aware of the fact that the Indo-Aryans of the Vedic period, at least 3000 B.C., were highly civilized and most advanced in the understanding of the spiritual, moral, and physical laws which governed the phenomenal world.

The ancient Vedic *Rishis,* or seers of Truth, described their knowledge of those laws in a simple, poetical language which is inspiring to readers in all ages. They described what they understood, and those descriptions show how vast was their wisdom, how deep was their insight in spiritual perception, how sublime was their conception of God and how grand was their idea of human immortality.

Those impersonal descriptions of the laws which they discovered were handed down from generation to generation by memory, long before the art of writing was known to the world; they are therefore called in Sanskrit *Shruti,* meaning 'that which is heard'. Later, when they were collected together, they were also called *Veda.* which means 'wisdom'. By this word, *Veda,* was not meant any written book, but the collected wisdom of the ancient seers of Truth; and as their religion stands upon the Veda, or the collected wisdom of the past ages, it is called Vedic religion, more properly *Vedânta Religion.*

These Vedic seers were great philosophers. They discovered and understood the law of evolution in this universe at a period when the Aryans of the West were dwelling in caves and painting their bodies in lieu of clothing. They discovered also the moral and spiritual laws which govern the higher life of the soul.

When the Hindus use the word *Seer of Truth,* they do not mean any seer of visions or dreamer of dreams; but they mean those great philosophers and saints who realized the higher truths by superconscious perception. The prophets, or seers of the Old Testament, were

rarely philosophers, nor did they discover any higher law; they were ethical teachers in degenerate times, pointing out the errors of their countrymen and warning them to cease from evil ways, under penalty of punishment by Jehovah. They predicted events, and were regarded as prophets *if* the things came to pass. As Vedânta, or the religion of the Indo-Aryans, is based upon the spiritual laws discovered by the ancient seers of Truth, it is absolutely impersonal. There was no founder of the religion of the Hindus; it has existed from time immemorial. But all other religions, like Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, had their founders and were built around the personality of those founders. The religion of the Hindus is not limited by any book nor by the existence or non-existence of any particular personage. If we study the words of the earliest known *Rishi,* or Vedic seer of Truth, even there we find that he alludes to others as having seen similar truths before himself. It is for this reason that the religion of the Indo-Aryans never had any particular creed or dogma or theology as its guide. Everything that harmonized with the eternal laws described by the ancient seers of Truth was recognized and accepted by them as true.

From the very beginning this religion has been as free as the air which we breathe. As air touches all flowers and carries their fragrance along with it, wherever it blows, so this religion takes in all that is true and beneficial to mankind. Like the sky overhead, it embraces the spiritual atmosphere around all nations and all countries. It is a well-known fact that the Vedânta religion of the Hindus surpasses Zoroastrianism,

Judaism, Christianity, or Mohammedanism in its antiquity, grandeur, sublimity, in its philosophy, and, above all, in its conception of God. The God of the Hindus is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, all-merciful, and impersonally personal. He is not like the extra-cosmic creator as described in the Genesis, but is immanent and resident in nature. He is more merciful, more impartial, more just, more compassionate than Elohim Jahveh, the tribal god of the sons of Israel. The God of the Aryan religion is more benevolent and more unlimited in power and majesty than the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians.

As early as 1,500 years before the Christian era, when the sons of Israel were worshipping their tribal god Jahveh in the form of a bull[1] or calf, and were appeasing his wrath by bloody sacrifices, nay, by shedding human blood upon his altar, and were gradually outgrowing the sun-worship, Kewan or Saturn-worship, tree and serpent-worship, and were struggling for a monotheistic conception of one moral ruler of nature, at that early date the Aryans of India realized one all-pervading supreme Spirit as the Creator, Preserver, and moral Ruler of all animate and inanimate objects of the universe. When Zoroaster in Persia was preaching the dualistic conception of two spirits, the creator of good and the creator of evil, as two separate beings, the Aryan sages in India were proclaiming before the world that there were not two creators, but one, who was above both good and evil. "That which exists is one; wise men call It by various names."[2]

1. Vide *Appendix*, I.

In the fourteenth century B.C., when Moses was reforming the immoral, lawless, nomadic tribes of Israel by giving them the ten commandments in the name of Jahveh, at that ancient time, the ethical teachings of the Vedic sages were already perfected, and almost all their followers were well established in the practice of the moral and spiritual principles of the Vedas. It was at that time that the sublime teachings of the immortal *Bhagavad Gitâ,* the *Song Celestial* as Sir Edwin Arnold calls it, were proclaimed by Krishna, the Christ of India.

At a period when thinkers among the Semitic tribes were trying to explain the origin of the human race, as well as that of the universe, and were collecting the fragments of the mythological stories of creation which were scattered among Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Babylonians, and Persians, at that time the minds of the Aryan philosophers of India were firmly established in the doctrine of the evolution of the universe out of one eternal Energy, called in Sanskrit *Prakriti,* and the evolution of man from lower animals was taught for the first time. Prof. Huxley admits this when he says: "To say nothing of Indian sages, to whom evolution was a familiar notion ages before Paul of Tarsus was born."

When the worshippers of Jahveh had no conception of any existence after death, nor of the existence of soul as separate from and independent of body, nor of immortality, in those days, the Aryan philosophers were fully established in their belief that the soul was separate from the body, and they were giving philosophical

demonstrations and rational explanations of the nature of the human soul, preaching before the masses that the soul was beginningless and endless and that it was indestructible. The Vedas assert: "That (the human soul) the fire cannot burn, nor water moisten; the air cannot dry, nor the sword pierce."

During the Babylonian captivity, which took place between 586 and 536 B.C., when the sons of the house of Israel were borrowing from the Parsees their ideas of heaven and hell and were modifying their imperfect monotheistic conception of Jahveh from a tribal god into a god of the universe by giving him the attributes of Ahura Mazda, when they were adopting the Persian conception of angels, archangels, and a host of intermediate celestial beings and when they were beginning to accept the Persian idea of the resurrection after death, at that time the glory of the Aryan religion was established and shown to the world by the advent of Buddha, the greatest religious reformer that the world has ever known. He taught that heaven and hell existed only in our minds, that the worship of an extra-cosmic personal god was not the highest form of belief, and that the belief in angels and archangels was a kind of superstition.

About the time when the Pharisees among the Jews were beginning to believe in a heaven and to think that the highest ideal of life was to go there and enjoy the pleasures of life eternally, Buddha was preaching in India the doctrine of reincarnation and the law of *Karma,* and was giving the most rational arguments against the desire for the enjoyment of pleasures in

heaven, showing that these pleasures were non-eternal and that the goal of man was perfection, not enjoyment. Buddha taught the way of attaining perfection through the emancipation of the soul from the bonds of self-delusion. The ultimate ideals, according to the Vedânta religion, ought to be, not going to some particular place of enjoyment, or before the throne of a personal god, but the knowledge of our true spiritual nature, and freedom from the bondages of ignorance and selfishness and all other imperfections, through the attainment of Godconsciousness in this life. Without fulfilling such ideals, our earthly existence is no better than that of animals nay, it is not worth living.

There is one peculiarity in the religion of the Indo-Aryans, and that is that it has never been separate from logic, science, and philosophy; it stands like a huge banyan tree, whose branches, spreading out in all directions, cover a large area of space; it has room for all phases of religious thought and all systems of philosophy, from the highest flights of a Kant or a Hegel, from the idealism of Bishop Berkeley and of Spinoza, from the loftiest pinnacles of the Platonic system, from the ultimate conclusions of modern agnosticism, down to the lowest form of ceremonial and ritualistic worship, worship of symbols, or hero-worship, or any other phases of religious thought which human minds have ever conceived. All these have place within the all-embracing fold of the religion of the Hindus, because they alone recognize the necessity for different planes of religious expression in a world that is in different stages of human evolution. Victor Cousin has said: "The history of Indian philosophy is

the abridged history of the philosophy of the world".

It is for this reason that very few can correctly describe the religion of this mighty nation of philosophers, or indicate exactly what it teaches. Here you may ask: "If there be so much diversity of opinion, how can there be any harmony?" But this was answered by the ancient Vedânta philosophers who taught that there was unity under the variety of religious thoughts, and in this unity lay the harmony between these apparently contradictory beliefs. The religion of the Indo-Aryans cannot be judged from outside. When a foreigner goes to India and looks about, he finds statues of some great sage, or he finds symbolic figures in temples that he does not understand, and he instantly jumps to a conclusion that the Hindus have no religion, and calls them idolators and worshippers of false gods. Imbued with the idea that the tribal god of the house of Israel was the only true God, and being brought up in a school where fanaticism and bigotry are the criteria of spiritual culture, unless they are unusually free from such narrowness and prejudice, these foreigners are very apt to fall into entire misconception of Hindu life and ideals. Especially is this often true of Christian missionaries, who are frequently persons of strongly bigoted views, which unfit them to be fair and impartial observers. They can only look at things from one narrow standpoint, and so fail to see truly and correctly.

When missionaries first came to India, they tried to make converts by force. Those who read the history of India know how the Portuguese missionaries

preached the Bible by holding swords and guns in their hands. We can only pity such fanatics, who in the name of religion sow the seeds of discord and quarrel wherever they go, and who in this age of enlightenment believe that those who do not worship Jahveh, the tribal god of the house of Israel and accept Christ as the only Saviour of mankind, will all go to perdition. We are sorry for those who waste their wealth and energy by supporting institutions which breed fanaticism. What evidence is there that the worship of Elohim Jahveh should be the worship of the one true God, and why should the Supreme Being of the universe be called a false god when worshipped under any other name? The religion of the Hindus is not the worship of a false god. It is not idolatry, The Hindus never worshipped idols. Did you ever hear a Hindu explaining his own religion? You have heard what the missionaries have said, but why do you not ask the Hindu himself what kind of a god he worships? Why do you judge him *ex parte,* before hearing the Hindu's side of the question?

Truth is the standard of a Hindu, the worship of Truth is his religion, and the attainment of Truth is his ideal. Truth is that which is not confined by any name or any form. Here I wish to make clear whether or not the Hindus are idolators. There is no such thing as idol-worship among the Hindus. When you visit a temple in India there you may see a priest sitting before a statue of Krishna, or Buddha, or Râma, or of some great Incarnation, Prophet or Teacher. The socalled idols are either such statues, or else are merely symbols. They are understood as such by every Hindu. Do you

know what they represent? They are symbols of the Divine Energy, of the attributes of God, or of abstract ideas, hard to grasp without some outward form. The priest who sits before the statues of those who were living beings at one time, shows his reverence to these great spiritual Masters. If you go to this priest and ask him of his conception of God, you will hear him say: "God is omnipotent, and infinite. His spirit pervades the whole universe. He is beyond all forms and names. He is the Soul of our souls; in Him we live, through Him we exist, and without Him there cannot be anything." Is this idolatry? What kind of idolatry is this? It is very easy for anybody to say that is it a worship of a false god, or of an idol, but if a person will look beneath the surface and enquire of the Hindus themselves, they can easily discover how mistaken are such assertions. If the Hindus are idol-worshippers because they show respect to their spiritual Masters, like Krishna or Buddha, why should not the Christians be called idolators when they show respect to Christ, kneeling down before his statue or picture? If the Hindu is idolatrous because he concentrates his mind upon some religious symbol, like the cross, or triangle, or circle, why should not the same term be applied to the Christian when he thinks of the crucifix or keeps it on the altar? Did the Hindus get the cross or triangle from the Christians? History affirms that the cross existed in India as a religious symbol centuries before Christ was born; but a Hindu never denounces any other religion, nor finds fault with any other form of worship or conception of God, however childish or anthropomorphic it may be.

True religion, according to the Hindus, does not consist in the belief in a certain set of dogmas or creeds, but in the attainment of god-consciousness through spiritual unfoldment. It is being and becoming God. It is the subjugation of selfish love and desire for self-aggrandizement, and the expression of Divine love, truthfulness, and kindness to all. The object of such a religion is the freedom of the soul from the bondages of the world.

You have been told that the Hindus are immoral, that they are the most immoral nation on earth; and I am ashamed to say that some of my countrymen and women, having enlisted themselves as Christian converts, have told you, that the Hindus were immoral, that they had no ethics, no religion. Being hypnotized, as it were, by their propagandistic zeal, they have forgotten the facts. But, friends, if the religion of the Hindus has done nothing else, it has done this much many of the worst vices that exist to-day among Christian nations do not exist in India. The crimes and vices with which the daily papers of America are filled are very rare in India. It has been said again and again that Christianity alone can make men and women moral; the Hindu asks: "Why has it not made the men and women of the Western countries more moral than they are to-day?" Think of the most diabolical crimes committed all over the United States by socalled Christians and daily chronicled by the press! Your prisons and asylums are filled to their utmost capacity with criminals and lunatics. Will you therefore call Christianity a failure? Will you dare to claim that it alone of all religions in the world can make

men good? Buddhists, Hindus, Mohammedans, and even large sections of the Chinese abstain entirely from intoxicating liquors, and the low percentage of brutality, of crimes of violence, and of cruelty to animals arises from the fact that they do not inflame their passions by alcoholic stimulants. Everywhere in this world there is wickedness and human failure, but if all things be taken into consideration, it will be found that there is no preponderance of vice among the heathen, nor of virtue among the Christians. Human nature varies in its expression, but is much the same in itself all over the earth.

The annual increase of criminals and lunatics in a nation not even 200 years old is perfectly appalling. In the whole of the United States 10,000 murders are committed every year. Hundreds of dead babies of illegitimate birth are found in vacant plots, in ash-barrels, in the rivers and on the roadsides. What has Christianity done to stop such crimes and vices? The words of Christ to those who see the mole in their brother's eye, but cannot discern the beam in their own eyes, should be remembered to-day. It is wise to let reforms begin at home, and that Christian nations should amend themselves before criticising the faults and failings of heathen lands.

Dr. J. H. Barrows, who was the secretary of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, after visiting India for three months, returned to New York and gave a course of lectures. In one lecture I heard him say: "The Hindus have no ethics, no morality, no science, no philosophy, no religion; whatever they have got they

have learned from Christian missionaries." On the contrary, any fair-minded student of the Hindu thought will notice at the outset that the philosophy and religion of the Hindus are based entirely upon the highest standard of ethics and morality. Prof. Max Mueller said that "we find ethics in the beginning, ethics in the middle, and ethics in the end". No human being can become truly spiritual unless he or she reaches moral perfection. Moral perfection is the beginning of spiritual life or spiritual evolution; and spiritual perfection consists in the manifestation of divinity and the emancipation of the soul from the bondages of ignorance and selfishness, which are the causes of sin and wickedness. A truly spiritual man is master of himself and possesses perfect control over his animal nature. No man who is a slave to his passions, desires, and animal propensities, however highly ethical he may appear in society, can be called truly moral, not to mention spiritual.

Having these high ideals, the Hindu religion does not encourage any of the vices, and especially inculcates an avoidance of drunkenness, which prevents its victims from gaining self-control. Hindu religion has no need of any help from temperance-unions or the societies for the prevention of cruelty to women and children, or of cruelty to animals. Such societies are quite unknown among the Hindus. Their religion itself has made the Hindus kind toward animals and has taught them to revere every woman as a representative of the Divine Mother on earth. Some of the Christian converts, in their zeal for eradicating certain social evils which have crept into Hindu society, have falsely attributed the

causes of these evils to the religious ideas of the Hindus. Many of you have been told that the Hindu religion teaches that women have no souls. Such an absurd idea can only be accepted by those who do not study and investigate for themselves. No Hindu ever imagined anything so crude. We do not find any such idea in the Aryan religion; but we can perhaps trace its source to the Semitic conception of the creation of woman out of a man's rib, the lofty concept of the origin of woman that still stands in the Christian Bible! The Hindu knows that the soul is sexless and only manifests on the physical plane either as man or woman to fulfil a certain purpose in life.

Some of you perhaps have the wrong impression that, according to the Hindu faith, a woman cannot reach salvation, but if you read a little of the *Bhagavad Gitâ,* you will find there: "All men and women, whether they believe in a God or not, are bound to reach perfection sooner or later".

As Christian civilization has been founded upon commercialism and has kept the ethical standard in the background, so Aryan civilization in India has been based upon ethical standards, and commercialism was set aside and almost ignored. As a result the Christian nations have commercial prosperity, while the Hindus as a nation have lived for centuries exemplary moral lives and have become the spiritual teachers of the world. Read the accounts of the Greek and Chinese travellers who visited India both before and after the Christian era. Read Prof. Max Mueller's celebrated works *India, What Can It Teach Us?"* and *Life and*

Sayings of Râmakrishna, and learn the truth for yourselves.

Hindu religion still produces men like Buddha, Christ and Ramakrishna and women like Sârada Devî even in this age of commercialism and selfishness. How can a religion which has no foundation upon the highest ideals of morality and ethics produce such men and women? The lives and characters of some of them have already within the last ten years become ideals for the masses. "A tree is known by its fruits," said Jesus, and he spoke truly. The characters of such men and women are the embodiments of ethics, the personifications of moral and spiritual perfection. Therefore, when persons bring false charges against the religion of the Hindus, you should remember that they do it either through ignorance or through a feverish zeal for evangelizing India and converting it to Christian ideals. They feel it necessary to save the souls of the socalled heathen from eternal perdition.

The religion of Vedânta does not teach that we are "born in sin and conceived in iniquity," nor does it say that we have inherited as a birth-right the sins of some fallen man who was tempted by an evil spirit called "Satan." On the contrary, it tells us that all men and women, irrespective of their colour, creed, or religious beliefs, are children of Immortal Bliss. It teaches that we are not the helpless victims of our parents' sins, but that our present condition is the resultants of our past deeds, and that our future state will be the result of our present actions. Parents do

not create the souls of their children, they are but the channels, the instruments through which the individual souls incarnate or manifest themselves on the physical plane. This idea is popularly known as the law of *Karma* and reincarnation, which means the remanifestation on this earth of the individual soul, or the germ of life, according to its desires and tendencies, which will determine the conditions of its existence.

The religion of Vedânta may be called the *Science of the Soul.* As modern science does not deal with dogmas and does not insist upon belief in the authority of any person or book, but depends entirely upon correct observation and experience of the facts of nature to discover the laws which govern the phenomena of the universe, so Vedânta, or the *Science of the Soul,* does not deal with dogmas or creeds, but explains through logic and reason the spiritual nature of man, or the true nature of the soul. It describes the origin, growth, and process of its gradual evolution from the minutest germ of life up to the highest spiritual man, as Christ, or Buddha, or Râmakrishna, as well as points out the purpose and ultimate goal of such evolution. This *Science of the Soul* discusses such questions as: Whether or not the soul can exist independently of the body; whether or not it existed before the present birth; whether or not it was created by any being? Vedânta enquires, 'Does the soul exist after death? Does it retain its individuality? If it be free or bound? If bound, can it ever become free? etc.' In attempting to solve such questions of vital importance, the Vedânta philosophers did not

speculate like the Greek or German philosophers, but explained through logic and scientific method the spiritual laws which they discovered in their superconscious state. Those spiritual laws gave a foundation to their religious system. The spiritual laws being eternal, the religion which was based upon them is called *eternal religion.*

In India religion and philosophy are one. Religion is the practical side of philosophy and the latter is the rational side of religion. They are inseparably connected. Therefore, when we speak of Vedânta philosophy, we mean both religion and philosophy at the same time. Although there have been many other philosophies in India, still Vedânta includes the fundamental principles of all of them.

The ancient thinkers in India, after studying the phenomena of the universe, started many theories to explain the origin of the phenomenal world of which the Atomic theory of Kanâda and the evolution theory of Kapila still remain unsurpassed by similar scientific theories of the nineteenth century. Nearly four thousand years ago the Hindu philosophers came to understand that the world was not created out of nothing, but was the result of the evolution of one eternal energy, which is called in Sanskrit *Prakriti,* in Latin, *Procreatrix.* In one of the *Upanishads* we read of a sage who was explaining the mystery of creation to his son. He said: "My dear child, some people say that this world has come out of nothing, but how can something come out of nothing?" It has often been said that the doctrine of evolution is the

marvel of modern times, and that it was unknown in the past ages; but those who have studied more closely are aware that it was well known to the Hindus and that there are clear evidences of it among the Greeks. Well has it been said by Sir Monier Monier Williams: "The Hindus were Spinozites more than 2,000 years before Darwin; and evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time and before any word like evolution existed in any language of the world."[1] Standing upon the firm rock of the evolution theory, the Hindus explained the mysteries of the universe, solved the problems of life, and arrived at a conclusion which has not yet been reached by the scientists of to-day. The evolutionists of ancient India did not arrive at the fatalistic conclusions of many of the modern evolutionists of the West. On the contrary, they maintained that the individual soul is not brought into evolution by any cosmic force or extra-cosmic being, but that it creates own destiny and moulds its own fate, by its own desires, tendencies, and actions. It is free to desire and to act in accordance with its desire. Each individual soul is a storehouse of infinite powers and possesses unlimited possibilities. Souls were not created out of nothing nor by the will of any being, but are eternal, beginningless and endless. At present they appear, however, as subject to the law of causation. The Hindus applied the law of causation to the moral and spiritual nature of individuals. In Sanskrit it is called *Law of Karma.* By this law they explained why one man is born with good tendencies and another with evil ones.

The Hindus do not believe that God creates one man

to enjoy and another to suffer, nor do they believe that He punishes the wicked or rewards the virtuous. Punishment and reward are but the reactions of our own actions. Each individual soul reaps the fruits of its own acts, either here or in some other existence.

The religion of Vedânta does not teach the worship of many gods, but of one God, who is called by many names and who is free to appear in any form in accordance with the desires of the worshippers. The God of the Hindus has no particular name nor any particular form. Thousands of names are given to that supreme Being who is nameless and formless. He is not extra-cosmic but intra-cosmic, and immanent as well as transcendent. He appears as with form to a dualist and without form to a non-dualist. He is one, yet His aspects are many. He is personal, impersonal, and beyond both. He appears as personal to a dualistic or monotheistic worshipper, and as impersonal to a qualified non-dualistic believer or one who believes in the immanency and transcendency of God; while to a pure non-dualist, the same God is the one eternal infinite ocean of absolute existence, intelligence, bliss, and love.

The religion of the Hindus recognizes the spiritual growth of the soul and describes the different stages of spiritual development. In the first stage God appears as extra-cosmic, as the Creator or the Father of the universe, who dwells outside of ourselves and of the world. This is the dualistic conception of God.

Some people say that the Hindus got the idea of the Fatherhood of God from Christian sources. But those who have read the Vedic literature, or even the

Bhagavad Gitâ have found therein many passages where God is addressed as the Father of the universe. It is said: "O Lord, Thou art the Father of the universe both animate and inanimate. Thou art worshipped by all. None is equal to Thee in the triple world. Who then can excel Thee, O Thou of power incomparable?"[1]

In the second stage, God appears as immanent in the universe as the one stupendous Whole of which we are but parts. Then He is the Mother of the universe as well as the Father; or, in other words, He is then the material as well as the efficient cause of all phenomena. The idea of the Fatherhood of God is not considered by the Hindus to be the highest, because it makes Him extra-cosmic or outside of the world and as efficient cause only. In this concept nature co-exists with God as the material cause of the universe. But when we comprehend that nature is nothing but the divine energy and inseparable from the supreme Being, then He becomes the Mother of the universe as well as Father. This is called qualified non-dualistic conception.

Thirdly, there is a still higher conception than this: the concept of the unity of the essential nature of man with the universal Spirit or Reality of the universe. From this point of view Christ said: *I and my Father are one.* The Hindu says: *I am He, I am that one eternal Being.* This union on the spiritual plane is the highest ideal of all religions.

The Hindus say that the dualistic belief in a personal God with a human form and human attributes is the

1. Rig Veda, I, 164, 46.

expression of the spiritual childhood of the soul. From dualism the soul rises through qualified non-dualism to monism. Each of these stages of spiritual development is true in itself and necessary, as are childhood, youth, and maturity in the physical body. It is good to be born and brought up within the limits of a church creed as a dualist, but it is not good to remain there all through life, and he who does so has failed to outgrow the stage of spiritual childhood. Growth is life and stagnation is death. Therefore, Vedânta recognizes the importance of spiritual growth in religion.

What we believe today may not be necessary for us tomorrow; let us be ever ready to face the necessity of growth. But we must not go backward; we must move onward until the ideal is realized. "Arise, awake, seek the company of the wise, and stop not until the goal is reached;" until you see God everywhere and become one with Him. This has been the cry of the spiritual teachers of India.

There is no other religion in the world which emphasizes the attainment of Godconsciousness in this life so much as the Vedânta religion of the Hindus. The paths which lead to this goal of all religions should vary according to the tendency, capacity, and spiritual development of the individual. Therefore, Vedânta prescribes no set of path, but offers many paths to suit different minds: such as the path of right knowledge and right discrimination (*Jñâna Yoga*); of concentration and meditation (*Râja Yoga*); of work for work's sake (*Karma Yoga*); and lastly, of devotion and worship (*Bhakti Yoga*). Each of these paths has various

branches. As one coat does not fit all bodies, so one path does not suit all minds.

The religion of the Hindus has made them peace-loving and humane, and it is because of their religious ideas that the Hindus have never invaded any other country. They are not afflicted with the insatiable greed for power, wealth, and territorial possession, which is so strong Christian nations.

The Hindus practise non-resistance of evil, which was taught by the Vedânta, by Buddha, and afterwards by Christ, but which is not yet understood nor practiced by many of the followers of Christianity. Vedânta has made the Hindus realize that all the various religious sects and creeds of the world are but the partial expressions of one underlying religion, which is nameless and universal. The knower of that underlying religion does not need any creed, or denominational name, or particular church. The worship of truth is his creed and denomination, and the human body is the holy temple wherein dwells the eternal spirit. The result of this grand idea is that there has been very little religious persecution in the whole religious history of India.

It matters not to what sect, creed, or denomination we may belong. Our first duty should be to see how far we have advanced in spiritual life, how near we have approached Godconsciousness, and how much of the mastery over our animal nature we have acquired. Knowing these to be the essentials of true religion, a follower of the teachings of Vedânta never fights for a doctrine or a behalf, never denounces the religious

ideas of others; never says, "my religion is true and yours is false"; never preaches: "my God is the only true one, all others are false"; never persecutes another for differing from himself; but always

CHAPTER VII

UNITY AND HARMONY

THE whole teaching of Vedânta stands for one thing —that is *love*. Five hundred years before the advent of Jesus the Christ, Buddha taught: "Hatred is never cured by hatred, but by love. This is the everlasting ethical Law." And what is love? Love means *expression of oneness*. Jesus the Christ said: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." But Jesus did not explain why we should love our neighbours as ourselves. That explanation you will find in the Vedas, in the Vedânta philosophy, in the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads*, which are the earliest writings of this universal philosophy, teach that we should love our neighbours as ourselves, not because they have done us some good or been kind to us, but even if they have spoken unkind words, even if they have taken wicked steps against us, even if they are spiteful and jealous of us, still we should love them because we are one with our neighbours in Spirit. There is only one spirit. The apparent man seems to be different and separated from that universal Spirit, which we regard as the Absolute, the Infinite Being, the *Brahman*. This universal Spirit is abiding in us all. We are like so many mirrors which hold the image of Divinity which is universal and one.

I will give you an illustration: suppose you hold in the sunlight hundreds of small tea-cups, and let the self-

effulgent sun, this luminous heavenly body, be reflected in the water that they contain. In each cup you will see an image of the sun, of the same nature, brilliant, luminous, but very small. Think of the immensity of the sun compared with the earth. The diameter of the earth is eight thousand miles, and the diameter of the sun is eight hundred and eighty thousand miles. And this vast luminous body is reflected in a tea-cup! There is the reflection, perfect. Compared with the sun, the earth is like a geometrical point which has no parts and no magnitude; or, in other words, the surface of the earth is the same as the centre—no diameter at all. Now, if this earth, with all its volume and mass, be considered as a geometrical point, then where are we? We are like grains of sand, even smaller, when we compare our physical bodies with the universe. Yet in these infinitesimally small particles of human bodies we find the reflection of the divine and self-effulgent sun of the universe. That is the image of God in man. But, as the image of the sun cannot exist independent of the sun, so the human soul, which is the image of Divinity, cannot exist, even for a second, independent of the Divine sun, the Divine Being, whose reflection it is. We are all one in that Infinite Being, the supreme Spirit, God, the Absolute, the *Brahman*, the Heavenly Father, the Divine Mother. The names vary, but the ideal is one. In the Rig Veda, the oldest scripture of the world, we read: *'That which exists is one; men call it by various names.'*[1] And standing on that point of oneness, we should renounce everything that makes us feel as separate individuals, as indepen-

1. *'Ekam sad biprâ vahudhâ bhabanti.'*—Rig Veda.

dent of each other, as differentiated from each other. We should try to combine them all into that one harmonious whole. God is the one stupendous whole of which we are but parts. And that is the Truth.

Again we read elsewhere: A seeker after Truth once asked his spiritual Teacher: "Revered Master, please tell me in a few words the whole truth of Vedânta."

The Master replied: "In half a verse I will tell you that which has been told in thousands of volumes, *Brahman (God) is Truth, the world is unreal, and the individual soul is one with Brahman.*" This oneness is the quintessence of Vedânta. Starting from oneness, we should go on destroying all ideas of separateness, variation or differentiation, which are only upon the surface. The undercurrent of the whole universe is One. And if we cannot see that undercurrent, what is the use of studying Vedânta or any other philosophy or religion? We do not regard him as a student of Vedânta, who does not see that oneness, underlying all the variety of manifestations, because that is the fundamental principle of this philosophy.

Now, if you start from that point, where is disharmony? How can there be war? How can there be any jealousy or hatred? There should be nothing but peace, not only in our hearts, but among our brethren, among all students, among men and women of the whole world —nay, in all living creatures. That is the ideal. There cannot be any distinction, when we see God as the supreme Being in whom we live and move and have our

being in actual reality. There cannot be disharmony, but there will be eternal peace and happiness.

Vedânta was introduced into this country in order to prove to the world that the fundamental ideal and the ultimate goal of all religions are in that Oneness. If we study the evolution of this world, what do we find? By *evolution* we mean the expression or change from one homogeneous mass into a heterogeneous variety. Now, we are heterogeneous: there are men and women, lower animals, plants; and again different nations, nationalities, castes, creeds, denominations. This is variety, but all this has come from one source. Why should we not realize that one source, and in it find harmony ? But if we see only the surface, we can never find harmony. If we try to make our faces look alike, we shall destroy our faces. There will be no face left. But that is not the plan of nature. On the contrary, the plan of nature is unity in variety, and we cannot work against it. We must learn to be natural, to be in perfect harmony with natural law. Let nature do her work. We must not resist her force. Nature is trying to harmonize everything, to combine all forces and show the beauty and grandeur of oneness. Nature is evolving to manifest that oneness in the end, and spirituality means the climax of natural evolution. In the end, we find the truth that was told by Jesus, the Christ: "I and my Father are one." So, that oneness between the Son and the Heavenly Father is the goal.

But shall we stop there? Shall we merely see our individual oneness with the universal Being? No. We shall also see our oneness with all beings, whether they are of the same belief or not. Our personal differences

of opinion we must learn to sacrifice for the sake of the cause. The cause is oneness. If you are practising renunciation, renounce your personal opinions. The self-conceit of the mind which is struggling for spiritual upliftment is the cause of great degradation. We must always guard against it. We must learn to be humble. Humility is the first virtue. Learn to see goodness in others. Learn to find your own faults. Do not be elated. Do not think that you are greater than others, lest you should sow the seed of your own downfall. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." We have no right to judge. Vedânta tells us that if you have chosen one particular path that is good for you, you have no right to tell others that they should not follow the path which is good for them. Be just. And that is the spirit which was taught in this age by Srî Râmakrishna, that all religions are like so many paths which lead to the same goal. We do not come to destroy anything, but we come to harmonize everything, so that there shall be no more discord, but peace, unity and harmony everywhere.

And if there be any disagreement among us, we must study our own feelings, and learn to renounce the cause of that disagreement, which is in ourselves, not outside. We should renounce that and be free from it. Then we shall see harmony. We are the cause of our troubles, and we blame somebody else. But we should be brave enough to take the whole blame upon our own shoulders. And that is what Vedânta teaches. If there be any discord, you are the cause of it. Do not blame anyone else. And you can unmake what you have made. We are the creators of our own future.

We are the makers of our own destiny. By our thoughts and deeds we are creating all the time. We are creators in miniature, because we are parts of the infinite Creator. We are building every minute. Do you not see how we are taking in new particles of matter in the form of food and drink, how the old forms are eliminated, and we manufacture new molecules, new atoms, new tissues, every moment?

Do you not see that you create your own environments wherever you go? Who is the cause of your troubles? Who is the cause of your happiness and pleasure and the misfortunes and sufferings that you go through? There is no other devil or creator of evil outside our own minds. We are the causes. Vedânta has given this as a death blow to the dualistic theory that there are two creators, (the one of good and the other of evil), sitting above the clouds and according to their whims, forcing the children of infinite Being to do right and wrong. That is not the ideal. Everything is governed by law. These laws are as eternal as God Himself. His laws are manifested in nature, and we are here to study them, to realize the beauty, the grandeur and the wonderful spiritual powers that are latent in each individual soul.

And if we cannot realize this, what have we learnt in all these years? Anyone can fuss and fight. But if anyone smites you on the right cheek, turn the left, and show your love and humility. And then you will be the salt of the earth. Then you will be the fishers of men. If you cannot put yourself on the lowest plane of humanity, how can you serve humanity? It is self-conceit that causes our bondage. The life of the

Sannyâsin means that he has renounced everything. What is everything? Your attachment. You may live in a palace, you may have all the pleasures of life around you, and if you have no attachment then you are a *Sannyâsin.* But if you walk like a beggar in the street, if you sleep on the grass under a tree, and if your mind is hankering after wealth and all the pleasures of the senses, then, you are a beggar and not a *Sannyâsin.* So, if you have no control of your mind, you have not learnt the *a-b-c* of Vedânta.

Think of the great king Janaka, who was an emperor in India and the greatest teacher of Vedânta. He lived in a palace, but unattached, doing all the works of emperor, of prime minister, of general, of father and of husband; but yet, when the palace caught fire he said: "If the whole kingdom is destroyed, it does not hurt me. It does not impoverish me, or make me feel poor."

Do you not see that you cannot enrich the soul by earthly possessions, nor can you impoverish your *Spirit* by renunciation, but it is the attachment to material conditions that hold the soul down on this lowest plane.

Vedânta tells us that we must not separate God from the world, but we must learn how to harmonize God with the world; not to see God and think of Him as outside nature as we have been taught in the orthodox churches, but to bring God into our midst, to realize that every kind of work, whether manual labour or intellectual or spiritual work, is an act of worship. When you scrub the floor, remember that you are worshipping the

Lord; let every expression of your energy be an offering to Supreme. That is the ideal. Then there will be no more cause for fear. The greatest devil that ever existed is Fear,—fear of death, fear of punishment. It is ingrown, inborn with us. We have almost inherited it because we have learnt it from our childhood. Even the pre-natal condition of the mother has inoculated the child with that germ of fear. For that reason, we have fear of death, fear of punishment, fear of eternal hell. We think that we are born in sin and iniquity. But we are not born in sin and iniquity. *Sins are nothing but errors, mistakes.* All such mistakes, as well as fear, arise from ignorance which veils the true nature of our soul and the harmony that exists between God and the universe. Being overcome by the delusive power of this ignorance, one commits wicked acts and becomes a sinner. The darkness of ignorance which creates the phantom of a devil and which is the mother of superstition can be dispelled by the light of true knowledge and divine wisdom which dawns upon the soul of a sincere student of Vedânta.

Vedânta gives the best commentary on the true religion of Christ—and not on churchianity. In the true religion of Christ there is perfect harmony; and this interpretation we need to-day. The whole-world needs it. In a few years you will see that Vedânta is going to be the religion of the world. Theosophy, Christian Science, New Thought are all stepping-stones. Vedânta is the highest goal. They are all going towards it. You may not appreciate what Vedânta is, to-day, because its followers are few here. But how many believed in Christ in his lifetime ? Only twelve disciples. Out of those

twelve, some denied Him and one betrayed Him. What Christianity has not done in two thousand years, Vedânta will do in two hundred. Just wait, and during your lifetime you will see that the seed that has been sown will grow everywhere. Great many souls are hungry to receive this truth. I have come from Los Angeles where four to five hundred people were clamouring for me to give more lectures on Vedânta. They were urging me to come and stay there and make my home in California. Wherever I go I find these hungry souls. They are not satisfied with Christian Science, New Thought, and other cults. We stand beyond all cult limitations, although there is truth in all these teachings. I can prove that Mrs. Eddy took her principles from Vedânta. Read my lecture on Christian Science and you will find it explained there. The fundamental principles of Theosophy were taken from Vedânta. I gave a lecture in the New Thought Church in Los Angeles, and I told them how the fundamental principles of New Thought are to be found in Vedânta. I was one of the speakers in the New Thought Convention in Detroit. I was one of the speakers at the *State Spiritualists' Convention* at Hartford. I lectured in Indiana at Chesterfield before eight thousand people, also in Lilydale. So I know them all, and there is some truth in each. Undoubtedly they are all trying to help toward the evolution of the spiritual ideals of the nation, but Vedânta is on the top rung of the ladder. Yet its different phases embrace them all. Vedânta has a dualistic phase, a qualified non-dualistic phase, and a monistic phase, with innumerable branches. The Vedânta philosophy embraces them all. And it is not

only a philosophy, but also a religion, because it gives the fundamental principles of all unsectarian religions and includes all the sectarian religions of the world. Christianity is a sectarian religion. So is Mohammedanism. So is Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Hinduism. But Vedântism gives the fundamental principles of all religions. And yet it is a philosophy and embraces all scientific truths. It is one with science, and absolutely logical and rational. Therefore, we must consider Vedânta as the system which teaches the harmony that exists between science, logic, philosophy, metaphysics and religion.

Vedânta is a system of philosophy, *yet it is a religion.* What is the difference between religion and philosophy? *Philosophy gives the theoretical side of religion and religion gives the practical side of philosophy.* They both go together. First of all, we understand the theory, which clears away all the doubts and difficulties that arise in the mind and answers all the questions that disturb its peace, and then we are shown the way by which we can bring those ideals into our daily lives. Therefore, Vedânta is most practical. You can apply it in every action of your daily life, in your household duties, when you walk in the street, or dress, or eat, or perform any duties; in your attitude towards your children and your brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, friends and relatives. You can spiritualize all these relations, if you understand the principles of Vedânta. Then you will be a true Vedantist. Then you will be a true Christian, a true follower of Christ, a true follower of all the great teachers and spiritual leaders of the world. It is a harmonious whole. And

in this harmonious whole there is no room for jealousy, hatred or inharmony. Jealousy, hatred and inharmony all proceed from ignorance, and they are all evils. They are poisons. If you encourage jealousy, you create a poison in your system. One of the best physicians in New York city said, the other day, that a man or a woman who is extremely jealous creates a poison in his or her system that would kill twenty people. And it is a fact. So, there is no room for jealousy.

All evil is on the negative side. There should not be any evil, if you always take the positive path. Send out currents of love, sympathy, harmony; and every time you find any trace of inharmony or hatred, crush it out at once. Then you will have peace, you will emanate the vibrations of peace wherever you go, and you will attract all. Everybody will look at you and will find comfort in your presence. You will have to create that vibration in your own system first and radiate it. You will spiritualize your home. You will spiritualize the place where you work,—your office and everywhere. You will be able to make a crooked-minded person appear straight and simple in your presence. All his crookedness will disappear. A crook cannot be a crook in the presence of a saint. Why cannot you be a saint, and so reform all crooks? You do not need any police systems, reform systems. Live the life and set an example, and in your presence all the wicked will be changed.

There was a great saint[1] in India who lived in an underground cave, in the garden of a temple adjacent

1. Late Pâvahâri Bâbâ of Gazipur.

to a town. The garden was surrounded by high walls. For years and years he would not see anybody. In India there is a difference between real *Yogîs* and those who pretend. Real *Yogîs* hide themselves from the public. They are not like those we see here, who advertise and draw people through the newspapers. They hide themselves because they do not wish to be vexed or disturbed. This great *Yogî* lived in this cave and would not come out for days. He would go without food and drink. But his presence in that neighbourhood created such reform that there was not one single burglary or theft committed in ten years. The police commissioner was put out of commission, and the police centre was removed from that town because there was nothing for it to do. That shows that a spiritual man or a spiritual woman emanates spirituality which has the power to reform all those who come within his or her zone of consciousness.

There are zones of consciousness. You have a certain zone of which you are the centre, and anyone who comes within your zone will be electrified, magnetized, spiritualized. Every magnet has a zone. As soon as a needle comes within the zone of the magnet it is drawn in. Remove it outside that boundary, there is no action. So you have a zone around you, and anyone who comes in contact with you will be magnetized and spiritualized. But if your zone is narrow and limited to the atomic centre in your brain, there is no hope of expanding, enlarging, strengthening by practice. But remember that every individual soul possesses infinite powers, potentialities and possibilities, because we are all, as I

said in the beginning, creators in miniature. We are infinitesimally small; yet when we think of ourselves as one with the *Spirit* we are infinite. There can be nothing greater than we. When we think of our bodies we are smaller than atoms, smaller than electrons. But when we think of ourselves as Spirit, as divine, we are infinite, we are one with the supreme Being. And that realization will make us rise above all fear, inharmony and disagreement, and will establish oneness with all the members of our community, all the members of different denominations, sects, religions, societies, and so on. Then, and then alone, we shall be able to live a really *spiritual life on earth,* and the kingdom of Heaven will be established upon this plane. First of all, we will have to establish the kingdom of Heaven within us. Realize that God is within. Then you will realize that the kingdom of Heaven can be established upon earth by our examples. We must set the example consciously, and towards that end we must struggle, keeping our minds open to truth, *subject to correction,* and earnestly striving with humility and sincerity towards that one goal, always sending out the current of love and forgiveness, the feeling of blessedness towards all. We must learn to bless all who curse us, to love all who hate us, to give all to those who deny us. And if we can do this, we shall be true students of Vedânta, and we shall realize in time that perfection which Christ meant when He said: "Be ye perfect as the Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

CHAPTER VIII

COSMIC EVOLUTION AND ITS PURPOSE

"The evolution of tre cosmos begins when I reflect My intelligence on the eternal energy."—*Bhagavad Gita, xiv, 3.*

"The attainment of the Imperishable One is the highest goal of evolution. Having realized this, the wise return not to the world, but enjoy eternal life in My Supreme Abode."—*Bhagavad Gita, viii, 21.*

All the scriptures of the world bear testimony to the fact that from very ancient times various attempts have been made by human minds to understand the laws that govern the phenomena of the universe, and to explain the processes which nature adopts in producing these phenomena. The Old Testament, the Zendavesta and the Vedas, are the scriptures which record such attempts made by the thinkers amongst three great nations, the Hebrews, the Parsees or Iranians, and the Hindus or the Aryans. Chronologically speaking, the Vedas are the oldest of the three. The Old Testament and the Zendavesta, believing in the extracosmic personal God, describe the special creation of the universe out of nothing at a definite time. We are all familiar with the legendary account of creation given in Genesis. The Lord finished the creation of the world in six days, gave it the sun, moon and stars, "the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night," and He clothed the earth with verdure, grass, herbs, trees, peopled it with all kinds of animals, breathed life into man's nostrils and

gave all to him, who was the crown of creation. In the Zendavesta we find a similar account of the special creation of the universe by the extra-cosmic personal God, Ahura-Mazda. But we search in vain for any such account of creation in the Vedas, the most ancient scriptural writings of the Aryans who inhabited India. Those who have studied carefully the monumental works and voluminous writings of the *Rishis* or seers of Truth in ancient India are quite amazed in not finding anywhere an account of the special creation of the universe out of nothing.

The poetic and truth-seeking minds of the Vedic sages soared high above the clouds of ignorance and superstition in the infinite space of eternal Truth, when they asked and answered such questions as: "Who has seen the First-born? Where was the life, the blood and the soul of the universe? Who can declare whence this creation? The gods (*Devas*) cannot, as they came later. Who can know what its source is and whether created or not?"[1] Those questions were not an outcome of uncultivated minds. They were not the results of ignorant and superstitious minds which cannot grasp ideas and conceptions of God higher than a block of stone or wood. How many people of today ask such questions, and how many can solve such problems? Can a mind which believes in the multiplicity of gods as the highest idea and ask: "Who can declare whence this creation? The gods cannot, because they came later." Can an idolatrous person who bows down with awe and re-

1. **Rig Veda, X, 129.**

verence before an idol and worships it as the God of the universe ask such a question as: "Who knows whether this universe was created or not? He who rules it in the highest heavens knows, or perhaps He knows not." These questions were asked by the Vedic sages who lived in prehistoric times, when the other nations were in their infancy, when reading and writing were unkonwn to all, when schools and colleges of the present day were not thought of, and the various instruments which we find to-day in the laboratory of a scientist and consider as an indispensable means for acquiring knowledge, were never dreamed of. These doubts were raised at an age when education consisted in the sudden flashes of light that came spontaneously in simple and truth-seeking minds. At such a time the ancient thinkers in India asked these questions Did they answer them? In one of the hymns of the Rig Veda, which dates back perhaps 5,000 years before Christ, we find the answers to these questions. It is said: "Before the manifestation of the phenomenal universe there was neither non-entity nor entity, neither atmosphere nor sky beyond. Death was not, nor, therefore, immortality; nor day and night. That One breathed breathless by itself in essence. There was nothing different from it nor beyond it. From this germ burst forth mighty productive powers, nature below and energy above."[2] Again, elsewhere in the *Upanishads* it is said. "From this undifferentiated Absolute Being evolved gradually vital force, mind and all the sense-powers, ether,

2. **Rig Veda, X, 129.**

heat, and all that is gaseous, liquid and solid."[3] It is indeed startling to scholars to find that in such an ancient age the thinkers and philosophers in India discovered that mind, thought, intellect and ether are the results of the evolution of one undifferentiated causal energy. In another *Upanishad* it is said: "The whole universe, before the evolution of name and form began, remained potentially in that unmanifested causal state." This causal Energy is called by various names by different philosophers, such as *Avyaktam, Prakriti, or Mâyâ,* the meaning being the undifferentiated causal Energy.

As regards the process of the cosmic evolution of the phenomenal universe, we find such descriptions as: "From the undifferentiated primordial Energy evolved ether." Then the ethereal particles or atoms began to vibrate; that vibratory state of the ethereal ocean is described as *Vâyu,* or that which vibrates, or moves or blows. It is the state of extreme heat caused by attraction and aggregation of matter. On account of high temperature it is sometimes described as the gaseous state of the material world. Therefore, the production of heat, in Sanskrit *Agni,* Latin *Ignis,* is described as the third stage of the cosmic evolution. When that extreme heat begins to radiate and the ocean of gaseous matter cools off, the gaseous condition is changed into liquid; in Sanskrit it is called *Apah,* which means liquid. The liquid state being further cooled off by the radiation of heat into space, the particles of matter appear in the form of a solid mass, which is called in Sanskrit *Prithivî* or solid.

3. ***Mundaka Upanishad,*** **II, 1, 3.**

Thus, when the solid mass is yet more cooled off the germs of life begin to manifest on the physical plane, first in the form of vegetables, then as animals, and lastly, as man.[1]

This is the first description of the principal stages of cosmic evolution that we find in the Vedic literature. It is the corner-stone upon which the huge superstructure of the doctrine of evolution was built through the rigorous processes of science and logic by later philosophers. Amongst the six principal schools of philosophy in India the *Sânkhya* system of Kapila is devoted entirely to the systematic, logical and scientific explanation of the process of cosmic evolution. Kapila is supposed by Oriental scholars to have lived as early as the seventh century B. C. He may be called the father of the evolution theory in India. His cosmology spread far and wide all over India, and those who came in contact with the ancient Aryans were more or less influenced by it. There is no ancient philosophy in the western world which is not indebted to the *Sâkhya* system of Kapila. The idea of evolution which ancient Greek philosophers and the Neo-Platonists had can be traced back to the influence of this Sankhya school of philosophy. Prof. E. W. Hopkins says in his *Religions of India*: "Plato is full of Sânkhyan thought, worked out by him, out taken from Pythagoras. Before the sixth century B. C. all the religious-philosophical ideas of Pythagoras are current in India (L. von Schroeder, *Pythagoras*). If there were but one or two of these cases they might

1. Cf. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II, 1.

be set aside as accidental coincidences, but such coincidences are too numerous to be the result of chance."[2] Again, he says: "Neo-Platonism and Christian Gnosticism owe much to India. The Gnostic ideas in regard to a plurality of heavens and spiritual worlds go back directly to Hindu sources. Soul and light are one in the *Sânkhya* system, before they became so in Greece, and when they appear united in Greece it is by means of the thought which is borrowed from India. The famous three qualities of the *Sânkhya* reappear as the Gnostic 'three classes.' "[1] p. 560. In regard to Neo-Platonism Prof. Garbe says: "The views of Plotinus are in perfect agreement with those of the Sankhya system. Porphyry, the disciple of Plotinus, has the Yoga doctrine of immediate perception of truth leading to union with the deity. As is well known and undisputed, this Porphyry copies directly from the treatise of Bardesanes, which contains an account of the Brâhmans, while in many instances he simply repeats the facts of the *Sânkhya* philosophy." *"The Religions of India."* It is said and generally believed that Pythagoras came to India and learnt the principles of this philosophy, and afterwards promulgated it in Greece and Alexandria. Greek legend is full of Samian's travels to Egypt, Chaldea, Phoenicia and India. Prof. Hopkins says: "After a careful review of the points of contact and weighing as dispassionately as possible the historical evidence for and against the originality of Pythagoras, we are unable to come to any other

2. Cf. Hopkins: *Religions of India*, p. 559.
1. Cf. Hopkins: *Religions of India*, p. 561.

conclusion than that the Greek philosopher took his whole system indirectly from India."[2]

In this *Sânkhya* system it is most startling to find that its ultimate conclusions harmonize and coincide with those of modern science. It says: First, something cannot come out of nothing. Secondly, the effect lies in the cause; that is, the effect is the cause reproduced, or in other words, cause is the potential or unmanifested state, and when it is manifested it is called effect. Thirdly, destruction means the reversion of an effect to its causal state.[1] Until lately this truth was denied by many of the Western scientists. Fourthly, the laws of nature are uniform and regular throughout. That which is in the microcosm is also in the macrocosm. Fifthly, the building up of the cosmos is the result of the evolution of the cosmic energy, called *Prakritî*. These are some of the principal conclusions which Kapila arrived at through observation, experiment and following strictly the rules of inductive logic. Kapila understood the law of attraction and repulsion when he described the famous aphorism, which means "the appearance of phenomena is due to the process of *Râga* or attraction, and *Virâga* or repulsion."[2] According to Kapila, *Prakritî* of the undifferentiated causal Energy, is uncreated and eternal, but insentient. It is the state of equilibrium (*Sâmyâvasthâ*) of all forces which are correlated to one another, and are its expressions. Here we find the first idea of the correlation of for-

2. *Ibid.*, p. 559.
1. *"Nâshah Kâraṇe-layah"*—Sânkhyasutra, I, 119.
2. *'Râga-virâgayoryogah sṛistih.'*—Sânkhya-sutra, II, 9.

ces which manifest in the subjective and objective world. In that state there is no creation, no phenomena. When the balance of these forces is disturbed then begins the process of evolution. This process continues for millions of year, and afterwards begins the cosmic involution or dissolution. The process of involution is only the reverse process of evolution. Evolution is followed by involution, and involution is again followed by evolution. The chain of evolution, involution, and again evolution, is a circle. It is beginningless and endless. The period of cosmic evolution is called in Sanskrit a *kalpa,* or a cycle, and the period of involution is another cycle. At the end of one cycle of cosmic dissolution the phenomenal world returns to its causal state. Kapila describes how and through what power the state of equilibrium of *Prakriti* is disturbed, how spiritual influx of *Purusha* or the absolute spirit illumines *Prakriti* and generates the activity to evolve. He then describes how *Prakritî* being illuminated by Spirit evolves first into cosmic Intelligence (*Mahat*) then into the cosmic Ego. This is the state when subject and object are differentiated. The first stage of the evolution of the cosmic energy into the objective phenomena is *Akâsa,* ether. Modern scientists are not quite sure regarding the state prior to ether. When the ethereal particles begin to vibrate and move the result is light, heat, and the gaseous state of matter, then gradually liquid and solid; first the subtle forms, atoms and molecules (*Tanmâtras* in Sanskrit), and then the gross elements. Out of these subtle particles of matter, says Kapila, have evolved mind or internal organ, sense-organs and the sense instruments of organic

animals. Starting from the gross elements, Kapila analyzes the objects of perception, and says that every gross object is composed of a combination of finer forms of matter—that is, molecules and atoms; he traces the atoms back to their causal state of *Prakritî* or eternal energy, and calls them force centres. Thus we see that about the seventh century B. C. the great thinkers in India discovered the same truth which modern scientists have recently discovered. If we examine the theories of the evolution of the cosmos according to modern evolutionists and astronomers, we find that they have arrived at similar conclusions. Prof. W. Le Conte Stevens says that if we accept the nebular hypothesis then we can understand that the evolution of the earth and other planets has taken place through ages from the primordial nebulous matter diffused in space at a temperature as low as that now pervading interplanetary space, several hundred degrees lower than that of our coldest winter weather. In this ocean of nebulous matter "If a single point is denser than the surrounding matter, then it becomes the centre of attraction."[1] The aggregation of matter involves the arrest of motion—for particles moving toward the centre are there stopped, but their energy is not destroyed. Mass motion is changed into that motion of molecules which is manifested as temperature.

"The greater the aggregation, the higher is the resulting temperature. Radiation also begins as soon as temperature is raised, but the rates of increase and

1. This reminds one of the *Sânkhya* theory that evolution begins when the balance of the properties of matter is disturbed on account of the unequal density in some part of the *Prakriti*.

loss of heat are not necessarily the same. The ill-defined mass of gas would gradually become viscous, until a condition of solidity would be reached, most probably at the centre. We have thus great central density with intense heat; around this the solid passes by insensible gradations into a viscous, tarry envelope, almost equally hot; this in turn as we pass outward becomes less viscous, until a condition is reached like the average of what we now call liquids; but differing in this respect that at first there is no well defined boundary between it and the densely gaseous materials which surround it."[2] As the temperature falls by the radiation of heat, the gaseous state changes into liquid. Through the loss of heat and chemical association liquid gradually changes into solid.[3] Thus we see how closely Prof. Stevens' theory coincides with the theory of evolution as described by the Hindu philosophers. These ancient evolutionists in India applied the doctrine of evolution to every phenomenon, and explained how, from a minute germ of life, a human being is evolved. They understood that the difference between man and lower animals is only one of degree, and not of kind. They said that each germ of life is indestructible, like matter and force, and before it appears as a man it passes through all the various stages of evolution of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdom. It is for this reason the Hindus object to the killing of animals for food or pleasure The Hindu evolutionists differ from the modern scientists in their belief in the continuity of

2. Cf. Dr. Lewis G. Janes; *Evolution of the Earth*, p. 105.
3. Cf. Dr. Jeaus: *The Universe Around Us*, (1933), p. 349; *The Stars in Their Courses*, p. 133.

each germ of life from lower to higher. But the tendency of modern science is to find out whether the continuity of the germ of life is a fact. Thus having explained the process of the cosmic evolution, they wanted to know whether or not the process of evolution has any purpose behind it. Before referring to the answer which the philosophers in India gave to that question, let us see whether a similar problem has arisen in the minds of modern evolutionists, and what they say about it. It is a question of vital importance. On the solution of this problem depends the explanation of the purpose of our earthly existence, and the foundation of ethics and religion. If we are mere freaks of nature and have come into existence by chance or accident, then there is no necessity for acquiring knowledge, and there is no need of ethical or religious life. There is no utility in virtue. If we are led by the blind forces of environments to struggle for our bare existence, which at the highest can last only a few score years, why should not we destroy everything, if by so doing we can live comfortably and obtain pleasure and happiness? If there be no purpose behind the process of evolution why is there so much variety in the manifestations? Why should there be any such thing as evolution in the cosmic process of phenomena? An agnostic will answer by saying, I do not know. Can a real seeker of Truth be contented with such an answer and enjoy life like an ignorant child? Under the present conditions of our mind and understanding we do not know many things; shall we therefore deny the existence of such objects? If we ask a child about the law of gravitation, it will answer, I do not know. Will anybody take it for granted

that there is no such thing as the law of gravitation because the child does not know it or understand it? Certainly not. If we ask an uncultivated man or an orthodox believer in the creation story of Genesis whether he understands or believes in the cosmic process of evolution, he will answer, no. Will it not be simply an expression of his ignorance? Similarly if an agnostic says, I do not know whether there is any purpose at the back of the cosmic evolution, we shall place him on the same level with an ignorant child, or with an uncultivated orthodox believer in a dogma. He may be cultivated in many ways, but as regards our problem he is no more than a child in search after truth.

Leaving the unsatisfactory answers of agnostics, let us see what the best thinkers of the present day say about the purpose of evolution. Most of the modern evolutionists believe that the struggle for existence, natural selection and the survival of the fittest are the principal agencies in the process of evolution. John Fiske, one of the foremost evolutionists that America has produced, says: "In the cosmic process of evolution, whereof our individual lives are part and parcel, there are other agencies at work besides natural selection, and the story of the struggle for existence is far from being the whole story." "I think it can be shown that the principles of morality have their roots in the deepest foundations of the universe, that the cosmic process is ethical in the profoundest sense."[1] "Again," he says, "the ethical process is not only part and parcel of the

1. John Fiske; *Through Nature to God*, pp. 79, 80.

cosmic process, but it is its crown and consummation."[2] Toward the spiritual perfection of Humanity the stupendous momentum of the cosmic process has all along been tending. That spiritual perfection is the true goal of evolution, the divine end that was involved in the beginning. When Huxley asks us to believe that 'the cosmic process has no sort of relation to moral ends,' I feel like replying with the question: 'Does not the cosmic process exist purely for the sake of moral ends?' Subtract from the universe its ethical meaning, and nothing remains but an unreal phantom, the figment of false metaphysics." Thus we see that the ultimate goal and purpose of evolution, according to John Fiske, is the perfection of the ethical and spiritual nature of man. What does this writer mean by spiritual perfection? He says: "The ultimate goal of the ethical process is the perfecting of human character."[3] Again, he says: "Thus while the earth Spirit goes on, unhasting, yet unresting, weaving in the loom of Time the visible garments of God, we begin to see that even what look like failures and blemishes have been from the outset involved in that accomplishment of the all wise and all holy purpose, the perfecting of the spiritual man in the likeness of his Heavenly Father."[4]

Now let us see what the Hindu philosophers say regarding the purpose of evolution. According to them the purpose of the cosmic evolution of *Prakriti* is the final liberation of *Purusa* or the real Spirit of man from the bondages of ignorance, imperfection and

2. *Ibid*, p. 113.
3. Cf. J. Fiske: *Through Nature to God*, p. 114.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

selfishness, and the attainment of perfect freedom, which is another word for perfection. As long as we are bound by certain conditions, whether mental or physical, we are not free.

If we study closely the process of evolution we find that there is an expression of this purpose in the evolution of the animal form. It attains to perfection on this earth under present conditions when the human form is produced. The evolution of the animal form fulfils its purpose when it reaches the human form. There cannot be any form higher than human on this earth under existing environments. If conditions change human form will also change. If the temperature of the earth be higher or lower than it now is, it will be impossible for human beings to live; but some other animals, suited for that higher or lower temperature, will be able to exist. We need a particular kind of temperature for our existence, in which the human form can thrive. Nature produces the environmental conditions first, and then brings out the invisible germs of life, and gives them suitable forms so that each one will manifest the powers which are latent in it. In animals we do not find expressions of that moral power, spiritual power, which the human organism is alone fitted to express. Human form and organism is the only one suitable for the manifestation of higher love, self-sacrifice and self-control. The animal nature can be controlled by man alone. If the human body be the perfection of animal form, and if the laws of nature be uniform, can we not say perfection is the goal of evolution? Has not the evolution of animal form stopped after producing human form? The purpose of the

evolution of form is fulfilled by the production of the perfected organism of man, the highest of the animal kingdom. The germ of life has had to struggle hard in order to manifest as a human being. This has been described in the very common saying in Sanskrit: "It is extremely hard for lower animals to be born as a human being," because nature takes a long time in evoluting the higher and most complicated organism of man. *Man alone is entitled to be called an ethical or moral or spiritual animal.* From the animal plane we are rising through the moral into the spiritual plane. The animal plane is that of a narrow and limited consciousness of the lower self—where the animal identifies himself with his body and thinks of himself as exclusive of others. From the animal plane we are evoluting through moral into the spiritual plane. The less the expression of lower self there is, the higher we rise above the animal plane. When we recognize the self of others, seek their comfort and help them, then we are on the plane called human. This is the beginning of moral life. Then we recognize the rights of others as we do our own. This is expressed by the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." The best expression of this moral law we find in the saying of Jesus, the Christ: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." When we begin to love others as we love our own Self we are truly ethical. Then we do not think that we have fulfilled the highest end and aim of life by eating, drinking and begetting children like lower animals, but that the fulfilment of the purpose of life consists in loving others as we love our own Self. *Then we obtain true freedom from the bondage of*

selfishness. That freedom can be acquired through a higher form of love of the real Self of others. Again, that real unselfish love is possible when we realize our true nature, and, therefore, it depends upon knowledge of our true nature. Each individual soul, according to the Hindu philosophers, is bound to become perfect, free and unselfish. The soul then reaches the plane of spirituality. A man may be moral without being spiritual, but a spiritual man can never be immoral. Some people say moral life is not necessary for spirituality. They are mistaken. They, perhaps, mean by spirituality something different from what the great spiritual teachers of the world meant. *Spirituality consists in the perfection of morality.* So, each individual soul must attain moral perfection before it is called spiritual. The Hindu philosophers do not believe that one should be moral for fear of eternal punishment, but through the natural process of evolution. When spirituality is perfectly acquired, the soul realizes its Divine nature and manifests divinity at every moment of its earthly existence. Then, and then alone, the purpose of evolution is fulfilled. We are all bound to reach that stage of spiritual perfection which is the ultimate goal of evolution. Therefore, it is said in the *Bhagavad Gitâ*: "He who realizes his divine nature conquers all the stages of evolution, acquires all happiness which can be obtained in the highest heaven, becomes free from all imperfections and enjoys eternal bliss in this life."

CHAPTER IX

PHILOSOPHY OF GOOD AND EVIL

"Good and evil of this world of duality are unreal, are spoken of by words, and exist only in the mind."—*Bhâgavatam, XI, ch. XXVII.*
"He who is devoted to higher knowledge rises above both good and evil."—*Bhagavad Gitâ, ch. II, v. 50.*

Whosoever has made a careful study of the phenomena of the universe, has noticed that nature is bisected, as it were, by the inevitable dualism of her opposing forces. The world of phenomena bears testimony to the constant fight of these two sets of contrasting forces, which have a multitude of designations, such as: good and evil, virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, heat and cold, attraction and repulsion, love and hatred, pleasure and pain, health and disease, life and death. On the one side, we see about us the signs of goodness, virtue, knowledge, love, self-sacrifice, health and all that makes life sweet and worth living; on the other side we find the expressions of evil, vice, ignorance, hatred, selfishness, murder, pestilence, disease, plague, earthquake, and all that makes life bitter, unhappy and miserable. Nature stands before us, as it were, with a benign and loving expression, ever ready to pour on our heads the blessings and comforts which she holds in one hand, while at the same time she affrights us by showing the sharp, shining edge of the drawn sword of destruction and evil which she holds in her other hand. This dual aspect in nature cannot be denied, and we are all bound to experience one or the other of these two sides at every moment of our

earthly existence. Whenever we experience the good side of nature, we rejoice and feel ourselves extremely happy; but our heart trembles, our breath stops, when we are face to face with the other aspect. Nature has ever been expressing herself in these two ways. What we see to-day was seen thousands of years ago and will be seen thousands of years hence. Centuries have gone by, nation after nation has passed away, but has nature ever ceased to follow her course? No. Her laws are perennial; her course is eternal. If we read the histories of ancient nations, we see that these two aspects of nature were as clearly manifested in the past as they are now. Constant attempts have been made to trace the causes of these contrasting forces and contradictory events of the phenomenal world. The best thinkers and philosophers of every age and clime have devoted their energies most earnestly and enthusiastically to the solution of the mystery of the good and evil aspects of nature, and to tracing how this dualism began and what was its cause. All the religious systems and philosophies of the world are but so many attempts of the human mind to reach the proper solution of this problem of good and evil, and to discover why such a thing as evil exists, why there is so much misery, suffering, crime and vice about us, and how these can be annihilated.

All such attempts and explanations can be classified under three names; first, optimistic; secondly, pessimistic; and thirdly, monistic. We find the most ancient of the optimistic explanations of the dual aspect of nature in the Zendavesta, the scriptures of the ancient Persians, or Iranians. These ancient Persian

optimists looked at the good and evil forces of nature as two entities eternally separate from each other, and believed that they were created by two distinct beings, or spirits. The one was called Ahura Mazda, the creator of all good that exists in the universe. The other was called Ahriman, the creator of all evil. The one half of the universe was created by the good God Ahura Mazda, who is omniscient, all-powerful, and governor of all good thoughts and ideas, and of everything that is good in the universe; while the other half, and all that is evil, was created by Ahriman, the evil spirit.

At first these two spirits were friendly and lived together, but afterwards Ahriman separated from Ahura Mazda, rebelled against him, and acted as his constant adversary. When the good God, Ahura Mazda, created the world and made it good in every way, the malicious Ahriman, who is described as a wily serpent, showed his power and tricks by sowing the seeds of sin and evil in the beautiful creation of Ahura Mazda. Although he was punished by Ahura Mazda, he did not stop fighting with his most powerful enemy. This fight will continue until the day of judgment and the renovation of the world, when the victory of good over evil will be completed then Ahura Mazda will create another and better world, free from sin and evil. Ahura Mazda has several good spirits, or angels under his command; Ahriman also has many evil spirits as his attendants. Both are working through their attendants. Such is the explanation of the cause of good and evil in the Persian scriptures, the Zendavesta.

This Persian idea of the two separate creators of good and evil was adopted by the ancient Jews during the Babylonian captivity, which lasted from 536 to 333 B.C. The Persian paradise, Aryana Vaëjo, became the Garden of Eden in the Old Testament; Elohim Yahveh, the tribal god of the house of Israël, became the creator of good and of the universe; while Satan, the old time servant of Yahveh, was endowed with the wicked and malicious spirit of Ahriman, and afterwards became the devil in the New Testament. It was at this time that the ancient Hebrews received from the Persians the ideas of heaven and hell, of angels and bright spirits. They accepted the Persian belief in punishment after death and in the resurrection of the spiritual body, as well as in the supernatural Saviour of the world. Thus we can trace the origin of the mythological explanation regarding the cause of good and evil as described in the Scriptures of the Hebrews, Christians, and Mahommedans. The same ideas of reward and punishment, of good and evil, prevail amongst the Mahommedans, who believe in the Old Testament as much as do the Christians and Hebrews. The idea that good and evil are the results of two distinct and eternally separate causes pervades many of the sayings of Jesus, the Christ, as, for instance: A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."[1] By this simile Jesus, the Christ not only separated the cause of good from that of evil, but he indicated that evil can never produce good, nor good, evil. He also described the punishment of evil when he said: "Every

1. Vide Mathu, VII, 18.

tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."[2]

According to the synoptic gospels, as they have been handed down to us, Jesus believed that the punishment of evil is the casting of the evil-doer into fire. This idea gradually developed into the hell-fire doctrine of Christian theology. Jesus also believed in devils, when he cast them out, as well as in Satan, the creator of all evils, and Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and in their attendants.[3] Moreover, he believed that he cast out devils by the spirit of God, thus proclaiming that God, who is all-good, can never produce any evil.

According to the New Testament, all diseases, sorrows, suffering, misery, crime, sin and all that is evil, are the works of Satan, or the evil spirit. Satan, in the New Testament, is a personage of great importance, as he is the cause of the numberless and immeasurable evils which exist in the world. He is the prince, or ruler of this world.[4] In short, he is the pillar of the systems of Mazdaism, Judaism, Christianity and Mahommedanism. If that prominent pillar were taken away the whole world of evil would remain causeless and unaccounted for. Although, ever since the beginning of the Christian era, the Biblical explanation of the cause of good and evil has been accepted and preached by the priests and theologians of Christendom, yet the majority of minds have never stopped to ask the question, why does the good God, who is the Creator of the world, at once omnipotent, omniscient and all-merci-

2. *Ibid.*, VII, 19.
3. *Ibid.*, XII, 26, 27.
4. *John*, XII, 31.

ful, permit Satan to tempt mankind, to bring evil into the world, and to spoil the goodness and purity of His beautiful creation? That question, however, is of vital importance. The solution of this problem has been sought for again and again, and the Christian theologians, up to this day, have failed to give any satisfactory answer. All their attempts have ended in making the good God either limited in power, partial, unjust, or cruel. Some of the Hebrew prophets, however, believed that God was the creator of evil as well as of good. "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."[1] Again Nehemiah said, "Did not our God bring all this evil upon us?"[2]

This idea was afterwards accepted by the Calvinists of the seventeenth century. They believed that God was responsible for the good and evil of the world, otherwise He would be limited in power. By attempting to solve the problem in this way they left God partial and unjust. St. Augustine tried to solve the question of good and evil by formulating the dogma of predestination and grace. This was no better than the solution offered later by Calvin. Instead of tracing the cause of good and evil, it made the great God unjust and merciless in relation to suffering humanity. Why should one man be predestined to suffer and another to enjoy? The doctrine of predestination does not give us any reason. Such explanations have made many a thinker an unbeliever in God and pessimistic in his

1. Isaiah , XLV, 6, 7.
2. *Nehemiah*, XIII, 18.

views. Many a soul, saddened by the spectacle of wickedness and suffering in the world has cried aloud in despair: "There is no God who can be called merciful, just and loving."

From the time of the Gnostics of the Middle Ages, who believed that this world was originally created, not by the good God, but by a devil, and that it is to be slowly and gradually purified by the power of the merciful God through Jesus, the Christ, down to the present day, there have been many free-thinkers who have held that the creator of the world is not an all-merciful and just God, but a being with a diabolical nature. August Comte, the most prominent of the modern free-thinkers, after seeing the imperfection of this world, regretted, like Alfonso, the King of Castile, that he had not been present at the time of the creation, as he could have given such excellent advice to the creator!

Another class of optimists say it is true that this world is full of sorrow, suffering and misery, but it is the best world that God could create. Let us shut our eyes to evil, which can never be avoided as long as the present conditions exist, and make the best use of our time, because matter, by its inherent nature, possesses a diabolical character of its own. A similar opinion was held by Plato, Leibnitz, Dr. Martineau, and other optimists of this class. There are other optimistic thinkers who deny the existence of evil in the creation of a just, merciful and good God. They say it is all good, there cannot be any evil. They try to see good everywhere and in every act, and declare that all sufferings, misery and hardships are for our good. If any

blow comes to us, it is for our good. Everything is for our good, and must be so, because the nature of creation is inherently good. They deny the creation of evil, and explain that good is a positive reality, and that what we call evil is only a negation of good. Good predominates in the world although we may not see it at present in all cases. Thus, instead of tracing the cause of evil, they deny it and shut their eyes to it. This kind of optimism is one extreme; pessimistic thinkers, on the contrary, go to another extreme. They make evil a positive reality, and good a negation of evil. They make destruction, death and misery the goal of the universe and deny the existence of good. They say that suffering and misery are the conditions of our existence, that pleasure and happiness come accidentally. The struggle for our existence involves some kind of suffering which we cannot avoid. If all our wishes be fulfilled the moment they arise in our minds, then how shall we spend our time? How shall we occupy our lives? There would be no struggle for existence, consequently no activity, no life. As the human frame will be rent into pieces if the weight of the atmospheric pressure which we are unconsciously carrying all the time be removed, so according to the pessimistic theory, the lives of men will fail of their purpose and end if they are relieved from the burden of need, hardship, adversity and evil. There is no way of avoiding this except by death. Life is not worth living according to these pessimists. They do not see any good in life. They must find evil everywhere. The best way of escaping evil is by committing suicide. They do not believe in the idea that a creator who is merciful, just and all-good, created this world

of misery, suffering, sorrow and evil. They do not say who created it. Thus the pessimistic explanation leads to another extreme, and does not satisfy any rationalistic mind.

A better explanation of the cause of good and evil is needed. But if the optimists are justified in seeing good in everything, and in saying that God created this world for our pleasure and happiness, the pessimists are equally justified in seeing evil in everything and in saying that God created this world for the suffering and misery of millions. The true explanation lies neither in optimism nor in pessimism. They are the two extremes. As long as the idea of the special creation of the world by an extra-cosmic personal God is preached, so long the true philosophy of good and evil will not be properly understood. In the West, people are beginning to wake up from the sleep of superstition and prejudice, and to see, through science and logic, that there cannot be two separate creators of good and evil who are constantly fighting against each other, nor two forces of nature; but that all the phenomena of nature are but the expressions of one eternal Energy. The whole universe is the result of the evolution of that one Energy. Nature is one, and not two.

The theory of the creators of good and evil is supplanted by the doctrine of evolution. Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, with their many names, such as Jehovah, Satan, Devil and others, having played their parts for centuries on the stage of the universe, are now slowly withdrawing themselves into oblivion. The idea of a

special creation at a definite time, has been followed by that of a gradual process of evolution extending through millions of years, in which extra-cosmic creators have neither part nor share. To a scientific mind the Garden of Eden has no attraction of any kind, it has become like a fool's paradise. The fall of man is no longer a reality, but a mythological story. Thoughtful men and women of Western countries who believe in the doctrine of evolution are just beginning to unlearn the scriptural dogmas. The time has come when people are applying logic and reason in solving the problem of good and evil. The tendency of scientific researches and investigations is to discover the unity of nature, which underlies the apparent duality of the opposing forces, and to explain the variety of phenomena through that underlying unity. In India, this unity of nature was understood by the monistic thinkers and Vedânta philosophers many centuries before the birth of Christ. These monistic thinkers understood from the beginning that this world was not created at a special time by a special being, and aided by logic and reason they came to believe in the doctrine of evolution.

In the voluminous writings of the Hindu sages there is no word which means a creation out of nothing. The word they use literally means *projection,* answering to the modern idea of evolution. Unlike the Western people of to-day, they had nothing to unlearn, as they had slowly and gradually discovered the true cause of good and evil, and afterwards explained their mutual relation as clearly as possible. They said that *good and evil are relative terms, one of which cannot exist*

without the other. What we call *good* depends upon the existence of what we call *evil*, and evil exists only in relation to good. Being interdependent terms they cannot be separated. In trying to separate them and to make each stand by itself as independent of the other, we not only destroy their relative and interdependent nature, but we destroy the terms themselves. The moment you try to separate good from evil you find this to be true. Evil cannot exist alone. If you try to make evil stand by itself as entirely separate from good, you can no longer recognize it as evil. Consequently, according to the Vedânta philosophers, the difference between good and evil is not one of kind, but of degree, like the difference between light and darkness. Again, the same thing can appear as good and as evil under different circumstances. That which appears as good in one case, may appear as evil if the conditions change and the results be different. The same fire may be called a giver of life and comfort, a bestower of happiness and a producer of good when it saves the life of a half-frozen man or when it gives us warmth in the coldest days of winter, or when it cooks our food, or guides our feet; but it will be called the producer of evil and a curse of God when it destroys life, or inflicts injury on man, or on his property. Still, the nature of fire is to burn, and this nature does not change. The great London fire destroyed many lives, brought ruin and destruction to many families, but at the same time it destroyed the germs of a plague which would have done more evil. So, it was both good and evil at the same time. The same force of gravitation is called good when it attracts the molecules of our bodies and

keeps together the atoms of our clothes, gives shape to our houses, our bodies, and this earth where we are now living, but it is the producer of evil when it kills a man who falls from the roof of a house. Electricity is good when it gives light, moves a street car, cures a pain, or relieves a disease, but it is evil when it crushes a man under the shock of its tremendous currents. As electricity, it is neither good nor evil, neither positive nor negative, and the other forces of nature are neither good nor evil, but their expressions may be called good or evil according to the results they produce. The forces of nature are running in the universe with tremendous activity and mad rush, like the currents of a mighty river which brings what we call good and blessings on one shore, and evil and destruction on the other. As, standing on one shore where good prevails, we say the river is very good, it is the producer of good, etc., so, standing on the other shore, we call the same river a producer of evil, a creator of destruction. Similarly, we say the forces of nature are good or evil according to our standard, our ideas and our interests. On the one hand, the river fertilizes the country by depositing rich soil and helping the growth of vegetation; on the other hand, the same river destroys villages and all that stands in its way.

Good and evil *exist in our minds.* That which fulfils our interests is called *good,* and that which brings to us misery or anything which we do not want, is called *evil.* When we look at the phenomena of nature by piecemeal, without recognizing their connection, we do not get the proper explanation of events. But if we look at the same phenomena as related to one another and to the

whole universe, then we discover the true explanation, and we are no longer puzzled. Then the proper cause of good and evil is understood. *It is limitation, the inability to recognize the relation of the part to the whole.* According to the monistic philosophers of India, it is impossible to find anything absolutely good, or absolutely evil in this world of relativity. That which we call good is only one phase and the other is evil. When we ignore the one phase, we see the other phase as along. The same event may produce evil in one country and good in another. The famine in India killed millions by starvation, but it made the American farmers richer than ever before. The famine has done evil in India, but good in America. This is true in every case. Our life, which is a great blessing to us, depends upon the life of others. The maintenance of our life causes thousands to die. Millions of lower animals are killed every day for our food. Each stomach has become a cemetery and each tooth a tombstone. When one man murders another, his motive is to do good to himself or to his family, or to society, or to fulfil some purpose which he considers good. The murderer may believe that he does some good to somebody, but, as he takes a wrong course of action, he is called a murderer and gets no sympathy from anybody, and is punished by society and the State. When a big murderer, however, comes from the battle-field after committing hundreds of murders to possess another's territory, we praise him and honour him and call him the greatest hero, and reward him. But if we analyze the nature of the work he has done, we find that he has committed many murders to serve his country. As the

murderer of multitudes is supposed to do good to his country, so possibly the man who kills but one person may do some good somewhere, although we may not recognize it as such. Our intellect is short-sighted, therefore we cannot always see the true results of our actions. As we cannot draw a sharp line of demarcation between the good and evil results of the physical forces of nature and cannot say that this is good and good alone, so we cannot separate the good and evil results of our moral acts. That which is morally good in one case may be evil in another. As, for instance, the commandment of God is supposed to be a moral good, and beneficial to all. Think of the command which God gave to Saul: "Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass."[1] We call it a good act because God did it, but if one man commands another to do such a horrible deed what will you call him? Such is our judgment. We say many things without knowing why we say them. Let us open our eyes and see how far good goes and how it is mixed with evil. Every act which we do must be backed by a motive, that motive again is for the good of some or for the evil of some. We may, or may not, understand it, but the results of our acts are always mixed with good and evil. Take, for instance, the nearest example. I am talking to you. Perhaps I am doing some good. At least, I intend to do so. But at the same time I am causing the death of millions of microbes. It may be good to me, or to you, but the poor animalculæ would not call it good. When

1. Samuel, XV, 3.

we see the results of this act from our standpoint we call it *good,* but if we were to look at it from the microbes' standpoint it would appear quite different, they would doubtless call it *evil.* If we judge everything from our standpoint, we can never know whether it is really good or evil, *because our standard is limited and imperfect.* Those who do not recognize the results of acts from different standpoints are liable to all kinds of error. If I judge the whole universe by my standard, my judgment will be very poor. But when I look at things from the various standpoints, I can understand how the same event can produce good and evil in relation to different conditions. *Every mistake we make becomes a great teacher in the long run.* Thus evil has its good, and good has its evil side. Therefore, good and evil go hand in hand. But ordinarily, wherever we find a preponderance of good over evil we designate it good, and the opposite as evil. Again, that which is sinful to one may be virtuous to another. Consider the different standards of sin among the Mahommedans, the Mormons and the Christians. Compare the scriptures of the world and see how what is a virtue in the Old Testament is a vice to men who believe in other scriptures. If polygamy is a sin according to the Christians, it is a virtue with the Mahommedans and Mormons, and was such with the ancient Jews. That which is good for some persons, as inculcated by their religion, may be evil to others living under a different dispensation.

Thus, we cannot draw a sharp line between good and evil. Punishment and reward, according to the Vedânta philosophy, *are but the reactions of our own actions.*

It says that every action must have a similar reaction. If the action be good, the reaction must be the same. Vedânta philosophy says: "Every action, whether backed by good or bad motives is covered with its opposite, as fire is enveloped with smoke." If we examine our own lives we will notice that good often comes out of evil. If the greater number of personal misfortunes have their good side, hardly any good fortune ever befell any one which did not give, either to the same or to some other person, something to regret.

The Vedânta philosophers try to explain the socalled punishment and reward *by referring to the law of cause and sequence, the law of action and reaction.* Action and reaction are opposite and equal, says physical law. When we do certain acts we are sure to reap certain results. But, if the results come before we have forgotten the causes which brought them, we call them either rewards, or punishments. If a good act is done to-day, the result may come at once, or after many years. *God never punishes the wicked, nor rewards the virtuous. He shines like the impartial sun equally upon the heads of sages and sinners. It is our own acts that bring the results, either in the form of reward or punishment.* When we understand clearly the law of cause and sequence, and of action and reaction, then we cease to blame God or any other extra-cosmic creator of evil. Then we do not say that evil has been interpolated from without. If we know that all the forces of nature, both physical and mental, are but so many expressions of one eternal Energy (*Prakriti*) or Divine Will, *which is far beyond the relative good and evil,* then we do not see good and evil in the

universe, but, on the contrary, we find everywhere the expression of that Divine Will. The nature of an effect must be the same as that of the cause, because *effect is nothing but the manifested state of the cause,* and if the cause of the universe be one eternal, divine Energy, then the universe, as a whole, can be neither good nor evil.

When we can throw aside the narrow, limited glass of our *relative standard,* through which we are now looking at the events of life and put on our mental eye the glass of Divine Energy or universal Will, then we shall no longer see good and evil, virtue and vice, or reward and punishment. But we shall see the expression of one law of causation everywhere. Then we shall not blame our parents, or Satan, or God or anybody, but shall understand that all our misery *is but the result of our own acts which we did in this life or in a past incarnation.* If we understand that as electricity is neither positive nor negative, but appears as positive or negative when manifested through a magnet, we can apprehend that the laws of nature only appear to us as good or evil when they express themselves through the gigantic magnet of the phenomenal universe. If we realize that the eternal Energy, or the Divine Will, appears as good or evil only as related to our minds and lives, then we can say, as the great sages in India said: "God does not create good or evil, nor does He take the virtue or sin of anybody. He does not punish the wicked or reward the virtuous. Our intelligence being covered, as it were, with the cloud of ignorance and relativity, deluded as we are, we imagine, on account of our imperfect understanding, that God

creates good or evil, that His creation is good or evil, that He punishes or rewards." It is through our ignorance of Truth that we do not recognize the Divinity which pervades the universe, *standing high above the reach of our conception of good and evil.*

Let us strive to see the Divinity, *by going behind the phenomenal appearances* of good and evil. Let us go to the Eternal source of all phenomena. Let us first reach the highest plane of spiritual oneness, and standing on that Divine Will, let us understand that good and evil *are two aspects of one eternal Substance which is neither good nor evil,* but the Absolute or *Brahman.* Then, and then alone, we shall transcend good and evil and enjoy eternal Bliss in this life.

CHAPTER X

WORD AND CROSS IN ANCIENT INDIA

"The Word was *Brahman*" (or The Absolute.)—*Bri. Upanishad.*

"He who exists by Himself let first stream forth the Word, the Eternal, without beginning or end, the Divine Word which we read in the Veda, whence proceeded the evolution of the world."—*Mahâbhârata.*

Since the beginning of the Christian era the followers of Christ have popularised the two great sacred symbols of the ancient Aryans—the Word or the Son of God, and the Cross. Although these two symbols were unknown amongst the Semitic races, especially the ancient Hebrews, yet they were known to the pre-Christian Greek philosophers as well as to the Aryan philosophers and thinkers who lived in ancient India.

The conception that the Word was the only begotten Son of the Father, the First-born, or the Son of God, was rooted deep in the abstruse philosophical speculations of the Aryan minds who tried to bridge over the gulf that exists between the visible and the invisible, between the phenomenal and the noumenal, between the individual soul of man and God the Creator of all. The Aryan seekers after the ultimate cause of the universe and the true relation of soul to God advanced many theories to explain the apparent separation between the Creator and the the created between God and the soul of man; and made various attempts to discover the means by which the two can be brought together in closer union and by which the soul of man will return to its Creator.

In ancient Judaism, however, the conception of Jehovah was so objective, so far from the universe, so majestic and so high that the idea of union between the individual soul and Jehovah or even its approach to His throne was considered to be blasphemous, and insulting to Jehovah the Supreme Diety. The result of this conception was that the idea of the sonship of man, or of the Word, never took any hold upon the ancient Semitic minds. The superficial readers of the Old Testament may find some vague expressions of the idea of sonship of man in such passages as: "Ye are the children of the Lord your God;"[1] or in the passage where Moses says: "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful and hast forgotten God that formed thee"[2] or when he asks: "Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?[3] [6] In whatever manner the Christian theologians might interpret such passages they never meant the same idea of the father-hood of God, or the sonship of man, or of the Word or of the Christ which pervades the Fourth Gospel. Moses meant nothing more than the fatherly goodness of the Creator. Through the paternal goodness of Elohim Yahveh, Abraham became the friend of God. A similar meaning lies behind the passage where Adam is described, once only in the New Testament, as the Son of God.

The deep philosophical meaning which is connected with the first verse of the Fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the

1. Cf. Deut., XIV, 1.
2. Ibid., XXXII, 18.
3. Ibid., XXXII, 6.

Word was God," was never expressed before by any of the writers either of the New or of the Old Testaments. Some of the Christian theologians have tried to trace the origin of the meaning of the Divine Word as given in the Fourth Gospel to certain expressions of some Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament. For instance, they refer to the passage: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."[4] Some again refer to another passage: "He sent his word and healed them.[5] In these and similar other passages "word" does not stand for any other meaning than simple commandment, as we find in the verse: "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth; his word runneth very swiftly."[6] Thus we can understand that in the Jewish Scriptures there is no historical antecedent of the idea of the Divine Word as the Son of God which is described by the writer of the Fourth Gospel in the first verse of the first chapter.

The Oriental scholars are unanimous in their opinion that the writer of the Fourth Gospel was a follower of Philo, the reformed Jewish philosopher, who was a contemporary of Jesus and who lived in Alexandria from B.C. 20 to 60 A.D., but never heard of Jesus. The writings of Philo Judeas abound in passages which show that he was a student of Greek philosophy and that he adopted the Greek conception of the Word, or the only-begotten Son of God, as explained by the Stoic philosophers of the pre-Christian

4. Cf. Psalm, XXXIII, 6.
5. Ibid., CVII, 20.
6. Ibid., CXLVII, 15.

era. It was through Philo that the Greek conception of the Divine Word was introduced amongst the thoughtful class of the Jews then living in Alexandria, and was afterwards identified with Jesus, the Christ by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, and was later accepted by Christians generally. Alexandria was in those days the principal centre of education and culture, where Jewish, Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist philosophers met and interchanged thoughts and religious ideas. The Greek philosophers called the Divine Word *Logos*. Logos is a Greek word which meant at first simply word, not as a mere sound, but as thought embodied in sound. The theory of the Logos first originated with Heraclitus, one of the earliest Greek philosophers who lived from 500 to 440 B.C. Although he believed that fire was the primitive element of the phenomenal universe, still he postulated some power, force, or law which controlled the material element fire. He called that power Logos, that is, reason or order. Though the theory of the Logos,—that reason, or order, was the primal cause of the Cosmos, originated in Greece with Heraclitus, yet it did not develop in meaning until the time of the Stoics. The Stoic philosophers believed that Logos, or Supreme Reason, or God, pervaded all matter. It was not only the Creator of all things but controller and ruler also. The Stoic philosophers held that the Logos was universal and eternal and that the human soul possessed a portion of the universal Logos and therefore man had a share of intelligence and reason. They believed that word, or speech, was the manifestation of Reason, or thought, which would remain as non-existent for us, without the power of

speech. This Logos became the medium through which the transcendent Cause of the universe was related to the phenomenal world. It was like the bridge between God and the world. Philo's mind, which was seeking some explanation for the relation between Jehovah and the world, adopted the Stoic explanation and the theory of the Logos.

In Philo's hands the theory of the Logos gradually developed in its meaning. By Logos he wished to express not merely word, but the thought, or idea of which word or speech is but the manifestation. As the audible or perceptible sound of a word is the expression of an imperceptible thought or idea, so the visible universe is the expression of the ideal universe, or the universe in a thought form existing in the Divine mind. This ideal creation, or concept of the universe, or type of the universe in the Divine mind was the Logos, and it was called by Philo the only-begotten Son, or unique Son. Philo always used the only-begotten Son in its philosophical sense, that is, as the Thought of God, made visible in the world either by creation or projection, but there is nothing in his writings to show that he ever personified the Logos. These terms, more or less poetical with Philo, became afterwards most technical when the Logos was identified with Christ by the writer of the Fourth Gospel. The author of this gospel did not identify the Logos with Jesus of Nazareth, who was son of Mary, but with Christ the incarnation of the ideal man, the perfect type of man which existed in the Divine mind from the beginning. As the Logos was the only-begotten son of God according to Philo, who never heard of Jesus the Christ, so

it was with his disciples. The author of the Fourth Gospel, believing in Jesus as the perfect type of man, gave him all the predicates of the Logos and described him as the Son of God.

Some scholars are of opinion that this meaning which was given to the Logos or word by Philo and the Neo-Platonists of later date was the result of the influence of the Hindu philosophers who lived in Alexandria and Greece about the time of Alexander the Great, 333 B.C. This has been supported by the writings of Eusebius, who quotes a work on Platonic philosophy by Aristotles, who states therein on the authority of Aristoxenes, a pupil of Aristotle, that an Indian philosopher came to Athens and had a discussion with Socrates. When Socrates told him that his philosophy consisted in inquiries about the life of man, the Indian philosopher is said to have smiled, and to have replied that no one could understand things human who did not understand things divine.[1]

In the most ancient writings of the Hindus, the Vedas, we find the idea of Logos most clearly expressed. There are many Sanskrit words used in the Vedas which signify that Divinity is the Lord of Speech, or word, the Lord of thought and reason, or Logos. For instance, *Brihaspati* is a Sanskrit compound word which we read often in the Vedas. *Brihas* comes from the Sanskrit root verb *Brih* or *Barh,* meaning to break forth or drive forth; from the same root Latin *Verbum* and English *Word* can be derived; and *Pati* means lord or husband owner. Therefore, *Brihaspati* means

1. Cf. Max Müller: *Theosophy or Psychological Religion,* pp. 83-84.

the Lord or Father of word. A synonym of Brihaspati is the Sanskrit *Vâchaspati—Vachas* or Vak (the same as Vox) means word. So *Vâchaspati* also means the Lord or Father of word, or speech. In Brihadâranyaka Upanishad we read *'Vâk vai Brahma,'*—"The word was *Brahman,* or the Absolute." Again, it is stated that "That, of which these things are born, by which when born they live, and into which they return and enter death, or dissolution, is *Brahman.*" "He with his mind united himself with his word".[2] "In the beginning, divine *Vâk,* or Word eternal, without beginning or end, consisting of wisdom, was uttered by the self-existent One from which all activities proceeded." "In the beginning the Lord of the universe shaped from the words the names and forms of all beings, and the procedure of all activities".[3] In one of the ancient writings of the Hindus we read: "I know that great self-effulgent Being who thought all forms and made their names".[4] "He desired let a second body be born of me and embraced word with his mind".[5] "All things that can be thought of had their beginning in word, or the eternal concept in the Divine mind." Again, in the *Mahâbhârata* we read: "He who exists by himself let first stream forth the Word, the eternal without beginning or end, the Divine Word which we read in the Veda, whence proceeded the evolution of the world." The Hindus believe that the phenomena of the world exist because they are in the Veda. The word *Veda*

2. *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad.*
3. Smriti.
4. *Taittiriya Aranyaka,* III., 12, 17.
5. *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad,* I, 1, 24.

does not stand for any book or writing but for Logos, or Sophia, or Wisdom, and comprehends all named concepts necessary for the creation of all created things. In the Veda it is said: "When the Lord projected the concept of the earth from His Divine mind, the earth was formed," etc. By Word the Vedic sages did not mean mere sound, but thought or concept in the Divine mind; therefore, the Divine mind was the Father, and Word or concept or ideal type was the Son, like the Greek Logos, as explained by Philo.

The later Hindu philosophers took up this idea, discussed it, and wrote volumes after volumes on the Logos theory. Whenever any man or woman reached perfection and manifested divinity, he or she was worshipped as the incarnation of the Word, the first-born, or the manifestation of the ideal man or woman as existing in the Divine mind. Krishna, Siva, Râma, Buddha, Râmakrishna and others are worshipped in India as the ideal types of men, or incarnations of the Word.

As the doctrine of the Logos, the very life-blood of Christianity was purely of Aryan origin, most probably of Hindu origin, so the symbol of the Cross, which is the corner-stone of the structure of Christianity, originated not amongst the Hebrews but amongst the Aryans.

Well has it been said by St. Augustine: "What is now called the Christian religion has existed among the ancients and was not absent from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, from which time the true religion, which existed already, began to

be called *Christian.*" Whatever importance the followers of Christ may attach to the worship of the Cross by connecting it with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, it existed as a religious symbol for centuries before the birth of Christ, and was largely used as a sacred symbol by the Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, Buddhists, Tibetans, Chinese, and other ancient nations of almost all parts of the world. The Cross is the oldest religious symbol that has ever been invented by human mind. Traces of the worship of the Cross as a religious symbol can be found amongst the most ancient prehistoric aboriginal tribes of the old and new worlds.

The ancient Egyptians used the Tau Cross, which is like the English letter T. In the Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Cross has been interpreted variously; for instance, a Cross with four equal arms has been assumed to have meant four elements. When the form of the Cross was composed of two or four sceptres with a circle at the point of interception it is said to indicate "divine potentiality." It stood sometimes for *protective power,* sometimes for *'life to come,'* etc. Some of the Egyptian deities, as *Ra, Ammon-Ra,* and *Ammon* had the sacred "Tau Cross" in their hands. The Cross was used by the Egyptians in tattooing the body, in the paintings on the walls and tombs at Thebes. A long Cross surmounting a heart, meaning good or goodness, was fixed upon the fronts of houses in Thebes and Memphis, intimating "This is the abode of the good." The Egyptian symbols of five planets had a Cross connected with each. The natives of Abyssinia used to observe certain religious rites by plunging a Cross in

the river Gitche. In ancient India the Cross was used as a sign of prosperity, good luck, longevity and happiness, a protector from evil, and was used largely in connection with religious rites and ceremonies. The most ancient form of Cross which has been used in India from prehistoric times is called *Swastika.* It is like a Greek Cross, but its arms are bent at right angles. It literally means in Sanskrit *Su,* well, and *Asti,* being, that is, well being, welfare. Originally the form of *Swastika* was two lines crossing each other, but afterwards it was shaped like . The word *Swastika* had been in existence in the Sanskrit language long before Buddha was born. In the Rig Veda we read: *"Swasti mé Indra,"* i.e., "Do thou, O Indra, grant me welfare." *Swastika* Cross appears in the hands of Vishnu, the Preserver of the world, and represents the world-sustaining power which Vishnu possesses. It was found in the foot-prints of Buddha in Buddhistic temples. In the Buddhistic inscriptions and coins, the *Swastika* or Cross very often occurs. In the *Ramayana* we read: "Bharata selects a ship marked with the sign of the Cross or *Swastika."* The Buddhistic *Stupas* (tombs) were built in the form of a *Swastika* or Cross. When a woman covers her breast with crossed arms it is called *Swastika* posture, that is, the sign of good luck, prosperity and protection. It is supposed that a woman with *Swastika* posture is free from all dangers. When a person sits cross-legged, it is called *Swastika* posture, which is the best of all the sitting postures. In ancient times houses were built in the form of a *Swastika Cross.*

When the Cross became the religious symbol of the

Buddhists, wherever Buddhism went the symbol of the Cross travelled with it. In Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, Burma, Ceylon, Java, and in other places the Cross as a religious symbol was introduced from India. In China, Japan, and in other countries the statues of Buddha were usually marked with a *Swastika* or Cross. In Tibet the Cross is to be found as the royal emblem of the Bon pa deities. The Lamas, or Buddhist priests, carry a Cross and use it at the time of benediction.

Sir Stamford Raffles, after living in Java for twenty years, writes: "Java received her civilization and art directly from India. Out of the six steps of the most ancient prehistoric temples in Java, three are in the form of a Cross,"

In the most ancient paintings of the Hindus, Krishna has a Cross in his hand. Yama, the ruler of the departed ones, is painted as holding a Cross in one hand. Some of the Christian missionaries say that the Cross was introduced into India by the early Christians who visited the country. Such statements are not correct. Among the most interesting ancient relics that have been recently excavated in the forests of Central India which were never visited by any Christian missionary, two rude stone Crosses have been discovered. The archeologists think that those Crosses must have existed in good shape at least three thousand years before the advent of Jesus the Christ. Moreover, the ancient rock-cut cave of Elephanta is nearly in the form of a Greek Cross; its dimensions being longitudinally 130 feet and transversely 123 feet, and in height is about 17 feet. In this cave, which was cut before the

Buddhistic period, there is a figure of Hindu Trinity holding a huge Cross in one hand. Tavernier, who visited Benares in the end of the seventeenth century, seeing the temple of Vishnu, said that the body of this edifice was built in the form of an immense Cross. This temple was destroyed by Aurungzebe, the Mogul emperor, who built a huge mosque in its place.

The Cross is to be found in almost all the ancient temples of India. Amongst the Jains, the *Swastika* or Cross is the oldest religious symbol. In the Sanskrit grammar of Pânini, written at least 400 B.C., *Swastika* or Cross is described as one of the ancient signs for marking cattle, and even to-day cattle and sheep are marked with a Cross by the illiterate classes of India. *Swastika* is mentioned in the Atharva Veda. Even to-day the Hindus paint a *Swastika* or Cross on the walls of the room which the newly married couple enter immediately after the wedding.

The *"Y"*-shaped Cross is drawn on the foreheads of the Vaishnavas, the dualistic worshippers of Vishnu. The Cross was used in the Hindu coins of prehistoric period. It was also used as decoration on walls, furniture, earthenware, rugs, and on garments worn by the priests and priestesses.

This *Swastika* or peculiar form of the Cross is the oldest of all forms of this symbol that are found in the West. It originated in prehistoric times amongst the Aryans who inhabited India, and from there it travelled all over the world. The same sign was found in hundreds of places on the Christians' tombs in the Catacombs at Rome.

There was a time when a great discussion arose amongst the early Christians as to the selection of the Cross which should be representative, and history tells us that the *Swastika* was one of those which were suggested. It is for this reason we find it on the tombs in the Catacombs at Rome. The latest use of *Swastika* mentioned in the literature on this subject is in the Archiepiscopal chair in the cathedral at Milan.

Prehistoric archaeologists maintain that the *Swastika* or Cross travelled into Western countries from the East during the Bronze age. They claim that long before the tin-mines of Spain, Britain or Germany were discovered, bronze came to Europe from the East—Burma, Siam, and other places where copper and tin were first made into bronze. When bronze was introduced into Western Asia, Egypt, and Europe, the sign of the Cross was also introduced in those countries, as the most ancient relic is found on bronze. Professor Wilson, in his celebrated essay on *Swastika,* which was read before the Smithsonian Institute, not only supports this theory of migration of the symbol of Cross from the East to the West, but believes that it migrated from Asia to America. Regarding the same symbol which has been discovered in North and South America, Professor Wilson says: "Adopting the theory of migration of the Swastika, we may therefore conclude that if the Swastika came from India or Eastern Asia (to America) it came earlier than the sixth century B.C.".

Thus we can understand how the Word, or the Son of God, was known in ancient India and that the Cross

was the most ancient religious symbol of the Hindus. Not only this, but the earliest record of the sacrifice of a divine man in space is to be found in the Rig Veda described in mythological language. John P. Lundy, in his *Monumental Christianity,* says: "At any rate, the religion of India had its mythical crucified victim long anterior to Christianity. I am disposed to believe this to be the victim described in the Vedas themselves. We read in the Rig Veda: 'The first-born being, before the beginning of the material phenomena, became a victim of sacrifice. The Devas, gods, and angels who came later took the first-born being for the animal of sacrifice, fastened him to a sacrificial post, sanctified him, and afterwards sacrificed him, stretching his limbs in the eternal space. From that sacrifice arose all that exist on earth and in the heavens.'" Here you will notice the metaphor that the first-born being was the only-begotten son of God, the absolute Being; that he was fastened to a post and was sacrificed by the Devas for the good of the universe. The students of the Vedic literature are well aware of the fact that the most ancient sacrificial post was in the form of a Cross. On such a post the first-born was fastened, like an animal of sacrifice.

John P. Lundy quotes from Colebrooke in his *Monumental Christianity*: "When that ancient sacrifice was completed, sages and men and our progenitors were by him formed. Viewing with an observant mind this oblation, which primeval Devas offered, I venerate." Mr. Lundy says: "This looks like the lamb slain from the foundation of the world and whom all the angels of God worship."

Thus the vital points of Christianity, in whatever manner they might have been explained by priests and theologians, were of Aryan origin. Whenever we worship the Cross, or the Son of God, we unconsciously worship the Aryan symbols of prehistoric times. Whenever we think of the sacrifice of Calvary, we unknowingly think of the mythological sacrifice of the first-born being which is described in the Vedas.

Although these and other similar religious symbols have certain value in helping human minds in the path of spiritual progress as objects of concentration and meditation, still they are of slight consequence if those abstract truths, for which all religious symbols stand, are forgotten or are not properly understood. Many symbols are used in India, each of which represents an abstract truth which ordinary minds cannot easily grasp. They are used largely by the dualistic and qualified non-dualistic worshippers of God. Most of them, however, like the orthodox Christians, do not understand the true meanings of the mythological symbols of the Word, Cross, etc., and fall the easy victims of superstition and errors.

The object of Vedânta philosophy is to free human minds from ignorance, superstition, prejudice, and errors, as well as to lead them to the realization of those abstract truths which give foundation to the names and forms of all symbols. Therefore, Vedânta insists that salvation cannot be obtained by the mere worship of the Cross, or the Son of God, or the Word in flesh and blood, and maintains that it can only be reached by going beyond all symbols, by realizing the sonship

of the soul and its oneness with the universal Spirit.

Vedânta declares that each individual soul is in reality the Word, the Christ or Son of God, which dwells eternally in the bosom of the Father,—nay, which is one with Him; that there is no gulf between the Father and His children, and that the realization of this supreme unity depends upon the sacrifice of the lower self upon the Cross made by the traversing of the Divine will by the human will. Such a sacrifice obliterates the Cross and leaves only the Word, which is the Father, the Absolute *Brahman*.

CHAPTER XI

WHO IS THE SAVIOUR OF SOULS

"Even shouldst thou be the most sinful of all sinful (men), thou shalt by the raft of knowledge of thy Atman of Self cross over the whole ocean of sin."—*Bhagavad Gitâ, Ch. IV, 36.*

WHO is the Saviour of souls? is a question of momentous importance in all the great religions of the world. Since the first dawning in human minds of the nature of the soul, this question has been asked and discussed by prophets and priests, kings and beggars, as well as by the inspired revealers of the sacred scriptures. Various attempts have been made since the beginning of the religious history of the world to arrive at the right solution of this great problem. It is a question so deep in its nature that many advanced thinkers, philosophers and metaphysicians of all ages and climes have confessed their failure to arrive at any satisfactory solution. They have tried, but the conclusions they have reached have not been universally acceptable; indeed, as this is a problem to be solved by each individual soul, it is highly improbable that any particular solution can give satisfaction to all classes of minds. The question resolves itself into three divisions, and each of equal importance: (1) Who can really be called a Saviour? (2) From what, and in what way, is a soul to be saved? (3) What is the true nature of the soul? These three points must be understood very clearly before we are able to discuss

the main question at issue; that is: Who is the Saviour of souls?

Three great spiritual leaders of the world are worshipped to-day as the Saviours of mankind by the peoples of different countries. One was of Semitic origin, and the other two appeared amongst the ancient Aryans who inhabited in India. The one is known as Jesus the Christ; the other two are Buddha and Krishna. Each of these Saviours is recognized by his followers as the Incarnation of God on earth. The followers of these Saviours worship their masters as God Himself. The general belief in India is that, like Jesus the Christ, Buddha. Krishna and Râmakrishna also possessed the divine powers of atoning for sins and of leading suffering humanity through different paths to the abode of eternal happiness and everlasting life.

As the followers of Jesus the Christ hope to be saved from sin and eternal suffering through their sin-atoning Master, so the followers of Buddha and Krishna expect to reach the highest ideal of life, the ultimate goal of religion, through the paths laid down by their divine Masters. Although each one of these is worshipped as the Saviour of the world, still the idea of salvation, the true meaning of the word salvation, and the methods of attaining to it are understood differently by the followers of each of these three great Incarnations. We all know that the Christians mean by salvation, redemption from sin, escape from eternal punishment and the attainment of everlasting felicity in heaven through faith in Jesus the Christ who died for sinners.

According to the majority of Christian sects, each individual soul is born sinful, inheriting sin as his birthright. They accept the account of creation as given in Genesis and believe in the temptation and fall of man through the influence of Satan, the creator of evil. When the first man was created, he was made perfect and sinless after the image of the Creator; and then the evil spirit appeared on the scene and sowed the seed of evil in the fertile soil of Adam's soul. As that positive séed of evil grew into a tree and bore fruit, Adam's sin, the disobedience to the command of God, brought about his fall, punishment, suffering and death. The tree of evil did not die with the death of the first man, but it continued to grow larger and larger with innumerable branches until the whole world was covered with its shadow, sorrow, disease and death. The results of Adam's sin or disobedience to God's command have been reaped by his descendants from generation to generation for nearly six thousand years. At last, when the whole world was groaning under the burden of sin and suffering, the compassion of the Father in heaven was aroused and He showed how much he loved mankind. It is said, 'God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son to save the souls of men'.[1] If that love had been shown a little earlier, how many thousands of souls might have been saved from sin and its consequent suffering! The ways of the merciful Father are mysterious and beyond human comprehension. Jesus the Christ came and sacrificed himself, taking upon his shoulders the burden of the sins of all humanity. His

1. St. John, III, 16.

blood washed away all the sins of the world; and since then the world has become free from sin, suffering and death for those who accept this sacrifice and redemption. Of course, these results are not to be enjoyed by unbelievers or heretics, but only by those who believe in Jesus the Christ as the Saviour of the world. Most Christians assert and believe that although Jesus the Christ died for all humanity, only those who come to him shall receive redemption from sin and go to heaven to enjoy celestial felicity. Those who, either through ignorance or perversity, fail to come under his banner, shall suffer for eternity. This is the explanation and solution of the great problem of the salvation of souls as understood and preached by the theologians and priests of Christendom and as popularly accepted.

The whole idea of Christ's being the Saviour of the world and of individual souls is most intimately connected with the theory that each individual soul is born in sin and is destined to suffer. Being born sinful, it has no power to save itself from the inevitable results of sin, which was committed, not by itself, but by the first man; consequently, it needs the help of the innocent, holy Son of God, who came down from heaven to rescue sinful souls by taking upon himself the burden of their guilt and suffering its results in his own person. It is often said that before accepting Jesus the Christ as the Saviour of souls a man must believe that he was born in sin; that the very nature of his soul is sinful; that he cannot redeem himself; that he has no power to obtain salvation save through external help, and he must have absolute faith in the theory of vicarious

atonement: through that faith alone he will go to heaven and be free from all sin and suffering. No one is allowed to ask any question regarding any of these points; he must accept the doctrine or suffer the consequences. There is no other alternative.

This solution may bring comfort to many souls; it may solve some problems of life and be entirely satisfactory to those who can accept it. We do not wish to disturb the well-settled opinions and beliefs of those who are content with this explanation and who are not ready to ask questions or seek farther. But there are many others who do not wish to accept anything upon hearsay or because it is written in some book: who do not care to believe anything on external authority. Such minds have found this solution unsatisfactory, illogical and contradictory. Some of the best thinkers and philosophers of the world, as well as the advocates of modern science, have asked again and again, "If God is infinite and all-pervading, where is there room for Satan?" "Who created Satan? Why did not God prevent the first man Adam from being tempted by that evil spirit? Why did He not protect him? Why should He punish an innocent man instead of the doer of evil?" How unkind and unjust must he be who punishes his own son for the faults of others! All these questions and many others have arisen again and again in the minds of thinking people, driving them to discouragement and unbelief. To them we say: Friends, you need not despair; there is great hope for you; there is another solution of the problem which may appeal to your reason and bring comfort to your souls. That solution, standing on the rock of reason, science

and philosophy, answers all questions and doubts, and may clear away all your difficulties.

First of all, let us examine carefully the origin of the idea of vicarious atonement. In ancient times, when primitive men were divided into classes, communities and tribes, each tribe had a tribal god; they believed that they could hold communion with these supernatural beings through prophets, priests, witches, or through oracles or inspirations. Their tribal gods were numerous, as you will find, among the ancient Semitic tribes. The members of each of those communities believed that their tribal god was their ruler, protector, guide and friend; whenever the god was angry or displeased, then evil overtook them; whenever any misfortune happened or any disease fell upon them, they thought that it was the result of their god's wrath, and they tried to appease him by going to the priests or to some necromantic diviners, or to certain prophets, and then performing such acts as these sages directed. The priests usually told them to offer the most useful and valuable things to their gods. In this way gradually grew up the idea of offering sacrifices and prayers to their god, and thus bringing him to their side and appeasing his wrath. The main object, however, was to get rid of the miseries and sufferings of life. Sometimes they offered things which could not be easily obtained; sometimes they sacrificed animals which were of great use to them; some tribes reached the climax by offering up human beings.

It was the custom amongst the ancient Jews to sacrifice human bodies before the altar of Jahveh. Nothing

was of more value than a child; therefore the first-born child or animal or fruit of trees belonged to Jahveh and they gave it to him. Before offering these sacrifices the priests transferred the sins to the innocent animals, and when these animals were killed they had the belief that the blood of these innocent creatures would purify the souls of sinners and wash away the sins committed by the members of those communities. They used to sprinkle the blood of the sacrificed on the heads of the sinners, believing that they were thus made free from all sins. This custom still prevails in some parts of the world. There are tribes in India who sprinkle blood of sacrificed animals in the same way as we read in the Old Testament. This custom gradually developed into the idea of vicarious atonement; the blood of the innocent is the purifier of souls and the redeemer of the wicked.

In the whole world the Christian nations alone have kept up this theory of vicarious atonement. The Zoroastrians, Jews and Mohammedans no longer accept it. They try to be free from sins by following the commands of their God, obeying the scriptures and living a righteous life.

As long as we believe in the special creation of man at some particular time by some extra-cosmic being, in his temptation and fall, in the transmission and inheritance of sin as that of some positive thing like wealth or property; so long we are bound to believe that the individual soul is born in sin, that it has no power to save itself from punishment, that it needs help from outside; so long we are forced to accept the idea of

vicarious atonement. Modern science has shown that this world was not created at any special time. The doctrine of evolution has thrown that theory into the background; so we are not obliged to accept the account as given in the *Genesis*. Modern Geology has proved that man appeared as early as the tertiary period, more than 10,000 years ago; therefore, we need not concern ourselves about the temptation and fall of man, perhaps 4,000 years later. Satan is already entombed in the grave of the nineteenth century, so we need not talk about the inheritance of sin. First of all, we are not bound to inherit the sins of our parents; consequently nothing can force us to accept the theory of vicarious atonement. Let us throw aside all the dogmas and superstitious beliefs with which we have burdened our minds from childhood. Let us forget for a moment that we are born in sin and that our nature is sinful. All such ideas do not bring any good to humanity; they make us more sinful; they keep us on the plane of sin and wickedness, because the power of thought is tremendous. "What thou thinkest, thou shalt become," is the saying of all sages. If we constantly think of ourselves as sinful, as born in wickedness, and to be punished eternally, then by the power of thought we make ourselves sinful. There is no hope for us to be better until we forget these things. If I constantly think that I am wicked, I keep myself on that plane. If I constantly think that I am weak and diseased, I bring disease on myself. Fixed thoughts and ideas which predominate in our minds, mould our inner nature and force us to act in accordance with those thoughts. The Christian Scientists and mental healers have found this to be

true. They know what an enormous power faith has. If I believe myself to be a sinner, "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," that belief intensifies all the evil propensities in my nature and makes it almost impossible for me to attempt their conquest. I know many people who have been brought up in institutions where it is taught that every individual soul is born in sin. The idea of a born sinner has become so strong in their minds that they can hardly imagine it possible for a soul to do good deeds without being helped by Jesus the Christ. They are frightened when they hear for the first time that God dwells within them. They cannot believe it; they will say: "How is it possible for God to dwell in the body of a sinner like me?" This is the effect of the training they get from their childhood; this degeneration of the human mind is the result of such training; it prevents the realization of truth; it keeps them back from the path which leads to perfection.

The fact is that we have not inherited the sins of our parents. Why should we inherit sin of another? Who can force us to inherit sins? Who compels us to inherit sin from father or grandfather? Did our parents create our souls? Have we sprung into existence out of nothing? Did we come into existence from a state in which we did not have our individuality? Is this my first and last birth? No, it cannot be. Who can answer such questions? That we have inherited sins from our parents may delude that ignorant minds of children; but no right-thinking persons can accept it as true. The truth is that our present lives are the results of our past lives. We are not the victims of the

sins of our forefathers. We possess individuality quite distinct from them. We existed as souls before our bodies were born, and shall exist after the death of our bodies. Jesus the Christ said: "Before Abraham I was"; so it is with each individual soul. Each soul existed before Abraham was born, nay, before creation itself, and has been manifesting its powers from the beginningless past. Our present existence is a connecting link in the chain of our various manifestations. We are living in delusion, committing mistakes and reaping the results of those mistakes, and thinking that we are born sinners and are to be punished forever.

One point we should remember: that as long as we think we are born sinners we are not approaching the true nature of our souls. If the innate nature of our souls be sinful, who can save us? It is impossible for anyone to change the innate nature of anything without destroying the thing itself. The innate nature of fire is heat; did you ever see fire exist without heat? Can fire exist, being separate from its innate nature? It is impossible. If the innate nature of the soul be sinful, then it can never exist as sinless. There is no power in the universe which can change the innate sinful nature of the soul without destroying the soul itself. Consequently, salvation of a sinful soul will be identical with the destruction or annihilation of it. Therefore, such statements that we are born in sin, that the innate nature of our souls is sinful, are absurd, illogical and misleading. On the contrary, if we accept God as the infinite Spirit, we cannot deny that He dwells everywhere. If that be the case, then

God dwells within us, in every individual soul; who can prevent it? If you do not believe that, you do not believe that God is infinite Spirit. If we once admit that Spirit is pure, sinless and divine, we are forced to the conclusion that the Spirit which dwells in us is sinless and divine. Infinite is always one, it cannot be many. How can the true nature or the Spirit in man, which is a part of the universal Spirit, be sinful, when God, the infinite Spirit, cannot be corrupted by sin? How can the Spirit which dwells in the soul of each individual be called sinful? What right have you to teach your child that it is born a sinner; that it has inherited sin as its birthright? You have no right whatever. On the other hand, teach your children that they are pure souls, that the divine Spirit dwells in each one of them, that God is within them. If your children imbibe such ideas from their childhood they will be more spiritual when they grow older; they will not have to unlearn anything. We all know how difficult it is to unlearn things which we have learnt in our childhood. How many grown-up people ever succeed in unlearning the ideas with which their tender minds were inoculated in childhood?

Teach your children such ideas as "The kingdom of Heaven is within you"; "I and my Father are one." That will be of great help to them. Do not accept the interpretations which you get from priests or books. First of all, learn the true meaning yourself and then explain it to them. If you do not understand the true spirit of Christ's sayings, wait for the explanation, and search within. The true meaning will come to you. That explanation will be true which is not bound by

the limitations of the manners, customs, prejudices or particular beliefs of a particular race. The standard of truth is always universal. That explanation will be the true one which is not limited by books or dogmas, but which will harmonize with the truths discovered by all religions.

Jesus the Christ did not teach the idea of vicarious atonement. None of the great spiritual teachers of the world taught the dogma that we are born in sin and are going to eternal perdition. In India we do not find such teachings; from ancient times these ideas were never accepted by the thinkers, sages and philosophers. The most ancient scriptures of the Hindus are the Vedas; they do not teach it. On the contrary, the Hindu philosophers unanimously declare that each individual soul is immortal, pure and cannot be stained by sin. The ancient seers of Truth in India realized the unity and infinity of the supereme Spirit, and the divine and sinless nature of the soul of man. They never preached the idea that the soul was created by some being at a certain time; they never taught it to their children. If we read the *Upanishads,* there we find Vedic sages, after realizing the divine nature of the soul, declaring before the world: "Oh, ye children of immortal bliss, listen to me: I have discovered the truth; I have found the path. Know ye your true Self; that knowledge will light you across the ocean of death and sin."[1] "Children of immortal bliss"; how full of sweetness, what a life-giving and heart-consoling expression!

1. Cf. *Svetâsvatara Upanishad,* Ch. II, 5; III, 8.

One of the results of such teaching is that the Hindu mind cannot imagine why an individual soul should be thought to be born in sin. A Hindu mother never teaches her children such ideas. There was a Hindu queen who used to teach her children *"Tat twam asi."* That thou art. That is, thou art the eternal Spirit, the infinite Spirit, the all-knowing Spirit, the Spirit that is free from sins and sufferings, which cannot be stained by sin. When she put her babe into its cradle she used to sing: "That thou art." "Thou art the divine Spirit." As the child grew older it asked its mother the meaning of what it heard, and the mother said: "Go and find out the meaning:" That impression created in the mind of that child was so strong that he afterwards became one of the great sages of India. If Christian mothers would teach their children in the same way, instead of telling them that they are born sinners and going to be punished, what a great blessing would it be to the children and to society. The number of sinners would decrease among the Christian nations.

There is no such thing as absolute sin; nor is it possible for one to inherit it like a piece of property. *Sin is nothing but selfishness. Its cause is the ignorance of our true nature;* as long as we do not know our real nature we remain selfish. If all individuals are born sinful, then why is it that sinful parents produce virtuous children? There are to be found many instances of this .

Here a question may arise: "If our true nature is divine, why are we not conscious of it? Why do we

not know that the spirit which is dwelling within us is divine?" Because of our imperfect understanding, which does not allow us at present to see things as they are. We mistake the body for the soul and soul for body, matter for spirit and spirit for matter; we identify the changes of the body with the nature of the soul. We give all the attributes of the body to the soul; and if the body is diseased we think we are diseased and suffering. This understanding, being subject to evolution, gradually manifests in a better way and ceases to make mistakes as we rise higher in the scale of evolution. Mind and intellect are the mediums through which the perfect and divine Spirit within us is expressing its powers. The *Atman* or the divine Spirit may be compared to the self-luminous sun and the medium of mind to space. When the mental space is covered with the thick and heavy clouds of ignorance, the light of the self-luminous sun of the *Atman* or the divine Spirit is invisible to the eye of the understanding. As the most powerful rays of the sun seem to us to be powerless and dull on a rainy day, so the most powerful rays of the divine light of the self-effulgent *Atman* do not shine on the understanding when the heavy clouds of ignorance overhang the intellect. When ignorance covers the light of the spirit the understanding makes many mistakes. Just as in the partial darkness of twilight our eyesight is often deluded and we mistake a rock or a tree-turnk for a robber and are frightened, so in the darkness of ignorance our understanding mistakes the body for the soul, matter for spirit and *vice versa.* Then we suffer and cry for help. Through such mistake we

falsely identify ourselves with the limited medium of mind, intellect, senses and body, and attribute their qualities to our true nature. Then the self-consciousness of the *Atman* or divine Spirit in us becomes confused with those limitations. The result of this mixture is what we call ego and egoism or selfishness, or, in other words, the idea of "*I* and *mine*," "I am this or that," "I am born," "I am diseased," and so forth. The changes of the body, and the senses and modifications of mind are identified with our true nature, the *Atman* or Spirit. The appearance of this *Atman* or divine Spirit as the limited ego is sometimes described as the fall of the divine spirit within the limitations of phenomenal existence. This appearance of the Absolute as relative individual ego through the power of ignorance is described in the Old Testament, in a crude mythological way, as the fall of Adam, the personified pure and perfect image of God. Ignorance is Satan. Through the influence of the magic power of ignorance or *Avidyâ,* or nescience, as it is called in Vedânta, the Eye or *Buddhi* or understanding is overcome. Then Adam, or Divine nature, or *Atman,* through the association of *Buddhi,* or imperfect understanding, falls from Paradise, i.e., appears as individual ego, losing for the time being the consciousness of the Absolute and becoming selfish and miserable. This, according to the teachings of Vedânta, is the spiritual meaning of the fall of man. The fallen ego will recover its absolute state through the help of the *Atman* which is described as Christ. This is the whole secret of true Christianity. The ego is the apparent, or selfish man. Buddha called this *Atman,* Truth, and

the apparent man, soul. Who can save the apparent man except the Real man, or *Atman,* or Truth? There is no other Saviour of the soul from this attachment to body and senses, from the bondages of ignorance and their results; and *the way of salvation is the knowledge of Atman, with the consequent surrender of the limited ego.* If the soul, realizing its Divine nature, tells any unawakened soul: "Thou art spirit; thy true nature is divine", then that true soul acts as the greatest friend and he is called the saviour of the unawakened soul. As the incarnations of God, like Krishna, Buddha, Râmakrishna, Christ and others declared this truth to the world through their divine personality and power, they are called the greatest friends of mankind, the Saviours of the world. Still we must not forget through the zeal of our loyalty to and reverence for those great souls, that they merely point out the right paths to Godconsciousness and that the true Saviour of the apparent ego is the *Atman.* Even the great souls like Jesus the Christ could not bring into the right path—to Godconsciousness, those who were not ready for such teaching. Think of what a small number of disciples Jesus left after so much sacrifice! What does it show? It shows that only those who feel the need of spiritual help can follow the example and teachings of the great soul, whether it be Christ or Buddha or Krishna or Râmakrishna or any other. They alone can attain to salvation or Godconsciousness who are striving for salvation. No one can save you if you are not ready to be saved. When the individual soul dwelling in the darkness of ignorance, after committing many mistakes and reaping their results, after

gathering experience in different planes of life, catches a glimmer of the light of Truth and struggles towards it, then, and then only, the divine light which is shining within is discovered; and Satan or Ignorance is conquered. Therefore Christ said: "Seek and ye shall find"; "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Buddha said: "The truth is noble and sweet; the truth can deliver you from evil. There is no Saviour in the world except the Truth. Have confidence in Truth, although you may not be able to comprehend it, although you may suppose its sweetness to be bitter, although you may shrink from it at first. Trust in the Truth." Where is that Truth to be found? Not in temples, not in churches, or mosques, not in books or creeds or sayings of this or that prophet, but in the depth of your own hearts. Search within. It is the *Atman,* the Self, the Soul of our souls. Therefore, Vedânta says: "One should save oneself by one's own Self or *Atman;* never should one let oneself sink in the ocean of birth and death. For *Atman* or divine Self is the greatest friend and Saviour of soul."[1]

1. ***Bhagavad Gitâ,* Ch. VI, 5-6.**

CHAPTER XII

GOD, OUR ETERNAL MOTHER

"I am the Father and Mother of the universe."—*Bhagavad Gitâ, ix, 17.*

The worship of God as the Mother of the universe, as our Divine Mother, is unknown to the people of the West.[1] Since the introduction of Christianity into Europe, the conception of God as the Creator and Father of the universe has been preached by the theologians and priests of Christendom. Jesus, the founder of Christianity, worshipped God as his Father, and prayed to Him as the Father of the universe; consequently, those who follow Jesus and His teachings worship God through this relation, established by their Master. The relation between father and son is much higher than that of the creator and his creatures, or the master and his servant. The more we advance in spirituality and the nearer we approach God, the closer becomes our relation to Him. The worship of God is impossible without having some kind of *relation between the worshipper and the object of worship.*

In the Hebrew religion God (Jehovah) was conceived of as the Creator, Ruler and Governor of the universe. He was like a most powerful and despotic monarch. All creatures were related to Jehovah as subjects to their ruler. As a ruler punishes his dis-

1. In America Theodore Parker was the first who spoke of God as our Mother.

obedient subjects, so Jehovah punished those who disobeyed Him or his laws. The duty of a subject was almost the same as that of a slave to his master. As a slave serves his master through fear of punishment, so the Hebrews served Jehovah. The transition from such a relation to that of father and son was indeed a great step. It was no longer an external relation to power and strength, but became a kind of kinship, of internal or blood relation, such as exists between an earthly father and his son. There is a tie of love which binds a son to his father, and such a tie brings the individual soul much nearer to the Creator of the universe. As the earthly father of an individual is ordinarily considered to be his creator, because of his begetting him and bringing him into existence out of nothing so, when the undeveloped human mind began to think of the creation of the universe, it imagined that the Creator was one who begot the universe and produced it out of nothing. Consequently, the Creator became the Father of the universe.

All our conceptions of God begin with anthropomorphism, that is, with giving God human attributes in a greatly magnified degree, and end in de-antropomorphism, that is, with making Him free from all human attributes. At the first stage of our conception of God, He appears to us as an extra-cosmic Being, as the Creator of the universe, who is separate from the universe and dwells outside of it, just as a carpenter is separate from the chair or table which he makes, or as the father is separate from the son whom he creates. The Hebrew conception of Jehovah was

purely anthropomorphic. He was an extra-cosmic Being. He dwelt in a heaven outside of the universe and possessed all human attributes. He created the universe out of nothing, fashioned it and became its ruler. The same Jehovah, when considered as the Father of the universe by Jesus and His followers, did not lose His extra-cosmic nature. Even today the majority of Christians do not go beyond this idea of an extra-cosmic God. They worship the same extra-cosmic Jehovah as the Creator of the universe, as their father. Jehovah is always masculine. He is never described as feminine.

According to the Hebrews, the masculine element of nature possessed all activity, strength and power; the male principle was recognized as the generator, and the female principle of nature was thought to be lower, insignificant, powerless and passive. The female principle of nature was the producer and bearer of what the male principle created; consequently everything that represented the female principle was considered as unimportant. This explains why womanhood was estimated so low by the writers of the Old and New Testaments, especially by the great apostle to the Gentiles. Even the very appearance and existence of woman on earth depended upon a man's rib, according to the Genesis. Although the Creator was represented by the Hebrews as masculine and all-powerful, when they explained the Genesis of the world they could not deny the presence of the feminine element which helped the Creator in bringing life into existence. In the Mosaic account of Genesis we read: "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the

waters"[1] which literally means that the Creator impregnated the waters or the female element of nature. And as God, that is, the male element, was extra-cosmic, outside of nature, and possessed all activity and power, He became the object of worship; and the female element or nature was entirely ignored. Every Christian admits the existence of nature, the female principle; but she has never been worshipped or adored. The idea of Father grew stronger and stronger and the mother nature was left aside as passive and powerless, and was ultimately ignored. As long as the conception of God remains as extra-cosmic, separate from nature, which is passive, so long will He appear as Father alone. The more we comprehend God as immanent and resident in nature, the more clearly we understand that God is our Mother as well as our Father. When we see that nature or the feminine principle is inseparable from the Being or the masculine element, when we realize that nature is not passive and powerless but the divine Energy, then we understand that God is one stupendous Whole, in whom exist both the masculine and feminine principles. Then we no longer separate nature from God, but we recognize nature as a part of the manifested divine Energy.

The tendency of modern science is towards this end. The doctrine of evolution, correlation of forces, persistence of energy, all these clearly prove that the phenomena of the whole universe and the various forces of the external and internal world are but the expressions of one eternal Energy. The theory of

1. Genesis, I, 2.

evolution explains only *the mode in which that eternal Energy produces this phenomenal universe.* Science has disproved the old theory of creation out of nothing through the fiat of an extra-cosmic God, and has shown that something can never come out of nothing. Science teaches that the universe existed in a potential state in that Energy, and gradually through the process of evolution the whole potentiality has become kinetic or actual. That eternal Energy is not an unintelligent energy, but is intelligent. Wherever we cast our eyes either in the external or internal world, we find the expression, not of a fortuitous or accidental combination of matter and mechanical forces, but of regular laws guided by definite purpose. This universe is not a chaos but a cosmos, *one harmonious whole.* It is not an aimless chain of changes which we call evolution, but there is an orderly hidden purpose at every step of evolution. Therefore, that Energy is intelligent. We may call this self-existing, intelligent, eternal cosmic Energy the Mother of the universe. She is the source of infinite forces and infinite phenomena. This eternal Energy is called in Sanskrit, *Prakriti,* Latin *Procreatrix,* the creative power of the universe. As we find,

"Tvam parâ Prakritîh sâkshât Brahmanah paramâtmanah,
Tvatto jâtam jagat sarvam tvam jagat jananî Shive."

"Thou art the *Parâ-Prakritî* or the divine energy of the supreme Being. Of Thee is born everything of the universe, therefore Thou art the Mother of the universe." As all the forces of nature are but the manifestations of this divine Energy, She is called all-powerful. Wherever there is the expression of any

force or power in the universe, there is the manifestation of the eternal *Prakritî* or the divine Mother. It is more appropriate to call that Energy *mother* than father, because, like a mother, that Energy holds within her the germ of the phenomenal universe before evolution, develops and sustains it, projects it on space and preserves it when it is born. She is the Mother of the Trinity—Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. She is the source of all activities. She is the *Sakti,* force in action. A creator, when deprived of his creative power, is no longer the creator. As the creative power is one of the expressions of that eternal Energy, so the Creator or *Brahmâ* is looked upon by the Hindus as the child of the universal divine Mother; so, is the Preserver and Destroyer. The Hindus have understood this eternal Energy as the Mother of the universe and have worshipped Her from prehistoric times, the Vedic period. Here you must remember that this Divine Energy is not the same as the powerless and passive nature which was rejected and ignored by the Hebrews and the Christians. You must not mistake this worship of the Divine Mother for Nature-worship. In the Rig Veda, the most ancient of the Hindu scriptures, we read: "The Mother Divine says 'I am the Queen of the universe, the giver of all wealth and fruits of works. I am intelligent and omniscient. Although I am one, by My powers I appear as manifold. I cause war for protecting men, I kill the enemy and bring peace on earth. I stretch out heaven and earth. I have produced the Father. As the wind blows by itself, so I produce all phenomena by My own will. I am independent and responsible to none, I am beyond the

sky, beyond this earth. My glory is the phenomenal universe; such am I by My power.' "[1] Thus the Divine Mother is described as all in all. We live and move and have our existence in that Divine Mother. Who can live for a moment if that eternal Energy ceases to manifest? All our mental and physical activity depends on Her. She is doing whatever She chooses to do. She is independent. She obeys none. She is the producer of every event that occurs in the universe. She makes one appear good, spiritual and divine, while it is She who makes another appear as wicked and sinful. It is through Her power we perform virtuous deeds or commit sinful acts. But She is beyond good and evil, beyond virtue and vice. Her forces are neither good nor evil, but they appear so to us when we look at them from different standpoints and compare them with one another.

When that all-pervading Divine Energy manifests, it expresses itself in two sets of opposite forces. The one set has the tendency towards God and is called *Vidyâ* in Sanskrit. The other tends towards worldliness and is called *Avidyâ*. The one leads to freedom and happiness, and the other to bondage and suffering. The one is knowledge, the other is ignorance. The one is light, the other is darkness. *Each individual soul is the centre where these opposite forces are constantly working and fighting with one another.* When *Vidyâ*, or the powers which lead Godward, predominate, we advance towards God and become religious, spiritual and unselfish; but when its opposite, the *Avidyâ* power,

1. Rig Vedâ, x, 125.

prevails, we become worldly, selfish and wicked. When the former is predominant the latter is overcome, and *vice versa.* These powers exist in each individual, *though they vary in the degree of their strength in each.* The man or woman in whom the former, that is, the Godward-leading powers, prevail, is called devotional, prayerful, righteous, pure in heart and unselfish. These qualities are but expressions of *Vidyâ* powers within us. Such higher powers are latent in all, even in those who do not show such qualities. All persons can rouse those latent powers by practising devotion, prayer, righteousness, purity and unselfishness. The easiest way to attain these powers is by the worship of the *Vidyâ Sakti,* or that aspect of the Divine Mother or Divine Energy which represents all the powers that lead to spiritual perfection. *By worship or devotion we mean constant remembrance of that aspect.* If we constantly think of the source of all spirituality and of all the higher powers which make one spiritual, surely those powers will be aroused in us, and we shall become spiritual, righteous and unselfish. Therefore, the Hindus worship this *Vidyâ Sakti.* When they worship that aspect, they do not deny or ignore the opposite aspect which leads to worldliness, but they make it subordinate to the higher *Vidyâ* aspect. Sometimes they think of these opposite forces separately, personify them and make them the female attendants of the Divine Mother. The Divine Mother has many attendants. All the evil forces of nature are Her attendants. She stands in the centre of the universe radiant in Her own glory, like the sun when surrounded on all sides by thick dark clouds.

Wherever there is any expression of extraordinary righteousness and spirituality, there is special manifestation of the Divine Mother. There is Her incarnation. The Divine Mother incarnates sometimes in the form of a man, and sometimes in the form of a woman, to establish order and righteousness. All men and women are Her children. *But there is something more in woman.* As woman represents motherhood on earth, so all women, whether married or unmarried, are representatives of that almighty Divine Mother of the universe. It is for this reason women are so highly revered and honoured by the Hindus. There is no country in the world except India where God the Supreme Being is worshipped from time immemorial as the Divine Mother of the universe. India is the only country where the earthly mother is looked upon as the living Deity, and where a man learns in his childhood: "One mother is greater than a thousand fathers." You have heard many stories regarding the condition of women in India. Most of these are grossly exaggerated, some are utterly false and some are partially true. The familiar American story of Hindu mothers throwing their babes into the Ganges to become food for crocodiles, is unknown among the Hindus. In the first place, crocodiles cannot live in a strong current like that of the Ganges. I have travelled the length of this mighty river from its mouth to its source, some fifteen hundred miles, but never saw any such acts. These statements were heard by me for the first time after coming to America, though tales and pictures to this effect have been quite common in this country in books for the young. There is not

time to go into a discussion of those points today, but so far I can assure you, that you will not find any other country "Where every living mother," as Sir Monier Monier Williams says, "is venerated as a kind of deity by her children, where every village or city has its special guardian mother, called (in Sanskrit) *Mâta*. * *"[1] It is extremely difficult for a Western mind to grasp exactly what the Hindus mean when they say that every woman is a representative of the divine Mother. A very simple illustration will give you an idea of the respect the Hindus have for women. In Sanskrit when two names are used together the rule of grammar is that the more honourable should stand first. In Sanskrit we say women and men, not men and women; instead of father and mother, we say mother and father; instead of husband and wife, wife and husband, because a woman is always more honourable than a man. In India wives do not adopt their husbands' names, they do not merge their individuality into that of their husbands, as women do in the West, but they keep their own names separate. If a wife's name be Râdha, and her husband's name be Krishna, and if we say them together, we would say Râdha-Krishna and never Krishna-Râdha. The wife's name must be said first. So we say Sitâ-Rama; Sita is the wife and Râma is the husband. Again, when God incarnates in a man form, as in Krishna or Râma, the wife of such an incarnation is worshipped as the incarnation of the Mother. The wife is worshipped first and then the husband. A Western mind does not

1. ***Hinduism and Brâhmanism, p. 222.***

easily appreciate the wonderful reverence for womanhood which the Hindus have.

The divine Mother is the personal God, the same as *Iswara* in Sanskrit; and *Brahman* or the absolute Substance or the universal Spirit is the impersonal Being. *Brahman* is formless, nameless and without any attributes. It is the ocean of absolute intelligence, existence and bliss (*Sat-chit-ânanda*). It has no activity. It is the *Godhead* of Fichte, the *Substantia* of Spinoza. It transcends all phenomena. Before phenomenal manifestation Divine Energy rested on the bosom of that ocean of absolute Being in a potential state. It is the dormant state of activity somewhat like our deep sleep state when all activity is latent. As in deep sleep (*Susupti*) all the mental and physical powers exist in us in an unmanifested condition and nothing is lost, so, before the beginning of the cosmic evolution all the phenomenal forces of the universe remained dormant in that Energy. There were no phenomena, no manifestation of any powers whatever. Again, as in our waking state all the latent powers manifest and we are able to walk, move, talk and are tremendously active, so, when a portion of that impersonal Being wakes up, as it were, and manifests the latent cosmic powers out of the sleeping Energy, the evolution of the cosmic Energy begins and the impersonal Being appears the Creator of the universe and its Preserver.

Then the impersonal Being is called personal, *on account of that manifested energy.* According to the Hindus that impersonal *Brahman* is neither masculine nor

feminine. But the personal God is masculine and feminine *both in one. Energy and Being are inseparable in the personal God.* As pure Being without energy cannot produce any phenomena and as Energy possesses all activity and is the mother of all forces and phenomena, the personal God is most appropriately called the Mother of the universe. *As fire and its burning power or heat are inseparable, so Being and Energy are inseparable and one.* Those who worship the masculine aspect of God, in reality worship the male child born of that divine Mother. Because the activity, strength and power which make one masculine owe their origin to that Divine Energy. But those who worship the divine Mother worship the Whole—all gods, all angels and all spirits that exist in the universe.

The wonderful effect of this conception of the Motherhood of God is to be found in the daily life of almost every Hindu woman as well as man. A Hindu woman thinks that she is a part of the Divine Mother, nay one with Her. She looks at all men and women of the world as her own children. She thinks herself as the blessed Mother of the world. How can such a woman be unkind to anybody? Her pure motherly love flows towards all men and women equally. There is no room for any impure thought or feeling or passion in such a heart. That perfect motherly feeling makes her ultimately live like the divine Mother on earth. Her ideal God in human form is her own child. She worships the incarnation of God as her most beloved child. Just as Mary was the mother of Jesus, so the Hindu women in India often

look upon themselves as the mother of Krishna, the Hindu Christ, or of Râma, another incarnation. Christian mothers, perhaps, will be able to appreciate this to a certain extent. If a Christian mother thinks that she is Christ's mother and loves Him as she loves her own child, the effect will be wonderful. She will then understand what divine Motherhood is. The Hindus think this is the easiest way for women to attain to that love which makes one unselfish and divine. A mother can sacrifice everything for her child; she naturally loves the child without seeking any return, though there are mothers who do not possess pure, unselfish motherly love. A true mother, however, loves her child above everything. If such a child be an incarnation of God Himself, how easy it will be for the mother to attain to the highest goal of religion. I know a lady in India who became a widow when she was young. She did not marry again. She was not like the ordinary woman of the world who thinks that a husband is essential for her happiness and that marriage is the highest ideal of life. She lived the pure life of a nun and worshipped Krishna as her own child. She became so advanced in spirituality that hundreds of educated men and women of high rank in Calcutta would come to see her, to take spiritual instruction from her. They used to kiss the dust of her feet as devout Roman Catholics kiss the feet of the statue of Mary. She is now revered and called as the Mother of God, Mother of Krishna, the Shepherd. She lived in a place near Calcutta. She could feel in herself the presence of the blessed Mother of the universe.

Another wonderful result of this conception of God

as the Mother of the universe is that when a man worships God as his mother he always thinks of himself as a child in its Mother's arms. As a child does not fear anything when it is near its mother, so the worshipper of the divine Mother is never afraid of anything. He sees the blessed Mother everywhere. In every woman he sees the manifestation of his eternal Mother. Consequently, every woman on earth is his mother. He conquers all lust and sense desires. He sees woman in a different light. He worships every woman mentally. I have seen a man who lived on this earth like a living child of the divine Mother, always protected and taken care of by Her. He worshipped God as the Mother of the universe. Through that worship he became pure, righteous and spiritual. He used to say: "O, my Mother, Thou art all in all. Thou art my Guide, my Leader and strength." His divine Mother showed him the true nature of man and woman. He used to bow down before all women, young, mature and old, and said to them: "You are the living representatives of my divine Mother on earth." How can a child have any other relation to one who is the same as its real mother? By this kind of devotion he conquered all lust and worldliness. His child-like, whole-souled and rapturous self-consecration to the divine Mother is a landmark in the religious history of India. His whole life, which was the personification of purity, self-control, self-resignation and filial love to the Divine Mother, stands as a mightly testimony to the reality and effectiveness of the worship of God as the Mother of the universe. When he used to sing the praises of the divine Mother

he gave life to every word he uttered, and no soul could hear him without being moved to tears by deep devotional feelings, without realizing that this wonderful child was in direct communion with his Divine Mother. His divine Mother showed him that each woman was her incarnation, so he worshipped and honoured all women as a son might worship his own mother. Some Western people may laugh at such reverence, but a Hindu is extremely proud of it. The Hindus know how to honour a woman. Prof. Max Mueller was much impressed with the wonderful life of this great sage, and recently published his life and sayings.[1] He was once asked: "If we are the children of your Divine Mother, why does She not take care of us? Why does She not come to us and take us up in Her arms?" The sage replied: "A mother has several children. To one she has given a doll, to another some candy, to the third, a music box, according as each one likes. Thus, when they begin to play and are absorbed they forget their mother; she in the meanwhile looks after her household work. But the moment any one of them gets tired of the play, and, throwing aside the plaything, cries for the mother: Mamma, mamma dear!' she runs quick to him, takes her up in her arms, kisses him often and often and caresses him. So, oh man! being absorbed in your play with the playthings of the world you have forgotten your Divine Mother; when you get tired of your play, and, throwing aside the toys, you cry for Her sincerely and with the simplicity of a child, She will come at once and take you up in Her arms. Now you want to play

1. Vide *Life and Sayings of Râmakrishna*, by F. Max Müller, Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

and She has given you all that you need at present."

Each one of us will see the divine Mother sooner or later. The Mother is always taking care of us and protecting us whether we feel it or not, whether we realize it or not. "O, Mother Divine! Thou art the eternal Energy, the infinite source of the universe. Thy powers manifest in the infinite variety of names and forms. Being deluded by the power of ignorance we forget Thee, and take pleasure in the playthings of the world. But when we come to Thee, take Thy refuge and worship Thee, Thou makest us free from ignorance and worldliness, and givest eternal happiness by keeping us, Thine own children, on Thy bosom."

CHAPTER XIII

DIVINE COMMUNION

"He whose heart is unattached to the objects of senses, and whose soul is fixed in Divine Communion with Brahman, attaineth to bliss everlasting."—*Bhagavad Gitâ, Ch. V, 21.*

DIVINE Communion, according to the Christian belief, is most intimately related to that ritual which is known by various names, the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, Sacrament or Mass. The general belief is that during the celebration of this ritual the souls of those who partake in this holy service commune with each other as well as with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In Matthew we read: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it and brake it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying: Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."[1]

These words have given foundation to that memorial service called "Holy Communion," which was instituted by Jesus the Christ, and which has been practised by all the Christian nations for nearly 1900 years; but if we read the religious history of other nations we find that the eating of bread, or the body of God, and the drinking of wine, or the blood of God, existed among pagan

1. Cf. Matthew, Ch. XXVI, 26-28.

peoples many centuries before Christ was born, and was paractised by the Greeks, Egyptians, Persians and the Hindus of the Vedic period.

Readers of the comparative history of religions know that the Eucharist is one of the oldest rites of antiquity. The Greeks called it the Eleusinian mystery. Rev. Robert Taylor said: "The Eleusinian mysteries were the most august of all the pagan ceremonies celebrated, more especially by the Athenians, every fifth year in honour of Ceres, the goddess of corn, who, in allegorical language, had given us her flesh to eat just as Bacchus, the god of wine, in like sense, had given us his blood to drink."

"Prodicus, a Greek sophist of the fifth century B.C., says that the ancients worshipped bread as Demeter (Ceres) and wine as Dionysus (Bacchus);" therefore, when they ate the bread and drank the wine, after it had been consecrated, they were eating the flesh and drinking the blood of their deity. "The Eleusinian mysteries were accompanied by many religious rites and ceremonies expressive of the purity and self-denial of the worshipper, and were therefore considered to be an expiation of past sins." Throughout the whole ceremony the name of the Lord was repeated many times.

The ancient Egyptians annually celebrated the resurrection of Osiris, their Saviour and Lord, and commemorated his death by eating the bread and wine consecrated by the priest through many rites and ceremonies. The worshippers who partook of this holy sacrament believed that the bread and wine became the veritable flesh and blood of their god Osiris.

In Persia, many centuries before the birth of Christ, the worshippers of Mithra, who, according to the Parsees, was the Mediator, Redeemer and Saviour of the world, took the sacrament of bread and wine with the same belief that the Christians do today. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Renan and other scholars believe that the Christian Eucharist was an imitation of the Persian ceremony which was practised by the worshippers of Mithra from most ancient times. In India, among the ancient Vedic sacrifices, we find one of special importance for remission of sins. It was a sacrifice of cake and wine. Cake was called *Purodâsha* and wine was called *Soma;* this cake was made especially for this purpose, was round in shape, its top resembling the back of a tortoise. It was considered to be the symbol of the body of Prajâpati, the first-born Lord of all creatures, who sacrificed himself before creation for the good of all, and out of whose body the whole universe arose. The wine of the *Soma* plant is described in the Vedas as the liquor of immortality, the giver of life and strength, the water of life; it was called the nectar which purified the body and soul of all those who drank, and which conferred immortality upon them. The sacrificer in ancient times consecrated this cake, then cut it into pieces, and, chanting the nature of the Lord, threw each of those pieces into the sacrificial fire; at the same time he poured consecrated wine into the fire. The remaining portions of the cake and wine were reverently eaten by the assembled family. The sins of the past fortnight were confessed, repentance was expressed, forgiveness was asked, and when they drank the divine

beverage they thought that they were in communion with the Heavenly King in spirit—that they were one with the Heavenly King and Father of the universe. Every householder used to make this sacrifice at the end of each fortnight; husband and wife performed it together and ate the cake and drank the wine with the rest of the family. The rich and powerful employed the ordained priests to perform the sacrifice for them.

Thus we can see that this holy communion service was performed by the ancient nations for the expiation of their sins even centuries before Christ instituted it among his disciples; that ritual which is observed today by millions of Christians all over the world was performed long before the time of Christ by many nations who had never heard of him. But the Hindus did not continue this practice; they gave it up when the Vedic seers began to grasp more abstract truths. Their truth-seeking minds could not rest contented with the sacrifices and ceremonials which were described in the Vedas; they gradually came to see that those sacrifices stood for something greater, and they tried to understand the spiritual significance; they searched for deeper knowledge of the mysteries of the universe; they struggled for the realization of the true nature of the soul and its relation to God, who was the objective Lord and Father of the universe. At that time they began to question whether or not God was objective and extra-cosmic; whether or not the soul was created by God. Those seekers after Truth were gradually led beyond that old conception of an objective, personal God, who dwelt in heaven outside of

nature. As they progressed higher and higher in spiritual researches and arrived at the Vedântic conception of God and the world, their meaning of the divine communion became higher and more spiritual.

Here we should remember that as long as God is extra-cosmic, outside of nature, as long as He is far from us, there remains a vast gulf of seperation between God and man. The more distant God is from us, the less chance there is for us to approach Him and come into direct communion with Him. Such being the conditions, the problem of divine communion does not arise in the minds of the followers of a religion which makes God unapproachable, as we find to be the case in two of the great religions of the world, Judaism and Mohammedanism. These two religions believe in an extra-cosmic, objective, personal God, who is the all-powerful Creator of the world and of human souls.

In Judaism the conception of Jehovah is so transcendent, so objective, so strongly marked and so majestic, that there arose a vast sea of separation between Jehovah and the individual souls. The communion or approach of any individual to Him was considered to be almost an insult to the Deity. This difficulty which such a conception produced was understood and felt for the first time by the Alexandrian Jews, like Philo and his followers, who were influenced by the Greek philosophy; they tried to bridge over that sea of separation between God and man by accepting Logos theory of the Greek philosophers.

The Logos is described in the writings of Philo as the only-begotten son of God, the Father; it was considered to be the Mediator or bridge between God and the world, between the Creator and His creatures; the same Logos was afterwards identified with Jesus the Christ; and since that time the followers of Christ have believed that no one could come into close communion with God except through that especial Logos, or Word, or Mediator, or through Jesus the Christ. The orthodox Christians think that it is impossible for a human being to commune with the Divinity except through the only begotten Son, the Christ. They say that it is blasphemous even to think of the possibility of an individual soul approaching God without coming through Jesus; they have forgotten, however, that the expression of *only begotten Son* was first used for the Logos, which was universal, and not for any particular personality.

Do you know why the Christians say that it is impossible for any individual to approach God without coming through Christ? Because their conception of God is the same objective, majestic, transcendent and extra-cosmic being as Jehovah of the Jews, under the name of Father in Heaven. As long as this conception of the Father in Heaven remains extra-cosmic, so long such an idea will continue to prevail.

In Mohammedanism the conception of God is the same as that in Judaism. The Allah is the all-powerful, transcendent and personal God who dwells in heaven, outside of the universe. Like Jehovah, Allah is to be feared rather than to be united with or ap-

proached or communed with. According to Mohammed, true religion lies in the complete submission to Allah's will, and nothing more. There is no possibility of a beatific communion with Allah in the religion of Mohammed. The modern Babists, who are but reformed Mahammedans, still maintain a similar conception of God; they believe in the same Allah, who is extra-cosmic, majestic and outside of the universe. The God of Mohammed lived in a heaven, and from that celestial abode commanded the universe; but the more philosophical class among Mohammedans went beyond this conception; they were known as the Sufis, and were almost like the Christian mystics of the middle ages. They were the mystics among the Mohammedans. They believed in a communion with God, and that communion could be established through love in the state of ecstasy.

Although these Sufis believed that a human being could approach God, yet they did not accept the idea that a human soul could be one with Him. They were dualists; they believed that the individual soul could be god-like and a temporary union between the soul and God could be accomplished only through love. They did not believe in any other mediator; they even rejected Mohammed as the only prophet of God. The writings of the Sufis are full of Oriental metaphors which seem horrible to many of the practical, matter-of-fact Western minds. Even the mind of a great philosopher like Emerson could not understand the metaphorical language of the God-intoxicated Sufi poet and philosopher, Hâfiz. Those who have read the Rubaiyat of Omar Khâyyam will understand how

difficult it is to grasp the true meaning which underlies the metaphorical expressions of the Persian Sufis.

Sufism, which arose about 820 after Christ, was the result of the influence of the Vedânta philosophy of India upon the dry Mohammedan conception of the objecive, personal God or Allah. The peculiarity of Vedânta, on the contrary, lies in a conception of God which is not only objective, but both subjective and objective. He is not merely transcendent but immanent. God, according to the Vedânta, is not only outside of nature but dwells in every particle and atom in nature; He is not only the Soul of the universe, He is the Soul of our souls. Although Vedânta does not object to the worship of an extra-cosmic, personal God, still it does not stop there as other religious systems have done. On the contrary, it says that a man may fear and worship God as the extra-cosmic being for some time, but when his spiritual eye is opened, and when he understands the true nature of the soul and its true relation to God, he begins to realize that God is both objective and subjective.

The soul, according to Vedânta, is not created by God out of any material which is outside of Himself, but it emanates from the spiritual essence of Divinity; consequently it is of the same substance and the same nature as God Himself. It is immaterial, immortal and unchangeable. God is not separate from the universe; there is no gulf of separation between God who is infinite and all-pervading, and the human soul or the world; but He is like the eternal background of the

variegated colours and scenes of the panorama of the phenomenal world. He is like the spiritual canvas upon which are painted the pictures of human souls by the invisible hands of the almightly Artist. He is the infinite source of all powers and forces which are manifested in the material and physical planes of the universe; He dwells within our souls.

Every individual soul is a part of the spiritual body of the God of Vedânta; He is nearer to our souls than are our bodies, nearer than our senses, our minds, our intellects; He is the essence of our existence and life. In Him we live and through Him we exist, consequently there is no need of any bridge, any mediator, between Him and us. The relation of the individual soul to God being naturally so close and so intimate, the divine communion in Vedânta has a more spiritual meaning and a deeper significance than that of merely eating the flesh and drinking the blood of God. God has neither flesh nor blood. True communion with Divinity, according to Vedânta, does not come through any external relation to place, time or personality, but it comes to the soul when the innermost door of the soul is open to receive that blissful current of the divine Spirit which rushes in with tremendous force. It comes when the depths of our hearts are flooded with the one sheet of the water of immortality, and when all the weeds of selfishness, hatred, jealousy, sectarianism and bigotry are washed away by the tremendous outrush of the current of that all-loving omniscient Spirit; then rises on the horizon of the soul that self-effulgent sun of wisdom; the calm and benign rays of that eternal sun dispel the darkness of

ignorance that had reigned there for ages, and illumine the heart with Divine light.

Divine communion comes at first like the reunion of two kindred spirits united by the everlasting bond of love, but who are apparently separated by the delusive power of forgetfulness. As a child who loves its mother, and knows nothing but that beloved mother, may forget her for the time being when its whole soul is fascinated with the toys of Christmas time; or as a young woman, charmed by jewels and beautiful garments, may forget her lover whom she adores, and considers the embodiment of all happiness; even so, the individual soul, bewitched by the objects of sense, may forget the true source of happiness, which is more intimately related to it than the mother is to the child or the lover to the beloved one. But, as the joy of the child when it is reunited to the beloved mother—as the joy which comes to the soul of that woman when she again remembers her lover—cannot be described by words, so that happiness which comes through the reunion of the soul with God is beyond the power of utterance. That happiness is not temporary; it is unending and everlasting. This *reunion* leads to a still higher realization of the spiritual oneness with God. At that time the soul *regains its true nature,* breaks through all barriers and walls of limitation and attains to perfect freedom and omniscience; from that time divine qualities begin to flow through the soul. In that state all questions are solved, all doubts cease, all results of past actions are annulled and all the knots of desire that arise in the self-loving and self-seeking ignorant heart are torn

asunder.[1] After this realization there is no more struggle for the expiation of sins, no more crying for forgiveness, no more fear of punishment. The human soul is transfigured with divine Spirit. This transfiguration, or perfect atonement, or *at-one-ment* with God, is the aim of divine communion.

Divine communion brings the attainment of God-consciousness; all other phases of consciousness which are manifested on the lower planes in daily life, merge *into this supreme consciousness* of the divine nature of the soul. It is called in Sanskrit, *Samâdhi.* It is the state of Godconsciousness. If any man or woman can reach this state for an instant even, then he or she destroys all effects of the sins which he or she may have committed during perhaps hundreds of previous incarnations.

No individual soul, whether virtuous or sinful, rich or poor, can ever become truly sinless and happy without coming into that state of Godconsciousness. You may cry for help and pray for forgiveness day after day and night after night, may ask redemption from sins, but rest assured that he who will forgive sins is your own Self. Your own divine nature alone can make you free from sins. You may call that divine nature, God or Buddha or Christ, it is all the same; no one other than the divine Self possesses the power of forgiving the sins of the individual ego. Remember that all help that you have received has not come to you from the outside, *but it has come from the very bottom of your own soul.* You might have thought,

1. ***Mundaka Upanishad*, 2, 2, 8.**

through ignorance, that the forgiveness and help came from outside, but *the time is sure to come* when you will have to realize that all the help you have received in your life, or will receive in the future, is from within; that it is your own divine Self that will help and forgive you, who, through ignorance and self-delusion, have committed many mistakes, and have played the part of a sinner.

The highest ideal of divine communion—that is, the attainment of Godconsciousness—*does not come through ceremony or ritual, nor by muttering passages from the scriptures, nor by counting beads, nor by confessing sins to a priest, nor by worshipping the departed spirit of any holy man.* These may be helpful to those whose souls have not awakened to spiritual truths, *but Godconsciousness comes through the realization of our true nature, which is eternally one with the pure, blissful and all-knowing spirit Divine.*

There are many paths that lead to such realization. Each of these paths is described in Vedânta as Yoga, or the method of attaining this consciousness. Those who practise Yoga sincerely, keeping the attainment of divine communion and Godconsciousness as the highest ideal, should not stop until it is acquired. *Life is not worth living if we cannot become conscious of our Divine nature in this life.* What good can be gained by living like slaves to passions and desires; what shall we gain for our souls by attiring our bodies in rich raiment, or by living in beautiful mansions, or by filling high positions in the state or country? These may be of great value to those whose aim is not higher than the

attainment of earthly comforts and pleasures of the body. How long will this body stay? Not more than five or six scores of years; but remember that the soul life is not confined to the life of the body; it is from eternity to eternity. What are you going to do for your souls?

Have you gained anything for the soul? The treasures of the earth do not enrich the soul and comforts of the body cannot long satisfy that soul which is over-burdened with cares, anxieties, sufferings and worries, and which is obeying the commands of hundreds of masters internal and external. The pleasures of the senses do not satisfy the soul which has realized the transitoriness and the ephemeral character of worldly objects. No family ties, no earthly relations, can ever quench the thirst of that soul which longs to drink the water that comes through divine communion alone; no earthly thing can stand in the way of that soul which eagerly seeks the path to return home and rest there peacefully after the tiresome journey along the by-ways in the maze of the phenomenal world. Vain are the hopes of those who try to be happy by acquiring wealth, or the pleasures of the senses and comforts of the body. Since the beginning of the history of mankind no human soul has ever become truly happy, or peaceful, or blissful in this life by pursuing the pleasures of the senses and comforts of the body. Therefore, Vedânta says: "If a man becomes master of the whole world, still he is not happy; he wants something else." And Jesus says: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Neither happiness nor immortality can be bought by the 'almighty dollar'.

One may be the father of many children, but he must be a fool who expects to be happy on account of many children. *True happiness comes to a soul when it renounces the foolish idea of becoming happy through sense pleasures and earthly enjoyments, and seeks Godconsciousness by entering into the gate of divine communion.* He who has entered that gate by the sincere and earnest practice of Yoga, and has succeeded in regaining his true nature, sees Divinity everywhere. To his eyes the beauty of a human face, or of a landscape, appears infinitely more beautiful because behind that beauty he sees the infinite source of all beauty; he knows that this external beauty is but a partial expression of that divine beauty. He feels divine presence in music, as well as in every sound that enters into his ears. Such a soul perceives Divinity in every object of the senses.

Then the mysteries of life and death are solved. The whole life, which seems to us meaningless, unfolds higher purpose, nobler and more spiritual meaning to one who has reached Godconsciousness through Divine communion. He whose soul communes with the divine Spirit within does not care for any celestial felicity; he does not want anything of this world; he is serene, peaceful, restful, happy and always contented, free from worry, anxieties, misery, sorrow, suffering and fear of death. He knows that he is *divine*. If the whole world persecutes him, tortures him and cuts his body into pieces, even then he resists not, but blesses his persecutors and gently utters: "I am Spirit divine; swords cannot pierce me, fire cannot burn me, the pains of the body cannot affect me; I am immortal. I am in

the sun, in the moon, in the stars; nay, I am the soul of the persecutor's soul. I am He, I am He. If the whole world go, I do not lose anything by it." He says: "I bow down to my divine Spirit, which does not possess anything, yet which is the Master of all that exists in the universe, or will exist in the future."

CHAPTER XIV

WAY TO THE BLESSED LIFE

"They attain to the Blessed Life who have ceased to be wicked, whose doubts are cut asunder, senses are subdued, and hearts are undisturbed by desire and passion; who love to do good to all creatures, who have realized the Truth, and whose inner self is molten into the essence of divine Self."—*Bhagavad Gitâ, V, 25, 26.*

In the whole animal kingdom man alone is capable of solving the problem of life. Other animals live, but they cannot ask what life is, nor can they understand its purpose or the source from which it proceeds. Human beings alone are endowed with intelligence enough to ask such questions; they alone can understand the purpose and aim of life, can trace its source and know the various aspects through which the life principle manifests itself in this world of phenomena. From time immemorial this problem of life has been discussed over and over again, and various conclusions have been arrived at, by different philosophers and thinkers of all ages and all climes. Some say that life is a great blessing, that it is the source of unbound joy and happiness, that it is Blessedness itself; while others hold that life is not worth living because it is full of misery, sorrow and suffering, disease and pain, and its end is death. It is true that our earthly life is beset with misfortune, distress, pain, anxiety, and disease, as well as various other sufferings which arise from the constant struggle for existence; yet none but superficial thinkers will maintain that life is not worth living, or that death is its goal.

When we understand the true meaning of life we know that life is opposed to death, as light is opposed to darkness. Life, in its most abstract sense, means *being;* it is the same as being, or existence, and death means non-being, or non-existence. Where life is, there death cannot exist. If life be a reality, then what we call death must be unreal. *That which lives or exists can never die or become non-existent.* And that which does not live in any form whatever, can never become existent. Existence can never become non-existence, and non-existence can never become existence.[1] This is the law of nature. Whatever exists will continue to exist. Such being the law, whether we consider our earthly life is worth living or not, we cannot say that death is the goal of life. As life or being is deathless and indestructible, so it is birthless and beginningless. That which is subject to death is a compound thing and has a beginning, but that which does not die is simple and therefore, has no birth and no destruction. If we look around in this world of phenomena we shall see that that which is birthless, is deathless also, and as life is opposed to death and has no beginning, life is beyond death and birth. Again, that which is birthless and deathless does not change, but that which changes is within the realm of birth and death. As life or being *in its true sense* is beyond that realm, it cannot change its nature, or decay. There is no sorrow, suffering, misery, decay, death, or change of any

1. The Bhagavad Gitâ (2.16) says: *"Nâsato vidyate bhâvo nâbhâvo vidyate satah."* Such is also the final conclusion of modern science as it says that everything in this world is not lost, everything is indestructible.

kind in true life, therefore, it is blessed. *It is Blessedness itself.*

True life is that eternal, self-existent power which animates all things and is the source of all activity and of all living forms. That power manifests in the animal and vegetable kingdoms as well as in man. From the minutest protoplasm up to the greatest man, wherever there is any sign of life, there is the expression of this all-pervading Eternal power, *which is unchangeable and one in its essence.* Electricity is one universal, inscrutable force, but on account of the various ways in which it is made manifest through different electric machines, it appears in many forms, as heat, as light, or as motion. We see this every day in the electric cars; the one current gives motion, light, and heat. So is it with the universal, mysterious life force; it is one, although appearing many when manifesting through the numberless forms of existence. We may, therefore, say that true life is one in essence, but its apparent expressions are numberless. Our earthly lives are so many expressions of the true or real Life which is Blessedness, which is one and eternal. *Life being real, its apparent expressions must be the expressions of Reality too.* These expressions are what we call apparent life. They are like *so many reflections* of the true Being of the universe. These expressions or manifestations of that universal Life vary in different individuals because of the variety of conditions upon which those reflections depend; again, the conditions being subject to change, the reflections or expressions of true Life appear as changeable. The apparent life can shape itself in manifold ways according to the conditions

of its environments, and evolves from the lower to the higher, and from the limited towards the unlimited. *Our apparent or earthly life is nothing but a symbol of the eternal life-principle, conditioned by time and space. True life or being, or Blessedness, is beyond time and space, and is not bound by conditions of any kind.* It is not subject to the laws of phenomena. It is independent and perfect; while the apparent life is dependent upon the laws which govern the world of phenomena, and is conditioned by time and space. True life or real being does not need any help from outside. It does not require anything from beyond itself. It is self-reliant, self-complete, self-sufficient and self-loving; while the apparent life, being an imperfect reflection of the true life, *depends upon the conditions of the environments,* and represents imperfectly those higher qualities of self-reliance, self-completeness, self-sufficiency, self-love and independence which make true life a blessed and a perfect whole. When the apparent life separates itself from the true being and isolates itself from the life of the universe, the partial reflections of these higher qualities in the apparent life are then known as *selfishness.*

If we examine the relation of this apparent life to the real life we understand that *it is nothing but a part of that universal Life.* As a part is related to the whole and cannot live independently of the whole; as a ray of light or a reflection is related to the sun and cannot exist independently of the sun, so the apparent life is related to that true being which is called *Blessedness,* and cannot exist independently. Like true life, this apparent life possesses self-love, but, unlike the self-love

which is in the true life, is a love of the particular and not of the whole. True life or being loves itself or the Whole, and as that Whole is God, its love is Divine. It lives in God and loves God. The self-love in the apparent life is love of a part alone, as separated from other parts, as isolated from the whole or God; therefore, it is selfishness. The apparent self-love is nothing but an attachment to the transitory conditions through which the life eternal expresses itself on the physical plane. True life loves nothing but one unchangeable Reality, while the apparent life loves the changeable personality which is identified with the non-eternal form.[1] On account of this attachment to constantly changing conditions, this apparent life or the individual

1. Such is also the divine confession of the mystic philosopher J. G. Fichte when he says: "Life is itself Blessedness, I said. It cannot be otherwise; for Life is Love, and whole form and power of Life consist in Love and spring from Love. * * Further, Love is satisfaction with itself, joy in itself, enjoyment of itself,—and therefore, Blessedness; and thus it is clear that Life, Love, and Blessedness, are absolutely one and the same. * * "Being,—I say again,—Being and Life are, once more, one and the same. * * And thus we have opened the way towards an insight into the characteristic distinction between the True Life, which is one with Being, and the mere Apparent Life, which, in so far as it is mere appearance, is one with Nothingness. Being is simple, unchangeable, ever the same; therefore, is also the True Life simple, unchangeable, ever the same. Appearance is a ceaseless change, a continual floating between birth and decay; therefore, is also the mere Apparent Life a ceaseless change, * * The central point of all Life is Love. The True Life loves the One, Unchangeable, and Eternal; * * That object of the Love of the True Life is what we mean by the name God, * * The True Life thus lives in and loves God, * * To be united with the beloved object, and molten into its very essence, is Blessedness."—Vide *The Doctrine of Religion in Fichte's Popular Works* (1873) by William Smith, LL.D., pp. 389-394.

ego, is subject to the changes of birth and death, is a slave to its conditions, and is sorrowful, miserable, restless, unhappy, and consequently unblessed. The apparent life or the ego appears as unblessed, because the conditions through which the true universal life manifests, are limited and imperfect.

Unblessedness consists *in the idea of the separateness of the part from the whole,* and in the bondages of other imperfections arising from this mistaken notion of individual isolation. To be united with the Whole, to be free from the bondages of these imperfections, and to be perfect, is Blessedness. Each individual germ of life, which we have already called the apparent life, possesses *an innate tendency* towards the attainment of this Blessedness, and to freedom from the conditions of unblessedness. Our earthly life consists in a continuous fight with the environments which have kept us away from the central Truth, or the Blessed life. We are constantly struggling to expand the sphere of self-love, by breaking down the walls of limitations which constrain the apparent life to a narrow selfishness, and thus to be united with the true life of perfection. The evolutionists do not know the cause of variation or natural selection. They cannot say what determines life and makes it manifest differently at every step of evolution. But Vedânta philosophy says that the cause of this variation is that innate tendency in a germ of life to be united to the whole and to reach perfection. The aim of each apparent life, or ego, *is to reach that state of Blessedness which is the goal of evolution.* As we approach nearer and nearer perfection by passing through the various stages of physical, mental and intel-

lectual evolution, the ways of our living become better, and by experience we learn that the best way of true living is not by obeying the dictates of the apparent life or lower self, but by following the blessed will of the universal Being or true life. We start at first with a little, weak, and dim ray of will which gradually becomes wider and stronger and brighter as we ascend through the different grades of evolution. Experience teaches us the relation which exists between the individual will and the Will that governs the universe. When we realize the true relation of the individual will to the universal will, then we find that the life or will which we have so long called ours is not ours, but is simply a part and parcel of that one life, or one will, which moves the universe. Our bodies are like so many little instruments through which the universal life-principle is expressing itself on the plane of phenomena. The mind, will and life of one individual are not entirely separate from those of another, but they are connected with all mind, all will, and all life by an invisible current of reality which is one and indivisible. As long as we do not realize this, but, on the contrary, think of ourselves as separate from one another, and as not related to the universe, so long shall we follow the dictates of our limited and imperfect will and think that by so doing we shall gain the highest benefit. The result is that we make mistakes at every step, and these mistakes cause us to feel dissatisfied, unhappy and sorrowful. We do not gain what we wanted, nor do we reach the goal for which we started.

This idea of separateness, this mistaken notion makes the apparent life, or ego, think that it is free and

independent while in fact it is bound hand and foot like a slave. *The moment we realize our relation to the Whole we are no longer bound by any conditions of selfishness, but we are free.* At present we are living as slaves without being conscious of our slavery. By *mistake* we are imagining that we are free, but if we examine our life most minutely, we shall find that we are not free. If we look around us it would be almost impossible to find a man or a woman whom we could call truly free. We ought to be ashamed of this state of things, but we are not, because we do not know that we are in bondage. Very few, indeed, realize that this life is a life of slavery and drudgery, and that the ego is enchained by the conditions of the phenomenal world. Amongst those who realize this, a few struggle for emancipation and a very few of these becomes really free. But the majority delude themselves by thinking that they are free, love the present conditions of their unblessed life, and do not seek a better state. There have been cases where a man, born and brought up as a slave and living in the society of slaves, has preferred to remain a slave rather than become a free citizen. Think of some of the Negroes of South Carolina, who actually prefer slavery to freedom. If any one gets some idea of freedom and tries to get out of slavery, his fellow slaves will think that he is going the wrong way and will try to force him to continue the old life, and strive by all means to hinder his becoming a free citizen. But a courageous man who loves freedom, and struggles day and night for emancipation, will not be dominated by the influence of others. He will seek the company of those who are also striving to be free, and of those

who have wiped off the mark of slavery from their foreheads, to learn from them the means of attaining freedom.

The community in which we are now living is exactly like that of slaves. Being deluded by our vanity and self-conceit we do not realize our present condition, and never struggle for freedom. On the contrary, we find fault with those who do, we criticise them, call them crazy or foolish, and essay to put them behind the doors of the lunatic asylums,—such is our mental condition. Are we not slaves to our desires, our passions, our senses, to the body and all the changes that are constantly going on in the machinery of human organism? Are we not slaves of anger, hatred, jealousy, fear and sense enjoyments? Are we not slaves of greed, of wealth and possessions? Are we not slaves to ordinary desires for political power, for name and fame? Are we not constantly obeying the commands of these masters who are ruling within us? Where is our freedom? We are slaves to desires, passions, comfort, luxury, ambition, pride, beauty, anger, hatred and sense pleasures, but we do not feel bondage in them we are not conscious of the fetters. How elated and flattered we feel when any person utters sweet and kind words; how insulted, wounded, and hurt when we hear harsh and unkind words; and how we long for revenge when we are injured. Can there be any condition worse than this? Are we born to follow this course and obey these pitiless masters all our lives? We rarely ask such questions. On the other hand, we say this life is full of happiness and pleasure. While we have a longing

for sense pleasure, we suffer and are unhappy. We sleeping the sleep of ignorance after drinking, as it were, the cup of the fearfully intoxicating liquor of self-delusion. All humanity is madly pursuing the phantoms of hope which change their colours as one approaches them, or suddenly vanish to reappear at a distance with fresh brightness, like will-o'-the-wisps, forcing the pursuer to chase them again. The vain pursuit of these phantoms of hope leads humanity into unbearable suffering, misery, and disappointment. We have made ourselves slaves of these deluding phantoms; and this is the way in which we are living. Each individual loves something, strives after something, but knows not what it is, or how to get it. Do you know what we are striving after? We are striving after happiness, but we do not know the conditions through which that happiness comes. *It will never come under the conditions in which we are now living.* Happiness does not come to a slave. He may delude himself for the time being and may think that he is happy, but when he comes to his senses and asks himself: Am I happy now? but he finds that after all it is not happiness, it is delusion. Happiness does not exist in slavery, but in freedom. He who is free is alone truly happy. That happiness which comes through perfect freedom is eternal. If we want that unending and eternal happiness we shall have to become free by breaking down the chain of slavery. We should remember that if we were really free we would have been happy, and we should not need to seek happiness, because freedom is the condition of happiness. Again, before seeking freedom,

we must realize the unblessed state of our earthly life, we must become conscious of the fact that this apparent life is a slave life.

The moment we come to know that we are living like slaves, that very moment we begin to feel the effects of slavery in our life and we seek the company of those that are free and blessed. We then struggle for emancipation and deliverance. Whatever we want sufficiently we shall surely obtain. Who is responsible for our present slavery? We are slaves because we have bound ourselves hand and foot *by our own desires;* if we want to conquer them we can do so. We must not blame another person, or God, or Satan, for our slavery. We should blame only ourselves. If we seek freedom and happiness, let us struggle hard enough for them and we shall surely attain to them. This freedom is the highest ideal of all philosophy and religion. What did Jesus say? He said: "And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free."[1] What is that truth, and what kind of freedom did he mean? We read the Bible, but we do not understand the true meaning of these words. Our eyes are covered with ignorance, therefore, we do not see things as they are. Mere reading will not bring knowledge of Truth and freedom. That knowledge will come when we really desire it and strive after it.

In Vedânta philosophy this freedom is called *Mukti,* or *Moksha.* It means *emancipation from the bondage of selfishness and all other imperfections.* Vedânta

1. St. John, VIII, 32.

philosophy does not speculate, nor theorize, nor give any artifical scheme of salvation. It describes the conditions of our present life and shows the way to freedom. It does not ask any one to accept anything because it is written in this or that book, but it tells him to find the cause of his slavery and remove it. When the cause is removed, the effect is also gone. Proper diagnosis is absolutely necessary for the successful cure of a disease. Slavery is the result of a diseased mind and the cause of that disease is ignorance, or the non-realization of our true life, in which there can be no suffering and no misery. In that true life eternal happiness reigns supreme. Where shall we find that true life? Shall we have to go into a cave, or a forest, or a desert to find it? No; *it is dwelling within the cave of each individual heart and we must search within.* Our real life is the background of our apparent ego. It is called by many names. Some call it God, the Father in heaven, the Blessed life; while others call it the Soul of our souls, the *Atman.* The difference is only in name. The dualists call that Truth God, because they look at it from without. But those who look at that Truth from within, call it the *Atman,* or the Self, the true Spirit, or the Divine nature of man. According to Vedânta, this true life is one, although its expressions are many. When it is looked at through the conditions of time, space, and causation, it appears as the sun, moon, and stars, and all phenomenal forms. They are nothing but so many expressions, or appearances of that one being or true life: They exist as such in relation to our mind, and the true life is behind mind.

True life is unchangeable; *but mind is subject to change.* Out of mistake think that mind is all in all, but there is something within us much more subtle, much more important than what we call mind. This something is expressing itself *through the changeable medium* of mind, the functions of which, as every one knows, are constantly changing. Our intellect grows, our understanding, too, is subject to growth; but does life grow? No; life is always life; there is no growth in it, from less life it cannot grow into life; but the conditions through which the life force manifests, change and grow. We generally mistake the growth of the body for the growth of life. The body grows because it is subject to growth, but life itself is unchanging, free, and divine. It may be asked, if our true life or divine nature is ever within us, is it not self-contradictory to say that we are living as slaves? If it be true that we are living as slaves, must we not admit that our true life or divine nature is a slave too? This question was asked by the seekers after truth in ancient times. The sages of India knew that the true nature of man is free, divine, and perfect, and they answered this question by saying: *'It is the mind which is the cause of the slavery and bondage, and of the freedom of the apparent man, or ego.'* Mind alone makes one act as a slave, and it is also mind which leads one to perfect freedom. When the mind is imperfect and attached to the conditions of phenomenal existence, it keeps the soul in bondage; *but when that same mind has been purified, when it has been freed from all delusions,* it learns to go below the surface of things and begins

to discriminate the eternal from the non-eternal, the Real from the unreal, true life from death, Blessedness from unblessedness, and thus becomes the means of attaining freedom. It makes us realize *what is behind mind,* and brings the ego back to the centre of truth from which it proceeded.

As long as our mind is imperfect we are far away from the central truth of Blessedness. The tendency, however, in each ego is to go back to the centre. Most of the modern thinkers say that life is a struggle with environment. But they do not tell us the object of this struggle. Is it without purpose? No; we are struggling constantly with environment to get back to the centre from which we started, and to break down the walls of *selfishness.* This struggle will end when the mind is purified. After passing through the various stages of evolution, each ego is bound to attain to freedom. We may not struggle for it now, but sooner or later, according to the experience which we have gathered, the struggle for freedom and perfection must begin for us. *We have come into this world to gain experience.* By *experience* is meant the manifestation of latent powers, and the knowledge of the results which proceed from it. A child is born with an undeveloped mind, its wisdom is also undeveloped; but do you think that as it grows older it gathers experience and knowledge entirely from without? No; the germ of all knowledge is already within. If the germ contained no intelligence, it would be impossible for a child to learn anything. We cannot learn if we do not have a tendency to learn. We know that knowledge is nothing but the real property of our own

souls. *External objects only give the suggestions* which bring out that which is hidden within each soul. In trying to manifest the latent powers each soul passes through the various stages of evolution, and after gathering experience in all, reaches perfection.

Those who understand the process of evolution know how painful and tiresome it is to go through many incarnations. Of course, those who think this life is the first and last chance for reaching perfection, have some kind of consolation in the hope of going to heaven, but if they happen to fail in this, their condition is miserable for all eternity. Are not such ideas childish and unscientific? Those who have gone a little deeper, find that these are mistaken notions. The soul existed before the birth of the body and will continue to exist after the death of the body. What we are today is but the result of our past, and our future will be the resultant of what we are now. Each apparent life is one of the links in the chain of the evolution of each individual soul. We may remain as visible or invisible, we may go to a higher or to a lower plane, according to the results of our desires; but each of these states is temporory and comparatively brief.

This process of evolution will continue without cessation until it brings us to that state where we become free from imperfections, sorrows, miseries, etc. This is a long, slow process. Therefore, Vedânta asks, if perfection be the goal of life, why should we wait so long? It says, let us attain more speedily to that goal, let

us live the life of Blessedness, and be happy from this day; from this moment let us live as masters and not as slaves. Many people think that Blessedness, the life of perfection, will come after death, in the grave; but they are mistaken, because after death the life of Blessedness or perfection comes only to those who have attained it in this life. Those who have not attained it here on earth, will not attain it in the grave. We cannot win this state by good works, nor by a belief in a creed or dogma. Virtuous deeds do not produce it as their result. The state of Blessedness unfolds itslef in our souls when we cease to be wretched, and do not mistake the unreal for the Real. Virtue and ethical deeds help the soul by purifying the mind from all selfishness and other imperfections, and by removing the obstacles that obstruct the manifestations of the divine powers. Thus, by doing good works, we prepare the mental field and bring about those favourable conditions under which alone the seed of the divine nature within, can attain to full and perfect expression. When the mind becomes pure it begins to discriminate the real from the unreal, the eternal from the non-eternal, the true life from the apparent; then it begins to feel the necessity for freedom, and enters consciously upon the struggle to attain it.

Two things are requisite for the attainment of the blessed life. First, we should understand the nature of the true life and realize the difference between the true and the apparent life, and their mutual relation. Secondly, we should struggle for freedom by withdrawing our minds from transitory things

and fixing them on that which is eternal; or in other words, we should be unattached to the non-eternal, and love that which is eternal, thus causing our wretchedness to cease. *Through love, and love alone, can the apparent life be united with the true Life.* Our life is determined by the things we love. If you tell me the thing you love, if you show me the thing you love, you show me your life; because we live in what we love. If we love the highest, we live on the highest plane; if we love the mere physical form, we are on the material plane. Try to find out which thing you love most, and then you will see where you are living. Let us try to love the highest. If we love the highest we have come nearer and closer to that eternal Truth which is the centre of the universe. The Blessed life will be ours through love. We cannot attain to that state of Blessedness until we realize the unity of life, because Blessedness *consists not in separateness, but in oneness.* The Reality of the universe is one. Truth is always One. *It cannot be many, although its expression may be multiform.* If we understand the unity of existence, then we have attained the state of divine Life.

Again, love means *the expression of oneness.* We are one with whatever we really love. Therefore, through love we will reach that unity, or Blessedness.[1] Before we can love the highest, we must know it. Love of a

1. It has been thus sung by Shelley the mystic poet:
'I know
That Love makes all things equal: I have heard.
By mine own heart this joyous truth averred:
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod'.
In love and worship, blends itself with God.—Ep. 125-29.

thing is impossible *without the knowledge of the nature of the thing. Therefore, knowledge of true life is the first thing necessary for the attainment of Blessedness.* When the apparent life, or ego knows its real nature, it begins to love that which is unchangeable and one. What then becomes of the lower selfish life? It disappears when true life dawns, and that moment we become free from death, disease, sorrow, suffering and pain, and reach Blessedness. Then we are far beyond the reach of trouble and misery, just as the sun is always beyond the clouds. The clouds may hide the sun but can never touch it. The soul of that man who has realized Blessedness cannot be touched by the imperfections which proceed from selfishness. Self-love then changes into divine love, and he becomes conscious of the greatness and majesty of his true nature. Then he knows that all the powers of the universe have proceeded from the infinite source of powers which lies within each individual soul.

The soul of the apparent man then rests in unwavering repose in that one eternal Being, or the state of Blessedness, and his body and mind work incessantly for work's sake, for helping others. When he turns his love from the many to the eternal One, he reaches the Blessed life. The life of such a man may be called a personification of all the blessed qualities that exist on that highest plane. When the fountain of Blessedness is once opened, all the blessed qualities flow through him eternally. Such a soul, such a pure spirit, is the embodiment of all the best teachings which the scriptures of the world contain. He is the personification of the Sermon on the Mount. That blessed state was

described by Jesus the Christ. He understood it and expressed it at every moment of his earthly life. He loved God; he lived in God, and through God. He manifested Divinity. Each individual soul must eventually do the same. Jesus the Christ was not an exception, as is popularly understood. There cannot be any exception to the laws which govern the universe. Every so-called exception is a law. If Jesus attained to blessedness, we also can attain; each individual soul will attain to that state of Blessedness. If we cannot, then Jesus did no attain it. Such being the law, let us realize it in this life. Then all the actions of our life will be blessed, like those of Christ.

This Blessed life is described in the *Upanishads*: "The realization of the *Atman,* or the eternal Truth, produces a revolution within us. At that time all the knots of desires for transitory things are torn asunder, all doubts cease for ever, all questions are solved; and the soul becomes free, emancipated and perfect."[1] The way to such a blessed life is also described: "That realization will come through constant hearing, constant thinking, and proper meditation." First of all, hear constantly and repeatedly that your true life is Divine, immortal and perfect. Constant hearing will bring before your mental eye this ideal, and then you will begin to feel it. Secondly, think of your present conditions and compare them with your divine nature. See where you are, how far you are below those highest ideals. Let each of your nerves and brain cells pulsate with the idea that your true nature is divine and free. Then you will get

1. *Mundaka Upanishad*, II, 2, 9.

the result of thinking. Thirdly, concentrate your mind on that divine being, on your true nature, on the true life, whose reflection the apparent life is; meditate on the central truth of oneness and unite the apparent ego with that perfect life, perfect nature from which proceed all blessedness, holiness, happiness and peace. Through this concentration and meditation the Blessed life or Divine communion is attained.

APPENDIX I

Regarding the worship of Jahveh in the form of a bull, Dr. A. Kuenen, the professor of theology at the University of Leyden, says: "Side by side with the worship of false gods, there existed in Ephraim a Jahveh-worship, which is strongly condemned by Amos and Hosea, nay, is placed by the latter entirely upon a level with the service of false gods. It is the worship of Jahveh under the form of a bull." [1]

As regards human sacrifices the Doctor says: "We cannot help assuming that those who worshipped Jahveh in this shape also slaughtered men in his honour." [2]

"Jahveh was conceived by those who worshipped him to be a severe being, inaccessible to mankind, whom it was necessary to propitiate with sacrifices and offerings and even with human sacrifices." [3]

As regards sun-worship Dr. Kuenen says: "Originally Jahveh was a god of light or of the sun, and the heat of the sun and consuming fire were considered to proceed from him and to be ruled by him." [4]

Kewan, or Chiun, or Saturn-worship is described in Amos, (v. 26, 27). Dr. Kuenen says: "Amos, in accordance with his contemporaries, ascribed the worship of Saturn to the Israelites in the desert." According to him there was a connection between the Saturn-worship and the dedication of the seventh day, and this custom was afterwards adopted and modified by the worshippers of Jahveh.[5] (See *Religion of Israel,* Vol. I, p. 264.)

1. Vide *Religion of Israel,* Vol. I, p. 73.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
4. Vide *Religion of Israel,* Vol. I, p. 24.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

Tree-worship is mentioned in Deuteronomy (ch. xvi. 21). Grove (or Asherah) stands for a tree or stem driven into the ground close to the altar of Jahveh.

"He (Hezekiah) removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah; and he brake in pieces the brasen *serpent* that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehustan." [6]

According to the best authorities of the present day, Moses lived about the fourteenth century before Christ. Dr. Kuenen says: "The exodus is accordingly placed by one in B.C. 1321, by another in B.C. 1320, and by a third in 1314 B.C. Of course perfect accuracy on this point is unattainable. With this reservation I accept the year 1320 B.C. as the most probable." [7]

It is a well-known fact that the book of Genesis was not written by Moses, but by some priest during the period of Jewish exile in Babylonia. Prof. Kuenen says: "It is true, he (the author of the book of Origins) is a *priest,* and as such is deeply attached to the Jahveh-worship, the ceremonies, and the privileges of the priesthood. The author of the book of Origins was not the first in Israel to narrate history from the creation of the world to the settlement of the people in Canaan. The course which he had to follow, therefore, had been pointed out to him by his predecessors and especially by the author of the second Creation narrative and the accounts connected with it." [8]

Regarding the influence of Parseeism upon Judaism, Dr. Kuenen says: "We discover the traces of the influence of the Persians in the *doctrine of angels.*" Of the idea of Satan he says: "It would be hazardous to see the Persian notion of Auro-Mainyus in this small modification, were it not that the Jewish Satan subsequently acquired the traits of this spirit of

6. Vide Vol. II, Kings, XVIII, 4 (revised version).
7. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 121.
8. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 157-159.

darkness more and more. ...The older Israelitish prophets and prophetic historians had not hesitated to derive even evil, moral evil not excepted, from Jahveh. This shows that the conception of the moral world had undergone an important change."[9] (Vol. III, pp. 37-40.)

On the subject of immortality Dr. Kuenen says: "The Israelite's ideas of the human body and soul and their mutual relation hardly admitted any other notion of man's existence after death than that of resuscitation, i.e., of the miraculous restoration of the body into which the spirit returned. As soon as Jahveh takes back the breath of life, man and beast die. But that spirit does not live on, at all events not independently or individually. ..Let it be taken into consideration, however, that the hope of a resurrection from the dead also existed among the Persians. Does it not become extremely probable, therefore, that Parseeism was not entirely foreign to the rise and the first growth of the Jewish dogma? Must we not also assume here that the germs which lay hidden in Judaism were fertilized by contact with a religion in which they had arrived at maturity?"[10] (Rel. of Is., Vol. III, p. 43).

According to Hindu chronology, Krishna flourished in India about 1400 B.C.

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Swâmi, you said we should be harmonious with everybody. Now we might not hate a person, but still we refrain from associating with him. Should we associate with him anyway?

A. No, you should not associate with everybody, but you should have kindly feelings towards all. For instance, we do

9. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 37-40.
10. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 43.

not associate with tigers, but still we should know that there is God dwelling in the tiger, too; that we are one in spirit with the tiger; that we are not greater than the tiger. We may not associate with him, but we may have the feeling of oneness at the same time. That is the answer which Râmakrishna gave to a disciple who asked the same question. You must see God in the tiger, but you do not have to live with him.

Q. Does the Swâmi think that sometimes the inharmony is only on the surface, that there is harmony in the mind, and for that reason we should use discrimination?

A. Yes, that is true. You should use discrimination. Of course you should not mix indiscriminately with everybody, because you may get into trouble. For instance, if there be a quarrel or fight in the street you should not stand there and be a looker-on, You might be dragged into it. So run away. Yet we know that there is God everywhere. We should use our judgment, be cause common sense is the best sense which the Lord has given us. *This common sense will develop into Divine sense* if we protect it from being crushed by the weight of ignorance and superstition. That is the best sense we have. Do not encourage anything that goes against common sense.

Q. What would be the best method of creating harmony in a society where there is faction and party feeling?

A. It is very difficult to tame human animals. We are all animals. It is easier to tame a tiger than a human being. The human mind goes in so many crooked ways. The nature of the lower animal is simpler. If anyone hates you, send a current of love. Pray for that person. Truth will triumph in the end. Nothing can hurt anyone who is standing for disinterested truth. Self-interest is the cause of all troubles. You will find that those who are trying to create inharmony have self-interest. We must learn to sacrifice our own personal opinions for the sake of the cause. Otherwise, no great work can ever be done. We individuals come and go, but we help towards the cause. That should be the ideal.

Q. Does the soul exist after death?
A. Yes.
Q. What is difference between soul and spirit?
A. According to the Vedânta philosophy, soul, or individual soul, or living soul means the ego. When spiritualists use the word *spirit* they mean the living soul or ego. But this word is also used in a higher sense, and by *spirit* we mean the *Atman,* that is the unchangeable basis of consciousness and intelligence. Consciousness or intelligence in the light which illumines our inner nature, and spirit or *Atman* is the source from which proceeds that light or consciousness. Soul or ego is the receptacle, as it were, of the spirit. It is the *spirit* plus *mind* with its various modifications. Mind includes all the mental activities, such as intellect, understanding, memory, emotion, power of perception, etc.
Q. Does the Vedânta philosophy teach *Nirvâna,* or the annihilation of the soul?
A. No. On the contrary it teaches that the true nature of man is beginningless and endless.
Q. What do you mean by *Nirvâna?*
A. The cessation of all imperfections, and the attainment of perfection and freedom from the bondages of ignorance, selfishness, sorrow, suffering and misery.
Q. Shall we lose our individuality after death?
A. No, we can never lose our individuality. We retain it through all eternity. As the *Atman* or our divine nature is eternal, so is our individuality.
Q. Has the soul any form?
A. No. But it can take any form. The soul or ego is the invisible germ of life which contains within it mind, sense-powers, vital energy and the finer particles of ethereal matter. It is called subtle body, or spiritual body, as in the New Testament, when it appears in a certain finer form.
Q. What is our divine nature?
A. The *Atman* or spirit. It is one with the Universal Spirit or the absolute reality of the universe. It is pure, sinless, immortal and perfect?

Q. Does Vedânta teach that this world is an illusion?
A. No. It teaches that this phenomenal world is the objectified thought of God; that the universe is the result of the evolution of the one eternal energy which is called in Sanskrit *Prakritî*, the Latin *Procreatrix*, *Prajñâ*, or *Mâyâ*, meaning the creative Energy or divine Will. Some translate *Mâyâ* to mean illusion, not knowing its proper meaning. *Mâyâ* never means illusion. When a Vedânta philosopher says the phenomena are *Mâyâ* he means that they are relative, conditional, and not absolute.
Q. Was Jesus a dualist or a monist?
A. Jesus the Christ was a dualist when he said: "Our Father which art in Heaven." He was a qualified non-dualist when he said: "My Father is greater than I," and when He used the illustration of the vine and its branches. He was a monist when he said: "I and my Father are one," and "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." He recognized these three stages and explained them in these ways so that his disciples might comprehend.
Q. What is the practical use of the Vedânta philosophy?
A. The practical use of this philosophy *consists in the knowledge of our true nature.* It teaches us what we are, why we have come into this world, the purpose of life and how to fulfil that purpose, and how we can live as masters and not as slaves. Now, we are living as slaves of our desires, slaves of our senses, attached to the transitory objects of this world. We are denying the real being of our soul and spirit, which are our true nature. By the help of the teachings of Vedânta we can become free from all these bondages, gain spiritual enlightenment and attain perfection in this life. Understanding these teachings helps us to manifest divinity through all the works of our everyday life and to love our neighbours as our true Self, which is divine and one.
Q. How do you define happiness?
A. Happiness is the reflection of our blissful or divine nature on the mind undisturbed by desires, passions or anxieties. Happiness comes in freedom, never in slavery.

Q. What do you mean by freedom?
A. True freedom means the emancipation of the soul from the bondages of ignorance, delusion, selfishness, and other imperfections.

Q. Did you say that the child's mind is like a blank sheet of paper?
A. No. It is an exploded theory started by Locke, that the mind of a new-born child is essentially a *tabula rasa.* Vedânta philosophy says that each child is born with certain tendencies and capacities which are the results of the child's experience during its past incarnation.

Q. Did the soul of the child exist before its birth ?
A. Yes.
Q. When was the soul created then ?
A. The soul was never created by anybody. It has no beginning. It exsits from eternity to eternity.
Q. Do you think each one will attain to blessedness ?
A. Yes. Each individual is bound to reach the Blessed life sooner or later.
Q. Does not Vedânta teach the doctrine of eternal punishment ?
A. No. Vedânta teaches that God never punishes the wicked nor rewards the virtuous. Punishment and reward are but temporary reactions of our own actions.

Q. Is Vedânta optimistic or pessimistic ?
A. Vedânta philosophy is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It enquires into the true nature of good and evil, describes their interdependent relation, and ultimately leads human minds to the realization of Divinity as the life and soul of all phenomenal objects.

Q. Is not the Creator of evil separate from the Creator of good ?
A. Vedânta teaches evolution and not special creation; consequently it has no need of the unscientific conception of two extra-cosmic creators, the one of good and the other of evil.

Q. How do you explain good and evil by the theory of evolution ?

A. In the process of evolution that which appears beneficial to us under certain conditions is called good; and that which is injurious to us in any way is called evil.

Q. What does Vedânta say regarding the inheritance of original sin ?

A. Vedânta does not recognize any such thing as original sin, which one is bound or destined to inherit.

Q. What is the meaning and cause of sin ?

A. Sin means selfishness. It is the result of ignorance of one's true nature, or divine Self.

Q. Does your philosophy teach Vicarious atonement ?

A. No. But it teaches how to attain at-one-ment, or oneness with the Supreme Spirit through the realization of the Divinity within.

Q. Can a sinner reach perfection ?

A. Yes. When a sinner realizes spiritual oneness with his true Self which is pure, sinless and divine, that very moment he becomes free from all sins and imperfections; and he remains so for ever.

Q. Are we responsible for our deeds, good or evil ?

A. Yes. We are responsible for every action, both mental and physical. Moreover, we are bound to reap the results, the deed will surely return to the doer.

Q. How do you differentiate good from evil actions ?

A. By the motives that prompt them. An evil action may result in benefit to others, but is not on that account a good action, nor can it bless the doer of it.

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