

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS

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PREFACE

After fourteen years of continuous work, the compilation, *Swami Vivekananda on the Vedas and Upanishads*, is now ready to come to the light of day. It began, partially as a response to the current confusion over the coherency of Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedanta and partially as a search for the essence of his message to contemporary humanity. As time went by, the volume of the work and a certain compelling pattern of inner organization built up a critical mass and momentum which swept the project forward to its present state of completion. A number of loose ends remain untied, however. Perhaps that is a good thing, for it provides opportunities for readers to make contributions and additions to the overall body of the work.

The invaluable nucleus for this work is Swami Yogeshananda's *Swami Vivekananda Quotes the Upanishads*, an unpublished compilation made from the *Complete Works* in 1960, before much material now available appeared in the public domain. The swami's work did not include the classical four mahavakyas, which have been researched and included in this compilation along with some other major mantras such as *Saccidananda*. I am very much indebted to Swami Yogeshananda's pioneering work.

I sincerely hope that, by bringing this material to light on the Internet we shall, on the one hand, receive feedback from readers everywhere, improving and strengthening the work; and, on the other, will take a step towards establishing the Himalayan majesty of the Vedanta, particularly in its modern incarnation of the Neo-Vedanta of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

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COMPILER'S INTRODUCTION

Re-visioning the Message of Swami Vivekananda

a) *The Need for a Reassessment of Swami Vivekananda and His Neo-Vedanta*

When we read about Swami Vivekananda, in most instances we hear of his charisma, his striking appearance, or his "cyclonic", impetuous movement to effect change in both East and West. And, as often as not, it is conceded that he met with conspicuous success in his undertakings (though Western intellectuals, not keen to be beholden to the Orient, are less enthusiastic on this score than are the Indians) this much is in the common domain.

As the dust settles on the past hundred years, however, we are hearing more and more, even from the precincts of the Ramakrishna Order itself, that Swami Vivekananda was "not a systematic thinker" or, less generously, that he was "inconsistent", "confusing", and even "incoherent". A rather strange string of epithets for a man who is, at the same time, touted as

the eternal companion of the avatar Ramakrishna! Can we ascribe such exalted status to one whose thinking processes were, in the common estimation, inferior even to a merely normal, educated person?

More insidiously, there is also a movement afoot among orthodox, scholarly Hindus and traditionalists of other faiths which asserts that Sri Ramakrishna, as also Swami Vivekananda and the Order he founded are anti-intellectual and ultimately responsible for the contemporary breakdown of the Hindu tradition. Again, a rather odd evaluation of two personalities whose avowed mission in life was the re-establishment of the Eternal Religion and the culture which emanates from it!

To someone who has benefited immensely from the so-called *new* (Neo-) Vedanta of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, such assertions come as a surprise and, at the same time, a challenge. Why are such wild statements being made, even by swamis of the Ramakrishna Order? Are Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda merely "paper tigers" with no enduring substance to them? The testimony of one's own life immediately cries, "No!" and a deep conviction arises that, no matter what contradictions and inconsistencies may appear on the surface of Neo-Vedanta, there **must be** a coherency, meaning and a profoundly supportive and nurturing structure to Neo-Vedanta that, as yet, is not fully apparent.

The material you have before you is a first step towards an exploration of the structure of Neo-Vedanta, a response to the oft-repeated statement that "Swami Vivekananda was not a *thinker*, merely a Hindu reformer." The possibility that he is a Vedantic Acharya in the line of the Vedic rsis, Buddha and Sri Shankaracharya is not entertained, far less explored; and therefore the pronouncements on his "inadequacies" are self-fulfilled.

However, to be fair, it is indeed true to say that the materials of Swami Vivekananda's teaching, as extant today, do not readily lend themselves to the sort of systematization that is needed to see the inner structure of his thought. The primary reason for this situation is that he died at the age of 39, worn out by his Herculean labors to awaken the spiritual currents of both India and the West. Although he yearned for the quiet and solitude to write a systematic treatise on Sri Ramakrishna's new approach to the Vedanta, his hectic schedule of travel and reform made it impossible for him to live a full span of life, far less to write a philosophical *magnum opus*. In the absence of such a blueprint from the swami himself, the organization of his copious works has proven to be challenging. His published *Complete Works* are proverbially a thicket in which it is all too easy to get lost and hopelessly confused! One begins to see how his detractors have arrived at their position, but not to give up hope of finding a method by which the inner structure of his work can at last be demonstrated.

b) A Basic Point of Reference for the Assessment of Neo-Vedanta

At this juncture, what seems to be necessary is to establish a reference point to which the whole project of revisioning Swami Vivekananda's message can be related. Almost certainly the most basic and obvious one is that he perceived himself as a Vedantin and that he believed his message to be a commentary on Sri Ramakrishna's re-living and re-interpreting the Upanishads in the contemporary era. This is the matrix from which everything else emanated. Such a view

is, from one standpoint, Swami Vivekananda's "application" to be taken seriously as a Vedantic Acharya or teacher, his "position statement" for any further evaluation. It provides the basis, not only for a rational and systematic assessment of his work, but also for the process of his acceptance as a Vedantic teacher. Traditionally, any person who calls himself a Vedantic teacher is expected to accept the Upanishads as the source of truth and to comment upon them and their two auxiliary texts, the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras*. From that standpoint, Swami Vivekananda could be readily dismissed as a Vedantic Acharya., because he failed to produce a written and systematic commentary on these texts.

We have already mentioned how the swami was cheated of time to carry out this basic work, despite his desire to do so; but not of infinite opportunities to introduce the Upanishadic worldview into every nook and cranny of his vision of contemporary life. We find, therefore, in the catacombs of the *Complete Works*, as well as in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature generally, a wealth of comments by Swami Vivekananda on the *Upanishads*, *Gita* and *Brahma Sutras*, gems lying strewn helter-skelter as the swami responded spontaneously - and gave his very life - to the crying needs of East and West.

On pondering the problem of the swami's "inconsistencies" it therefore seemed an obvious first step to gather up these gems and arrange them in the traditional patterns of Vedanta which is, after all, the very template of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. If, under the heading of the four Vedas and their subsections, especially the Upanishads, we could gather the scattered treasures of Swami Vivekananda's utterances, would we be in a better position to see the structure and coherency of his thought? It is my hope that the reader of this compilation is now in a position to answer that question for him- or herself. Whoever can encompass the sheer volume of this work, amounting to nearly half of the nine-volume *Complete Works*, will see how it attests to the central position of the Vedas and Upanishads in the thought of Swami Vivekananda. Again, the concentration of the swami's wide-ranging and intense thought under the rubric of a commentary on the Vedas and Upanishads puts it, as it were, in a super-cooled crucible where its powerful internal dynamics can be more readily studied than in the freewheeling milieu of his spontaneous utterances to an infinite variety of people and situations. It is as if we have peeled off several layers from the swami's work and are laying bare the core form from which everything else takes its origin.

Encountering such "DNA" of Swami Vivekananda's core thought can be nothing less than a total experience. As one enters into his "commentaries" as presented in this work, one finds, as it were, *terra firma* disappearing and the rapid unfolding of universe after universe, each expanding infinitely and yet at the same time as close as one's jugular vein, to borrow a phrase from the *Koran*. It is my belief that such encounters can and will open up new vistas into what Swami Vivekananda was about, not just in the piecemeal way that tends to result when we dabble on the surface of his vast and protean works.

c) Approaching Neo-Vedanta as an Integral Whole

Here we are entering into the very paradigm of the Vedanta itself, the deep matrix from which have emanated the Upanishads, Buddha, Sri Shankaracharya and the entire galaxy of the Vedantic tradition as we know it. The present work plugs us into the very heart of Vedantic

experience, enabling us to grasp the essence of all that preceded Neo-Vedanta and at the same time to flow into the endless new forms that bubble up continuously in Swami Vivekananda's thought. This material, selected on the basis of its conformity with the Vedantic archetype is, I believe, the basis on which a truly critical and authentic evaluation of the structure of Neo-Vedanta can begin to be made. This is the mode in which the compilation took form and in which I hope readers will approach it. No doubt many a familiar or arresting quote will attract recognition or beguile with its novelty; but my purpose is, in fact, to go beyond individual quotes to a sense of the whole and an inkling of the total structure. I believe that, if we grasp the gestalt itself, each quote will then shine, not just in its own radiance, but in the radiance of the interconnected whole. This is the best way, in my view, to reach a sense of the consistency and cogency of the Neo-Vedanta of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Approaching the work in this spirit imposes on the compiler a rather different task than merely providing inspirational texts for the faithful. Seeking the gestalt inevitably imposes the mandate to be as all-inclusive as possible, even at the risk of bringing in material, from some standpoints "peripheral". Certain broad categories, however, should be covered:

1. East and West, the two empirical domains of Swami Vivekananda's work, the mirror-image needs of which elicited from Swami Vivekananda different, but complementary responses.
2. The integrated four yogas, the platform from which he addressed the task of self-transformation of contemporary humanity.
3. The concrete and the metaphysical, the "this"-world and the "other"-world, both of which have a valued place in Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedanta and exist as poles in his scheme of self-transcendence and self-manifestation, the two aspects of his approach to the issue of maya at the very core of Vedanta and, for that matter, the human condition anywhere.
4. Evolution and involution of consciousness, the twin processes which weave together all of the phenomena related to the three foregoing categories; the ascent to and descent from the divine and the infinite relationships which result along their trajectories.
5. Concretizations which encapsulate or are holograms of the Reality from which all of the above emanate, in which they exist, and to which they return. Some examples of such holograms would be Swami Vivekananda himself, his poems which encapsulate truth beyond linear thinking, and some of his more aphoristic, *mahavavya*-like statements which defy all logical analysis but overwhelmingly convey the integrated truth of Vedanta.

This rather formidable list is an attempt to cover all possible bases of human knowledge and experience. It is not one which I preconceived and imposed on the materials, but rather the algorithm, as you might say, which emerged from the data when it was all put together. Its validity and applicability are questions too recondite to be entered into here - that task will be tackled elsewhere. For the moment, I put it on record as a set of criteria of inclusiveness and completeness with which I have evaluated and developed this compilation. Once discovered, I consciously applied it to the final selection and overall organization of the materials, trying to give East and West due representation in the commentaries, as also each of the four yogas,

"this" and "the other" worlds, evolution and involution; and finally, occasional passages of Swami Vivekananda's poetry which, I felt, encapsulate the very essence of his commentary on a particular mantra.

This attempt at inclusiveness and wholeness has necessarily meant the utilization of materials which are not, at first sight, strictly quotes or comments directly on the Upanishads. The bulk of such material was delivered in the West, where Swami Vivekananda was much more freewheeling in his translations and interpretations of the Vedantic texts than he was in India. Fortunately, there are several Western lectures from 1896 explicitly on individual Upanishads which provide a baseline for Swami Vivekananda's handling of Upanishadic mantras. From his renditions there we can extrapolate to other materials, especially the copious California lectures of 1900, where the swami "took off", as it were, into radically new dimensions with fascinating new angles on his Vedantic commentaries. Again, in some mantras, we find that Swamiji, in his definite commentaries on the Upanishads establishes certain coinages of his own - such as *soul of our souls* in *Kena Upanishad*, v.4, or *work for work's sake* in *Gita* 2.47, which have such a life of their own that I have included a few other passages containing them, even if not strictly related to a commentary on the Upanishads. The thinking here was to highlight and underscore the swami's line of thought, always in the framework of our search for the total picture of Swami Vivekananda's own version of Vedanta. Again, probably as part and parcel of his holistic approach, possibly because he was almost always quoting off the cuff, Swami Vivekananda not infrequently blends two Upanishadic mantras into one, or combines an Upanishadic mantra with another text, such as Sri Shankara's *Vivekacudamani* or *Nirvanasatkam*. Where such an amalgamation has occurred, I mention the fact and use the materials in both of the sources.

d) *The Broad Picture: Swami Vivekananda's Introduction to the Vedas*

Having laid out the materials according to all of these criteria, I clearly saw that Swami Vivekananda's "commentaries" are power-packed, often counterintuitive, even controversial. Perhaps the main reason for this impression is that he deals so often with what has traditionally been considered "secular" concerns, flying in the face of traditional religious discourse. He thus sets up a powerful voltage between the conservative religious tradition and his deep concern with the burning problems of the contemporary world.

So strong was this sense of tension in the commentaries that I decided to embark on a compilation of Swami Vivekananda's general remarks on the Vedas and Upanishads. I thought that this would provide, in a less aphoristic way than in the commentaries themselves, his basic approach to Vedanta and how he integrates it with the contemporary world. I discovered huge amounts of material which, I felt, lent itself to presentation as a historical narrative in what I have called *The Introduction*. There Swami Vivekananda traces Vedanta from its origin with the Vedic seers and the culture that supported them to Buddha, Sri Shankaracharya, and on to the present day. Laying out the basic tenets of Vedanta on God, humanity and the world as well as its characteristic practices for developing a spiritual approach to life, the Introduction traces how different emphases and interpretations emerged in response to the unfolding historical process. In particular, the introductory materials bring out the problems and conditions of the

modern world, and just how Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda propose to address them and mold them to the Vedantic paradigm.

While the commentaries can well be read without the Introduction, especially by those thoroughly familiar with the Neo-Vedanta of Swami Vivekananda, for others, or for those who feel the historical dimension can deepen their appreciation, the Introduction provides a frame of reference relating the commentaries to the whole panorama of Vedanta - yet another gestalt in our study.

e) **The Materials and How They Have Been Put Together**

1. **Selection of the Materials**

Having arrived at the criteria of selection and basic presentation, we come to the question of precisely which materials to use in the commentaries and how to organize them. The response to the first question was, in line with our inclusive approach, to include all materials with credentials of authenticity. This decision spread the net beyond the *Complete Works* to the writings and testimony of his brother-disciples (including the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*) and his students, such as Nivedita and Sharat Chandra Chakravarty. Some interesting accounts and observations by other friends and acquaintances pertaining to Swami Vivekananda's views on the Vedas and Upanishads were also included in the biographic accounts which embellish the commentaries on some of the major mantras.

With regard to the deployment of appropriate passages for inclusion in the present compilation I have differentiated between passages with formal, more or less literal quotes of the mantras and those without. The latter groups I have called "commentaries" rather than "quotes"; their suitability for inclusion is, of course, open to discussion. The criteria on which such commentaries have been included are:

1. Wording of the mantra as a paraphrase rather than as a literal quote. As mentioned previously, there is a definite difference between the way Swamiji translated mantras in India and in the West. In India he tended to be more literal and literary, while in the West he was much freer with language and concepts, often giving loose paraphrases rather than complete or precise translations.
2. Obvious comments on the mantra without an actual quotation or paraphrase of it - again, more common in the West.
3. Passages which contain unique key words, phrases or thoughts which Swamiji used in other, bona fide translations of the same mantra - more common, again, in the West.
4. Poems or poetic passages which seem to contain the essence of Swamiji's thoughts on any mantra, which I have placed at the end of the comments as a "meditation".

In short, materials were used which are cognate with the more recognizable, traditional passages. I feel it is important to include such passages because it ensures coverage of his message for the West, a very vital ingredient of his overall formulation of Vedanta,

2 Assignment of the Materials to Their Sources

In the Vedas and Upanishads the same mantra may occur in more than one place, e.g. the parable of the two birds we usually think of as coming from the *Mundaka Upanishad* occurs originally in the *Rg Veda*. I have assigned such mantras to the earliest source when Swamiji does not assign it himself, or to the source to which he himself most often assigns it, e.g. "There the sun shines not" has been put in the *Katha Upanishad* (2.2.15) rather than in the *Mundaka* (2.2.12)

In a number of places Swami Vivekananda quotes mantras which are composites of two Upanishadic mantras, or of the Upanishads and the Gita. These I have placed in the comments on both sources.

3. The Organization of the Materials

(i) According to the Vedas

With regard to the question of organization, I have followed the traditional division into four Vedas, under each of which the materials appear as Samhita (especially in the *Rig Veda*), occasional Aranyakas, and the main body of the work, the Upanishads, presented in the sequence found in S. Radhakrishnan's *The Principal Upanishads*. Apart from the literary convenience of clustering materials from the same source together, this method also seems to bring out the special emphasis of each Veda and to demonstrate how it was developed in the Upanishads belonging to it. It also served to concentrate in one place all of Swami Vivekananda's insights into five major themes of Vedanta, as follows:

Rig Veda	Creation, its presiding deities and inner workings
Shukla Yajur Veda	Human divinity, the Self and deification of the world.
Krishna Yajur Veda	Human freedom, realization and transfiguration
Sama Veda	Divine cosmology, universal individuality and oneness with the universe.
Atharva Veda	The keys to universal knowledge on all levels.

Here again is the inclusive overview this study is devoted to, an exploration of the central themes of humanity and its relationship to God and the world.

(ii) The Line of Thought within Each Mantra

The material accumulated for each mantra has been organized throughout along the same basic lines and presented in this sequence of thought:

- i) A statement by Swami Vivekananda of established facts and preceding theories on the subject of the mantra.
- ii) Swami Vivekananda's re-formulation of these facts and theories from the standpoint of Neo-Vedanta, creating a different "space" to be explored.
- iii) A general statement in Swami Vivekananda's words of the yoga or methods by which an understanding of this new angle of vision may be obtained.
- iv) An exploration of the form those general methods take in each of the four yogas: karma - bhakti - raja - jnana, as also the "fifth yoga" of integration of the basic four.
- v) A word-picture of the transformations brought about by the practice of the yogas according to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta, either in the form of Swami Vivekananda's own experience or his vision for future humanity.

An illustration of how this line of thought works out in practice is given immediately below in section 3, *Captions for Mantras and Headings for Sections and Subsections*.

In many cases, of course, the material is scant; sometimes only a translation of a mantra without any commentary occurs. From there the amount of material varies enormously up to a maximum of nearly eighty entries for *Sat-chit-ananda*. Naturally, the degree of organization depends upon the amount of material for any mantra, but the basic approach just described is used in order to create a systematic line of approach which again, permits easier comparison of the commentaries of different mantras.

3. Captions for Mantras and Headings for Sections and Subsections

When the comments on the mantra are copious or substantial the mantra has been given a caption derived from Swami Vivekananda's own interpretation of it, e.g. I am God for *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, 1.4.10.

Whenever there are entries in excess of three to five under each mantra, it was felt necessary to create sections and subsections with heading in order to keep explicit the line of thought we have just presented in the previous section. Such headings were made by extracting from the text itself important thoughts and phrases which, when put together, indicate the gist of the section or subsection in Swami Vivekananda's own words, e.g.:

Chandogya Upanisad 6.2.1, One Existence without a Second:

a) The Proposition That the Absolute Is Manifesting Itself as Many

1. Many Different Meanings of the Word "Existence"

2. The Idea of God in Advaita Is Oneness; the Idea of Many Is Caused by Our Minds

b) We See The Self According to Different Vision

c) Freeing Ourselves from the Variety Due to Name and Form

1. We Must Free Ourselves from Our Bodies

2. You Cannot Be Happy unless You Serve the One in a Suffering World

3. As You Unfold Yourself the Reflection Grows Clearer

4. In Jnana You Lose Sight of Variety and See Only Unity

d) I Have Experienced the Blissful Reality of the One

e) Meditation

As mentioned in the preceding section, this sequence also demonstrates the line of thought presented in all of the *laRiger* commentaries.

(iv) Numbering of Entries and Listing of References

In order to help anyone who would like to go to the original sources of any quote or passage of comment, each has been assigned a number in brackets on the right hand margin. The list of references at the end of the comments on any mantra is listed by the same numbering system and gives not only the volume and page number of any entry, but also its title and date, when applicable. This latter detail is to assist readers trying to find anything, especially in the *Complete Works* where it is so notoriously difficult to find anything, or in the individual version of *Inspired Talks*, where date is the key to finding anything.

f) Conventions of Language

In going through these translations and comments of Vedic and Upanisadic mantras by Swami Vivekananda and comparing them with versions in English by his predecessors and contemporaries, I have discovered that in a few cases Swami Vivekananda used the translations

of others, or that such translations have been inserted by editors in instances where Swami Vivekananda gave only the *Sanskrit* original. Otherwise, Swami Vivekananda made his own translations, more often than not extemporaneously, which are invariably simpler and more direct than the translations of others and often radically different in the use of language. To check the authenticity of Swami Vivekananda's own quotes as they appear in the texts we are using, I have made every effort to find "original sources" - either completely unedited, or from early sources handled by editors with a light touch. I have then organized these "corrected" versions in chronological order (when there is more than one), along with data as to who edited the material, whether *Sanskrit* was given with it, and to what kind of audience it was given, material which will be presented as an appendix to this work. This method has made it possible to trace which are the most authentic versions, as also the most oft-recurring, how the swami modified his translations according to his audiences, and with the reliable and comparable versions, just how he himself modified his use of language with the passage of time. From this background study I have been able to select more confidently one quotation which can be used as the "lead quote" for each mantra, i.e. the one which most accurately expresses the swami's interpretation of it.

Unfortunately, due to lack of time and resources I have not been able to present the original sources of the comments, though in many cases, these unedited sources contain many ideas and expressions of extreme interest and different from what appears in the *Complete Works*. For the sake of accuracy references to lead quotes heading up the comments on the mantra (Reference #1) or to entries that consist only of quotes are to the original source with which they have been brought in line rather than the *Complete Works* or other heavily edited source. Other references are to the *Complete Works* or other standard source. In such cases, however, the quotes of the mantra have also been adjusted to the original source, though what that source is is not indicated in the list of references. It is to be found in the systematic presentation of quotes and their sources which will form an appendix to this work.

With regard to the language of the materials generally, I have followed the following conventions:

1. Sanskrit words are written in phonetic English spelling.
2. In referring to the deity, capitalization has been minimized in order to preserve the flow of ideas and language. While proper names have of course been capitalized, pronouns have been capitalized mostly when in the nominative, e.g. I am He, unless the sense of the sentence absolutely requires the capitalization of pronouns in other cases. Adjectives referring to the deity have been capitalized only when used as nouns, e.g. "There is happiness only in the Infinite" vs. "I have seen that ancient One".
3. I have taken the liberty of changing the punctuation of texts, especially from the *Complete Works*, where often very long sentences require more than a string of commas to make sense. I have tended to use hyphens more liberally than does the *Complete Works* to indicate sudden breaks in thought which occur quite frequently in what is largely spoken materials. This usage is in line with the punctuation of the Californian material which was done in the West in the 1960s.

4. In keeping with nineteenth century usage Swami Vivekananda routinely referred to "man" instead of "humanity" and to the deity as "He". I have decided to use tactful gender neutrality in this text, as is meant for a general audience.

5. I have used abbreviations and some other conventions for the names of the texts used in this compilation, a list of which follows immediately.

With the principles and methods I have just described and enumerated, I now entrust this vessel of Swami Vivekananda's Neo-Vedanta to the ocean of the contemporary world, especially as it flows through the Internet, the highway of ideas today. If the vessel is crafted properly, it will make its way steadily over the black and troubled waters of the present day and, in doing so, will bring coherence, calm and light to what is at present the darkness and confusion in which we are caught up.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS

INTRODUCTION

PART I: THE ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

Section 1: Definition and Eulogy of the Vedas and Vedanta

Chapter 1: The Vedas in Swami Vivekananda's Own Life

Chapter 2: Some Preliminary Definitions

Chapter 3: The Glory of the Vedas

PART I, SECTION 1:

DEFINITION AND EULOGY OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

Chapter 1: The Vedas in Swami Vivekananda's Life

a) Sri Ramakrishna's Training of Swami Vivekananda

Sri Ramakrishna would ask Naren to read those scriptures which treat solely of Brahman the Absolute. He did not ask the other disciples to do this. Theirs was a different path - theirs was the path of bhakti or love for God. But Sri Ramakrishna saw that his was the path of jnana, or transcendental insight. His main message was to be the incomparable glory of the Vedanta.

Naren, however, would refuse to read them. The Master would say "Well Naren! Then do just read a little of them to me. I desire to hear them. You need not pay any attention to the text." Yes, in that sense he would read them to the Master. Many were the times when the Master pleaded thus, many were the times when the disciple read, and in the reading, the ideas would burn into his soul. He lost himself in the reading. Thus, the *Yoga*, the *Adhyatma Ramayana*, and some of the important Upanishads were read by Naren either in the presence of the Master or by himself.

"All this is Brahman; (*Cha.Up.3.14.1*) what is perceived and what is not perceived, what is known, and what is not known; these heaven-worlds, this mortal life, the Vedas and what are not the Vedas, the beginning and what is not the beginning, all this is Brahman. The soul is Brahman [*Mand. Up.,2*], the gods are Brahman, the universe is Brahman, truth is Brahman, and all is Brahman. There is nothing but Brahman. Whoso realizes this, verily attains unto the Highest. He is freed from the deceptions of the senses and the intellect. He sees nothing but Brahman. To him Brahman has become all in all. As a snake throws off its skin, so does he throw off all limitations and himself becomes the shining One. [*Brih.Up.4.4.7*] He himself becomes Brahman." [*Mund. .Up.3.2.9*] Such is the spirit and the text of the Upanishads; and as Naren read sublime ideas like these, his soul would soar and soar like a great eagle, above the pettiness and the commonplaces of this world. And the soul of Sri Ramakrishna would soar higher and higher, beyond the confines of even the highest spiritual limitations. It would be beyond and beyond and Beyond, until his body would become rigid in spiritual ecstasy, and all thought was left behind and all sense-consciousness dimmed by the glory of that indescribable effulgence of that Absolute Brahman, which only they can know who have been utterly drowned to all objective life, and from whom all form, thought and personality have dropped off. And Sri Ramakrishna, entering this condition of being became a living God, become one with Brahman. What were the Upanishads but the utterance of that consciousness into which he had soared? Such was Naren's training at the feet of his Master. And Naren breathed in the pureness of that air, feeling the freedom of the Infinite in the great depths of spiritual emotion. "Shivo'ham, Shivo'ham" (*Nirvanashatkam*) "Brahman is real, Brahman alone is real, the world is a myth. And verily, the soul itself is Brahman." [Shankaracharya: *Brahmajnanavali Mala 5.21*] Thus rang the note in his soul.

Naren saw in the life of Sri Ramakrishna the full meaning and the ripe blossoming-forth of all that the Upanishads taught. The example of the Master, his own eagerness as a disciple, his own great power in the spiritual faculty of understanding - these were the factors in that making up of thought and insight which later burst forth, for him, into the blessedness of the highest Advaita realization. Aye, he attained that state himself where all is Brahman. And this was the greatest event in all his life. All other realizations and events led up to and were afterwards tributary to this. He came to accept all the gods, and "I believe in Brahman and the gods" was his luminous declaration.

In him who became the crown of the Vedanta, who became the spirit incarnate of the Advaita Vedanta and the living utterance of the Upanishads, whose message was to stir the world - verily in him, the Paramahansa Ramakrishna, he saw the effulgence of Brahman, verily, he saw it as his own Soul. Verily he saw this in nirvikalpa samadhi, which is the awareness of the infinite Consciousness and the seeing of the infinite vision.

Such was the training of Naren. Little by little, he was lifted out of doubt into beatitude, out of darkness into effulgence, out of anguish of mind and heart into blessedness and bliss, out of the seething vortex of the world into the grand expanse of the world of realization. He was taken, little by little, and by the power of Sri Ramakrishna, out of bondage into infinite freedom. He was taken out from the pale of a little learning into that omniscience which is the consciousness of Brahman. He was lifted out of all objective conceptions of the Godhead into the glorious awareness of the subjective nature of true Being, above form, above thought, above sense, above all relative good and evil, into the sameness and reality and the absolute - beyondness of Brahman.

(1)

Sri Ramakrishna was the man of realization. Naren aspired to be even like him. And his desire was fulfilled. It was because he had lived in the garden of Dakshineswar and in that of Cossipore with the Master that he was later on able to stand before large audiences and utter the words of a gospel which stirred the human heart to its very depths. In the presence of his guru Naren dwelt in the spiritual world, the inhabitants of which were the simple-minded and the simple-hearted devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, the light of which was the beautifully human and humanly divine personality of the Master. Naren came to stand on firm ground because he was touching the human foundation of all religious systems. The voice of his master, the tears and smiles during his spiritual experiences, the manner in which he walked and ate and performed the thousand and one things of human life, became gospels and apocalyptic revelations unto him. And how shall divinity ever be revealed if not in all the sweetness and in spite of all the limitations of human personality? Naren sat at the feet of his Master and in his eyes he read the whole meaning of the Vedas and Upanishads. Spirituality was therefore no longer garbed for him in fine but impractical metaphysics; it presented itself in all the simplicity and in all the divinity of human life.(2)

(b) Swami Vivekananda's Visions of Vedic Rishis

Swami Vivekananda always thought of himself as a child of India, a descendant of the rishis. While he was a modern of the moderns, few Hindus have been able to bring back the Vedic days and the life of the sages in the forests of ancient India as he did. Indeed, sometimes he seemed to be one of the rishis of that far off time come to life again, so living was his teaching of that ancient wisdom...

In a dream or vision... he saw sages gathered in a holy grove asking questions concerning the ultimate Reality. A youth among them answered in a clarion voice: "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss, even ye who dwell in higher spheres, I have found the ancient One, knowing whom alone ye shall be saved from death over again!" [*Swet.Up.2.5 and 3.8*]

Asked where he had learnt to chant with that marvelous intonation which never failed to thrill the listener, he shyly told of a dream or vision in which he saw himself in the forest of ancient India hearing a voice - his voice - chanting the sacred Sanskrit verses.

(3)

"It was evening in that age when the Aryans had only reached the Indus. I saw an old man seated on the bank of the great river. Wave upon wave of darkness was rolling in upon him, and he was chanting from the Rig Veda. Then I awoke, and went on chanting. They were the tones that we used long ago... Shankaracharya has caught the rhythm of the Vedas, the national cadence. Indeed, I always imagine that he had some vision such as mine when he was young, and recovered the ancient music that way."(4)

Swami Vivekananda had this vision in his parivrajaka days, some two years after the mahasamadhi of Sri Ramakrishna, probably in January of 1888. On that occasion he had the vision of an old man standing on the banks of the Indus and chanting riks or Vedic mantrams, in such a distinctly different form from the accustomed methods of intonation that it could be compared rather to Gregorian chanting. The passage which he heard was that salutation to Gayatri which begins: "O come, Thou effulgent One, Thou bestower of blessings, signifier of Brahman in three letters. Salutation be to Thee, O Gayatri, Mother of Vedic mantrams, Thou who hast sprung from Brahman." The Swami believed that through this perception he had recovered the musical cadences of the earliest Aryan ancestors and thought that his own Master must have had a somewhat similar experience in which he had caught "the rhythm of the Vedas." He also found something remarkably sympathetic to this mode of chanting in the poetry of Shankaracharya.(5)

c) The Education of His Brother-Disciples

May of 1887: [After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna] Narendra and other members of the math often spent their evenings on the roof [of the monastery at Baranagore]. There they devoted a great deal of time to discussion of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Shankaracharya, Ramanuja, Jesus Christ and of the Hindu philosophy, European philosophy, the Vedas, Puranas, and Tantras. (6)

A few days after the Master had passed away, the mother of Swami Premananda invited Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples to her village home at Antpur. Swami Vivekananda took them all to Antpur. Their hearts were then afire with renunciation; they felt great agony of sorrow at the loss of their Master; and all were engaged in intense spiritual practices. The only thought they had during those days, and the only effort they made, was for the realization of God and the attainment of peace. When they were at Antpur, they applied themselves much more intensely to spiritual practices. They would light a fire with logs under the open sky and spend the nights there in japa and meditation. Swami Vivekananda would talk with us fervently about renunciation and self-sacrifice. Sometimes he would make his brother-disciples read the *Gita*, the *Bhagavata*, the Upanishads, etc., and hold discussions on them. (7)

[At the Baranagore monastery], Narendra... would illustrate the historical import of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings upon the present generation of Hindus who were educated in Western lines of thought, and would show how his life was destined to alter their minds and the entire character of their theological outlook, thus bringing them back from drafting in an ever-widening radical divergence from Hinduism into the understanding of and concurrence with the Hindu ideals of worship and with the contents of the Upanishads. He would say to them, "The

time will come when you will see what part Ramakrishna has played in the re-Hinduization of Hinduism and the consolidation, into a compact form, of its essential elements."...

Through loving discipline he infused into his brother-disciples the fire and a wider knowledge of the mission that was before them, the mission which was entrusted by the Master into his charge for fruition and dissemination. Most of the sublime ideas which he gave to the world in the time of his fame were not new to his brother-disciples, except in modes of expression, for they had heard them in these Baranagore days, or even earlier at the garden-house at Cossipore.

Most of all, the leader initiated his fellow-monks into the living realities of Hinduism, making them conscious of the values of its thought and spirit.... He made them master the Upanishads, the *Yoga Vashishtha*, the Puranas, and the other Shastras, until they knew why the rishis were so exclusive to those who were outside the pale of Hinduism, but their wisdom was to brahmanize them and brahmanize the shudras.(8)

[After his return to Baranagore from his first pilgrimage to the north of India in early 1888, Swami Vivekananda] instilled into his brothers all the ideas he had gathered as a parivrajaka. He broadened their perspective, instructing them for days and days and making them interested in the spiritual regeneration of the nation. He tried to eradicate their provincial consciousness and make them think of all the separate parts of Hindustan as composing an indivisible unit. And the spirit of that unit, he said, was that of the Vedas and Upanishads, and its strength the supersensuous vision and the most wonderful outlook upon life that the human mind and heart had ever conceived. In Ramakrishna India would be one, he said. And this particular training of mind made them capable of bridging the barriers that separate one province or one caste from another. For in turn, they were to cross the boundary line which modern Hinduism, in its more rigid orthodoxy, had determined as the immovable barrier between one caste and another, between one nation and another.(9)

[In 1890], Swami Vivekananda took Swami Akhandananda with him on his journey [of pilgrimage] to Western India.... At Almora, they met Swami Saradananda and Vaikuntha Sanyal (Swami Kripananda).... They stayed at Srinagar, Garhwal, and stayed there for a month and a half. On the way there, they took lessons on the Upanishads from Swami Vivekananda, and spent their time in intense prayer and meditation at Srinagar.(10)

At Srinagar, the monks took up their abode in a lonely hut by the banks of the Alakananda river in which, they came to know, Swami Turiyananda had lived before. In this hut Swami Vivekananda and his brothers passed many days, living on madhukari bhiksha, which means literally, begging a few morsels of food from each house in the village, "even as the bee supports itself with particles of honey from each flower." During these travels and specially here, the Swami instructed his brother-disciples in the teachings of the Upanishads. For days and days in Srinagar, he spent most of the time reading to them these scriptures until their minds became saturated with their meaning and their message. While at Srinagar, he met a school-master, by caste a vaishya, who was a recent convert to Christianity. The Swami spoke to him on the glories of the Vedic religion, and he became repentant of having renounced the

glories of the sanatana dharma and longed to return to the Hindu fold. He became greatly attached to the monks and often entertained them in his house.(11)

[In December, 1890, Swami Vivekananda and six of his brother disciples met by chance at Meerut and lived together in an impromptu math for two months. Swami Turiyananda wrote of this episode]: It is well-nigh impossible to express the happiness our stay in Meerut brought to us. During those days Swami Vivekananda taught us everything, right from mending a pair of shoes to chanting the holy Chandi. On the one hand, he would read out and explain to us the Vedanta, the Upanishads, Sanskrit dramas, etc., and on the other, he would teach us how to cook pilau, kalia etc.(12)

d) Vedic Studies in Gujerat, 1891 - 1892

At Porbandar, Swami Vivekananda was a guest at Sankar Pandurang's place. He was the governor of Porbandar (Sudampur). Swami Vivekananda said that in the whole of India he had not seen Pandurang's equal in Vedic learning. As a commentary on the Atharva Veda was not available, he compiled one himself. Swami Vivekananda used to speak with him in Sanskrit and in a short time become an adept in it. (13)

Sankar Pandurang [was] a learned pandit attached to the court of the Maharaja of Porbandar. At that time he was translating the Vedas and he also begged the Swami to remain and to help him in this extremely arduous task. So both worked constantly for several months, the Swami interesting himself more and more deeply in the study and interpretation of the Vedas, perceiving the greatness of thought contained therein. Here also, he finished reading the *Mahabhashya*, the great commentary of Patanjali on Panini's grammar. (14)

The more he studied the Vedas, the more he pondered over the philosophies which the Aryan rishis had thought out, the surer he was that India was in very truth the mother of religions, the cradle of civilization, and the fountainhead of spirituality. But he was bitter in his soul that all this glory should seemingly lie buried under ignorance and that the millions were unconscious of it. He knew that the tides of the invasion of foreign cultures for centuries had incalculably swept away many of the glories of the culture of the race in the eyes of the people themselves, and that many of the pandits, who ought to be the custodians of this culture, had become mere chatterers of Sanskrit grammar and philosophy and were only as so many phonographic records of its past, without being possessed of its spirit and of the sense of responsibility as to their adding to that culture the fruits of original, intellectual and spiritual researches. (15)

During his stay in Khandwa, the civil judge gave a dinner to the Bengali residents in honor of Swami Vivekananda. Before going to attend the party, he took with him a book, which was a collection of some of the Upanishads, saying that there should be some reading of an interesting and instructive nature to pass the time usefully before and after dinner. When the guests arrived, he read some of the very intricate and abstruse passages and explained them in such a way as a boy could understand. There was among the guests Babu Pyerlal Ganguly, a pleader, who was held to be a more than average Sanskrit scholar of that part, who took the role of critic. But when he went on listening to the illuminating replies and comments of Swami

Vivekananda, he felt himself vanquished. When the reading was finished, Pyari Babu whispered to Swami's host that Swami's very appearance foretold greatness. (16)

In the city of Bombay, Swami Vivekananda met Mr. Ramdas Chhabildas, a noted barrister... who cordially received him and requested Swami Vivekananda to live with him. The swami remained at his house and used to spend most of his time in pursuing his knowledge of the Vedas to a still further degree. Quite accidentally he met in Bombay Swami Abhedananda... who speaks of him as a soul on fire, tortured with emotion, and seething with ideas pertaining to the restoration of the spiritual consciousness of the ancient Hindus. (17)

In Poona, Swami Vivekananda met the renowned Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and he had great satisfaction in conversing with this great Vedic scholar upon many interesting subjects, remaining for ten days as a guest in his house. (18)

e) Swami Vivekananda Finds His Mission

In December of 1892, sitting in meditation on the last stone of his motherland by the shrine of the great Mother of the universe [Kanya Kumari], Swami Vivekananda, like another Jacob wrestling with the angel, wrestled with his own soul, until the Spirit gained the upper hand, going beyond the limitations of orthodox religious forms or even the orthodox religious spirit into the great, vast heart of things. To him religion was no longer an isolated province of human endeavor; it embraced the whole scheme of things, not only the dharma, not only the Vedas, not only the Upanishads, not only the meditation of the sages, not only the asceticism of the great monks, not only the vision of the Most High, but the heart of the people, their lives, their hopes, their misery, their poverty, their degradation, their sorrows, their woes. And he saw that the dharma, and even the Vedas, without the people, were as much straw in the eyes of the Most High. That from which the Vedas have proceeded, That from which the Soul of the people has emanated, That from which the rishis received their inspiration and the avatars their supreme compassion, descended upon him in all the universality and eclecticism of the mightiest insight; and he felt a Power, greater than that of his own personality, and his soul in prophecy knew that That Power was all-sweeping and invincible and that it should work from within the masses in its own ways - inscrutably and perhaps slowly, but nonetheless surely - making, above all, for the resurrection of the motherland and the revival and progress of the people. Verily, in Kanya Kumari, the Swami was the patriot and the prophet in one.

Thus the meditation of the Swami was not only thought, not only idle dreaming, it was Living Power. And he said unto himself, "Yes, I have found my mission at last! I must go to the West to spread the light of the dharma for the good of India and the world. Yes, the West, the glorious, the practical, the rich and powerful West - must come to understand and accept, in a true sense, the vision, the dignity, and the vastness of the contents of the sanatana dharma. And then, having seen the West's understanding of the East, the East itself would come to realize an invigorated and reborn Self-consciousness.... For the sake of dharma, for the sake of India's poor, for the sake of the very life and soil of India, I will go to the West in order that means and ways might be found to raise the Indian masses and for the recognition amongst the nations of the value of the Indian experience." (19)

In Madras [after his experience at Kanya Kumari], conversations would continue and the swami would speak eloquently on the need of preaching the dharma to the nations of the world, and of raising the masses in India. He would charge the audience to give back to the masses their lost individuality by throwing open to them that treasure which has been hidden for generations from them - the learning of the Vedas and the Vedanta - if they wished India to rise. Whilst in this vein, he would show that the millions upon millions of the depressed classes of Hindusthan were its only hope. And those who heard the Swami in these divine hours were fired with the same thoughts. (20)

On the morning of the thirteenth of February, 1893, Swami Vivekananda met by appointment the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, the Maharaja, and the Peshkar... and all those noblemen promised him their support for his proposed propaganda in America. In the afternoon he delivered a lecture at the Mahaboob College on "My Mission to the West". The chair was occupied by Pandit Rattan Lal. Many Europeans attended this lecture and more than one thousand persons were present. The swami was a revelation to all. He rose to his highest level. His command over the English language, his learning his power of expression, his eloquence evoked admiration from all. The swami spoke of the merits of the Hindu religion, of the greatness of Hindu culture in its resplendent days and gave an outline of the Vedic and post-Vedic learning. He spoke of the rishis as the great law-givers and organizers of the Shastras, and showed how the Puranas incorporated great ethical ideals. Finally, he spoke of his mission, "which is nothing less than the regeneration of the Motherland", and he declared that he felt it an imperative duty to go out as a missionary from India to the farthest West to reveal to the world the incomparable glory of the Vedas and Vedanta. (21)

f) Upanishad Classes in the West

Swami Vivekananda never quoted anything but the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita. And he never, in public, mentioned his own Master, nor spoke in specific terms of any part of Hindu mythology. (22)

He said, "It is only the pure Upanishadic religion that I have gone about preaching in the world." (23)

[In Annisquam in August of 1893]: the teaching of the Vedas, constant and beautiful, he applied to every event in life, quoting a few verses and then translation, and with the translation of the story giving its meaning.... In quoting from the Upanishads his voice was most musical. He would quote a verse in Sanskrit, with intonations, and then translate it into beautiful English, of which he had a wonderful command. (24)

At Greenacre in August of 1894, Swami Vivekananda rolled forth the solemn poetry of the Vedas for an hour the other night in his excellent English. (25)

December 8, 1894: "I have been here [in Cambridge, Massachusetts at Mrs. Bull's home] for three days. I have a class every morning here on Vedanta and other topics, the 8 Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and Shankaracharya. (26)

On January 25, 1895, the swami held the first of a series of parlor lectures at Mrs. Auel's residence in Brooklyn. The lecture was attended by about sixty-five persons, most of them ladies. The swami gave an outline of the Upanishads and the yoga system, and his conversation was highly appreciated." (27)

The dinner at Miss Corbin's [in February, 1895] was a great success.... Swami Vivekananda was very fine and spoke to the people who came after dinner most impressively. There was the most rapt attention on the part of the 400 who seemed to feel and expressed great delight at the change from the ordinary fashionable gathering. He has made many new and valuable friends. Miss Corbin was too happy to express. She has offered the conservatory - which is lovely - for classes on the Upanishads. (28)

At Thousand Island Park in the summer of 1895, on a favorite walk with his students, sometimes they stopped several times, and sat around on the grass and listened to Swami's wonderful talks. A bird, a flower, a butterfly would start him off and he would tell them stores from the Vedas or recite Indian poetry. (29)

From Reading, England, October 1895: "I require a man well up in Sanskrit and English, particularly the latter language - either Ramakrishnananda or Abhedananda or Trigunatitananda.... The work is to teach the devotees I shall be leaving here, to make them study the Vedanta, to do a little translation work into English, and to deliver occasional lectures."(30)

At South Place Chapel in London, on November 10, 1895, the first and second lessons were read by Vivekananda. They were selections from the Vedas and formed the text of his address. (31)

During the next two days [after Swami's talk to the Harvard Graduate Philosophical society on March 25, 1896]... Swami Vivekananda delivered his last three talks in Boston, holding in the evenings his third and fourth classes, "Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion", and the Upanishad class at the Procopeia Club's rented arena. (32)

England, May-July, 1896: In his class-lectures... Swami Vivekananda spoke of the various kinds and levels of spiritual consciousness and of the superimposition, or projection (adhyasa) of these inner states of being upon external nature, creating, as it were, the universes experienced at different stages of spiritual awareness. It is thus that various truths have been revealed to saints and seers in accordance with their own various levels of consciousness and points of view - all of them equally valid, none of them revelations of absolute truth, of which there can be no description and no revealer. The audience... was awestruck by Swami's elaborate and detailed exposition of this line of thought, in which he explained precisely why it is that "Truth in one, sages call it by various names" (*Rig Veda* 1.164.46) and why it is that all religions, however different they may be, present valid views of the one Brahman. He explained rationally the phenomena of visions, giving many examples and descriptions.... It was difficult to describe the splendor of his face and eyes, and voice during these eight sessions, so great it was.... And such was the level of these talks that Swamiji's fame increased and many new people came to hear him. (33)

g) Systematizing the Concepts of Vedanta

More and more as time went on, the Swami had found it necessary to systematize his religious ideas. To do this he felt he would necessarily have to re-organize the entire Hindu philosophical thought by unifying its distinctive features around a few leading ideas of the Hindu religious systems, so as to make it more readily intelligible to Western minds. He wanted to bring out, according to different schools of Vedanta, the ideas of the soul and the divinity or final goal, the relation of matter and force and the Vedantic conception of cosmology, and how they coincided with modern science. He also intended to draw up a classification of the Upanishads according to the passages which have a distinct bearing on Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, and the Dvaita conceptions, in order to show how all of them can be reconciled. His constructive genius thus roused made him want to write a book, carefully working out all these ideas in a definite form. (34)

To Alasinga, April 4, 1895: "Send me the *Vedanta Sutras* and the commentaries of all the sects." (35)

To Alasinga, May 6, 1895: In your [English language] journal write article after article on the three systems [of Vedanta philosophy], showing their harmony as one following after the other, and at the same time keep off the ceremonial forms altogether. That is, preach the philosophy, the spiritual part, and let people suit it to their own forms. I wish to write a book on this subject; therefore I wanted the three Bhashyas; but only one volume of the *Ramanuja Bhashya* has reached me as yet." (36)

By the time Swami Vivekananda went to Thousand Island Park in the summer of 1895, he had with him the Bhashyas of all the sects, and all his philosophical writings and utterances were, as it were, so many commentaries upon these, which were remarkably original in their expression. He would accept no authority as final, "knowing full well how each commentator, in turn, had twisted the texts to suit his own meaning." Whenever he made comments in his classes upon the Vedas or other sacred scriptures of Hinduism, he was found invariably to throw a whole world of light and revelation upon the texts. (37)

To Swami Ramakrishnananda from Caversham, Autumn, 1895: Well, you just patiently do one thing - set about collecting everything that books, beginning with the Rig Veda down to the most insignificant of Puranas and Tantras, have got to say about annihilation of the universe, about race, heaven and hell, the soul, consciousness, and intellect, etc., the sense-organs, mukti and transmigration and suchlike things. No child's play will do - I want really scholarly work. The most important thing is to collect the materials. (38)

To Mr. E. T. Sturdy, London, October 31, 1895: It is absolutely necessary to form some ritual and have a church. That is to say, we must fix on some ritual as fast as we can. If you can come Saturday morning or sooner, we shall go to the Asiatic Society Library, or you can procure for me a book called *Hemadri Kosha*, from which we can get what we want; and kindly bring the Upanishads. We will fix something grand, from birth to death of a man. A mere loose system of philosophy gets no hold on mankind.

If we can get it through before we have finished the classes, and publish it by publicly holding a service or two under it, it will go on. They want to form a congregation, and they want ritual. (39)

[*This proposal of Swami Vivekananda was apparently never carried out*]

To Mr. Sturdy from New York, February 13, 1896: I am working a good deal now upon the cosmology and eschatology of the Vedanta. I clearly see their perfect unison with modern science, and the elucidation of the one will be followed by that of the other. I intend to write a book later on in the form of questions and answers. (40)

[*This was never done, but from his lectures in London in 1896 it is easy to see that his mind was still working on these ideas.*]

Swami Vivekananda came to London [in the spring of 1896] and called for Swami Saradananda [to help with the Western work]. Swami Vivekananda's brother-disciples sent Swami Saradananda off on *S.S.Rewa*. In a few days the call came for Swami Abhedananda. Swami Vivekananda in his letter [of July 3, 1896] asked him to take all the Vedic classics with him:

"Send Swami Abhedananda to England as soon as you get this letter.... He will have to bring some books for me. I have only got the *Rig Veda Samhita* Ask him to bring the Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda, as many of the Brahmanas as he can get, beginning with the *Shatapata*, some of the Sutras, and Yaska's *Nirukta*."

His brother-disciples went to the abode of the savant Satyavata Samashrami and purchased all the volumes of the Vedic books, *Bibliotheca Indica*, compiled by him and published by the Asiatic Society. Then Swami Abhedananda boarded the ship and his brothers gave him a sendoff. (41)

On Friday, August 6th, 1897... Swami Abhedananda landed at the port of New York, the commercial capital of the United States of America. He had with him a box of Sanskrit books on the Vedas, Upanishads, and six systems of Hindu philosophy which he had brought from India at the request of Swami Vivekananda. (42)

To Alasinga, Autumn, 1896: I am busy writing something big on the Vedanta philosophy. I am busy collecting passages from the various Vedas bearing on the Vedanta in its threefold aspect. You can help me by getting someone to collect passages bearing on, first, the advaitic idea, then the vishishtadvaitic, and the dvaitic, from the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Puranas. They should be classified and very legibly written with the name and chapter of the book in each case. It would be a pity to leave the West without leaving something of the philosophy in book form.

There was a book published in Mysore in Tamil characters, comprising all the one hundred and eight Upanishads; I saw it in Professor Deussen's library. Is there a reprint of the same in Devanagari? If so, send me a copy. If not, send me the Tamil edition and also write on a sheet

the Tamil letters and compounds, and all juxtaposed with its Nagari equivalents, so that I may learn the Tamil letters. (43)

October 31, 1896, from the Journal Light. We lately listened to a discourse by Swami Vivekananda.... The subject, in the main, was the Vedas, but we got excursions on evolution, modern science, idealism and realism, the supremacy of the Spirit, etc. On the whole, we gathered that the speaker was a preacher of the universal religion of spiritual ascendancy and spiritual harmony. Certain passages from the Vedas - beautifully translated and read, by the way - were charming in their bearing upon the humaneness and sharp reality of a life beyond the veil. One longed for more of this.

We were much impressed with the admission that in the Vedas there are many contradictions, and that devout Hindus never thought of denying them nor reconciling them. Everyone was free to take what he liked. At different stages and on different planes, all were true. Hence the Hindus never excommunicated and never persecuted. The contradictions in the Vedas are like the contradictions in life - they are very real, but they are all true. This seems impossible, but there is sound sense in it. (44)

Swami Vivekananda was invited by the Paris Congress of the History of Religions [in the autumn of 1900] to contradict the conviction of many of the Sanskrit scholars of the West that the Vedic religion is the outcome of the worship of the fire, the sun, and other awe-inspiring objects of natural phenomena. He promised to read a paper on this subject, but he could not keep his promise on account of ill health, and only with difficulty was he able to be personally present at the Congress, where he was most warmly received by all the Western Sanskrit scholars, whose admiration for the swami was all the greater as they had already gone through many of his lectures on the Vedanta. (45)

h) Beginning the Educational Work in India

1. The Monastic Order

In 1894-95 we did not know the thoughts that were seething in Swami Vivekananda's mind day and night. "The work!, the work!" he cried. "How to begin the work in India! The way, the means!" The form it would take was evolved gradually. Certainly before he left America, the way, the means, and the method were clear in every detail. He knew then that the remedy was not money, not even education in the ordinary sense, but another kind of education: let man remember his true nature, divinity. Let this become a living realization, and everything else will follow - power, strength, manhood. He will again become MAN. And this he proclaimed from Colombo to Almora [after his return to India in 1897].

First, a large plot of land on the Ganga was to be acquired. On this was to be built a shrine for worship and a monastery to give shelter to his brother-disciples and as a center for the training of young men. There were to be taught meditation and all subjects relating to the religious life, including the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, Sanskrit, and science. After some years of training, whenever the head of the monastery considered them sufficiently prepared, they were to go out, form new centers, to preach the message, nurse the sick, to succor the needy, to work in

times of famine and flood, to give relief in any form that was needed. How much of what he thought out at that time has been carried out! To this India can bear testimony. It seemed almost madness for a mendicant monk to plan such an extensive work. In later years we were to see it carried out in every detail. (46)

It was Swami Vivekananda's great desire that the Vedas and other Shastras should be studied at the math. Since the time the monastery was removed to Nilambar Babu's garden [in February, 1898], he had started, with the help of his brother disciples, regular classes on the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Vedanta Sutras, the Gita, the Bhagavata and other scriptures and had himself taught for a time Panini's *Astadhyayi*. (47)

Of Swami Vivekananda's stay in Calcutta from January to October, 1898, the story is one of continuous engagements and of training his disciples. The math diary gives access to a study of his varied activities and occupations. Now it would be the house of some devotee which he would visit in Calcutta, then the entertaining of scores of visitors who came to see him at the monastery and at Balaram Babu's house. Now it would be hours of training the sannyasins and brahmacharins of the Math, then hours of meditation, of song, of answering letters, or reciting stories and anecdotes, or else relating the acquisition of certain stages of yoga and of spiritual insight. Now it would be a lecture on the Bhagavadgita or on the Upanishads or other scriptures of Hinduism, then a discourse on the material sciences or on the history of nations. Or it would be a question-class in which he would invite the members of the Math to raise or discuss their philosophical doubts, and would himself take up the debate with his illuminating solution of the problems at issue. (48)

All through the serious period of his [final] illness in 1901 and 1902 and even up to the very end, the swami was eager to receive friends and visitors and to instruct his disciples, notwithstanding the plea of his brother disciples to take perfect rest for the sake of his health; for in the matter of teaching, he knew no limits. Everything must be sacrificed, even the body itself....

All through the period under description, and especially from the early part of March, 1902 until the time he passed away [in July of the same year], in spite of his physical afflictions, the swami was busy in many ways. Disease counted as nothing when his mind was set upon doing something. Even unto the last day he himself conducted numerous Vedic and question classes at the monastery, and oftentimes the brahmacharins and even his own brother disciples came to him for spiritual advice. He often spoke of methods of meditation and would train such as were backward in this spiritual science. He spent hours in answering correspondence, or in reading, noting down his thoughts for writing some book on Hindu philosophy or on Indian history; and then, for recreation he would sing some song or discourse with his brother disciples, giving himself up to fun and merriment. (49)

The swami always abhorred extremes. He protested against the too elaborate paraphernalia of daily worship at the math in the strongest terms and insisted on his disciples devoting more time to sacred study, religious talks and discussions, and to meditation, in order to mold their lives and understand the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings than to superfluous and minute details in conducting the worship. It should be done in the simplest way with due devotion and

fervor, along with the former occupations, without taking up the whole time of the monks as it used to do. To enforce this, he introduced the ringing of a bell at appointed times at which the members, leaving aside - or, rather, finishing all other works - must join the classes for study, discussion, and meditation.... About three months before his departure he made a rule that at four o'clock in the morning a hand-bell should be rung by someone going from room to room to awaken the members of the Order, and that within half an hour all should gather in the chapel to meditate. So, also, classes on the Gita, Bhagavata, Upanishads and the *Brahma Sutras*, and question classes for religious discussion were regularly held. Over and above these, Swami Vivekananda encouraged his disciples to practice austerities.... In his charge to his disciples he repeatedly pointed out that no monastic order could keep itself pure and retain its original vigor as well as its power of working good, without a definite ideal to work for, without submitting itself to rigorous discipline, vows, and without keeping up culture and education within its fold. (50)

2. The Laity

It was on the afternoon of the first day of May, 1897, that a representative gathering of all the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna took place at Balaram Babu's house, in response to Swami Vivekananda's invitation to them intimating his desire of holding a meeting to found an association. He had long thought and made a plan of bringing about close cooperation between the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and of organizing in a systematic way the hitherto unsystematic activities, both spiritual and philanthropic, of his brother disciples.... The future method of work was discussed, and some resolutions were passed, comprising in the main the present principles and the aims and objects by which the movement was to be guided....

After the resolutions were passed, office-bearers were appointed. Swami Vivekananda himself became the general president and he made Swami Brahmananda and Swami Yogananda the president and vice-president respectively of the Calcutta Center. It was decided that a meeting would be held at Balaram Babu's house every Sunday afternoon, when recitations and readings from the Gita, the Upanishads and other Vedantic scriptures with comments and annotations would be given, and papers read and lectures delivered, the subject being chosen by the president. All these were decided in the two preliminary meetings on the first and fifth of May: and the first general meeting of the members was held on the ninth under the presidency of Swami Brahmananda. For three years the Ramakrishna Mission held its sittings in the above place, and whenever Swami Vivekananda was in Calcutta he was present at almost all of them and spoke and sang, to the joy of the audience. (51)

In Calcutta in 1897, Sharat Chandra Chakravarty, Swami Vivekananda's disciple, had been studying Sayana's commentary on the Rig Veda with Swami Vivekananda, who was then staying in the house of the late Balaram Bose at Baghbazar. Max Muller's volumes on the Rig Veda had been brought from a wealthy friend's private library. Swami Vivekananda was correcting the disciple every now and then and giving him the true pronunciation or construction as necessary. Sometimes, while explaining the arguments of Sayana to establish the eternity of the Vedas, Swami Vivekananda was praising very highly the commentator's wonderful ingenuity; sometimes again, while arguing out the deeper significance of the doctrine, he was putting forward a difference in view and indulging in an innocent squib at Sayana. (52)

During his sojourn at Ambala in Northern India at the end of 1897, Swami Vivekananda daily held religious conversations at all hours of the day with large numbers of people of different creeds (which included Muslims, Brahmo, Arya Samajist and Hindu) on Shastric and other topics and won them over completely - specially the Arya Samajists - after hot discussions, to his ideas and methods of interpreting the Vedas. (53)

i) Swami Vivekananda's Last Bequest to Vedic Study

During the session of the Indian National Congress which was held in Calcutta in the latter part of December, 1901, scores of distinguished delegates from different provinces who came to attend it, availed themselves of this opportunity to visit the monastery and pay their homage to Swami Vivekananda, whom they regarded as the patriot-saint of modern India.... Among the ideas which he discussed with the leaders of the Congress was that of founding a Vedic Institution which should preserve and train eminent teachers to herald everywhere the ancient Aryan culture and Sanskrit learning. The delegates were in fervent sympathy with this plan. Recalling their visits to the swami, and particularly referring to the above-mentioned project, one has written:

His last wish (and one left unaccomplished) was to found a Vedic Institution in Calcutta. A few months before his passing away, during the Christmas holidays, the sitting of the National Congress was held in Calcutta. Delegates, reformers, professors and great men of various callings from all the different provinces of India assembled there on that occasion. Many of them came to Belur Math to pay their respects, to Swami Vivekananda [who] enlightened them on various subjects, social, political, religious, etc. In fact, these meetings formed a congress in themselves, of a type even superior and more beneficial to those present than the actual sessions of the Congress. In one of these afternoons, the proposal was to start a Vedic College in Calcutta, and all present assured him that they would help him in carrying on in every way that lay in their power. (54)

On the fourth of July [1902, the last day of his life], Swami Vivekananda went to the chapel and meditated there for three hours. A few days earlier he had told Swami Brahmananda, "This time I must do one thing or the other; either I must recoup my health through meditation and japa and work with full vigor, or else I shall give up this shattered body."... After lunch he took rest for an hour and then grammar and yoga for two hours in a class. He gave his own interpretation of the words *sushumnah suryavasasah* occurring in the Yajur Veda, as these words had not been interpreted by commentators. Then he went with Swami Premananda outside the math and walked two miles; and while walking told him by way of conversation, the whole history of the growth of civilization and of different nations of the world. (55)

Swami Premananda said, "For some time he had a strong desire to open a school of Vedic studies. Even on the last day three letters were sent to Poona and Bombay for some books on the Vedas. That day I had a long discussion with him regarding the school of Vedic studies. I asked, 'What will be the good of studying the Vedas?' He said, 'Superstitions will go.'... Then, while having a walk and after much talk about the school of Vedic studies, he referred to what

was written in the Vedas about the sushumna and said, 'The annotation is not correct; you should try to get the meaning from the text.'" (56)

j) Expressing Vedanta in Everyday Life

1. Through Work

[On his way to the West, Swami Vivekananda stopped in China]. His earnest desire was to see a Chinese monastery. Unfortunately, these monasteries were on grounds forbidden to foreigners. What could be done? He asked his interpreter, only to be told that it was impossible. But this served to intensify his desire. He must see a Chinese monastery! He said to the interpreter, "Suppose a foreigner goes there, what then?" and he received as reply, "Why, sir, they are sure to maltreat him." The swami thought that the monks would surely not hurt him if they knew he was a Hindu sadhu. He persisted and finally induced the interpreter and some German acquaintances to tread on "forbidden ground".... But they had not gone far when... some two or three men were seen approaching with rapid steps and clubs in hand. Seeing their menacing appearance, the Germans ran off, and the interpreter was about to take to his heels when the swami, seizing him by the arm, said to him with a smile, "You must not run away before you tell what the Chinese call an Indian yogi in their language." Having been told this, the swami called out to the men in a loud voice that he was an Indian yogi. And, lo, the word *yogi* acted like magic! The expression of the angry men changed to that of deep reverence, and they fell at his feet. They arose and stretched out their joined palms in most respectful salutation; and then said something in a loud voice, of which one word the swami understood to be *kabatch*. He thought it was undoubtedly the Indian word meaning amulet. But, to be sure of what they meant, he shouted out for an explanation to the interpreter who stood at a safe distance, greatly confounded at the strange development of events - and well he might be, for never in all his experience had he witnessed such a spectacle as this. The man told him, "Sir, they want amulets where by to ward off evil spirits and unholy influences. Sir, they desire your protection." The swami thought for a moment, for he was not a charm-giving sadhu. Suddenly he decided upon something; and taking a sheet of paper from his pocket he divided it into several pieces and then wrote on each separate bit the word *Om* in Sanskrit, the most holy word of the Vedas and the symbol of the highest transcendental truth. He gave them the bits of paper and the men, touching it to their heads, bowed down before him and led him into the monastery. (57)

During his sojourn in Northern India at the end of 1897, [Swami Vivekananda] visited the Arya Samaj Orphanage in Bareilly on August 10th; and on the next day, as a result of an impressive conversation with a gathering of students on the need of establishing a students' society which might conjointly carry out his ideas of practical Vedanta and work for others, it was formed then and there. (58)

At the beginning of 1899, Nag Mahashaya [a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna] came all the way from his distant village home in Deobhog to meet with Swami Vivekananda at the new monastery [at Belur]. It was like the coming together of two great forces, one representing the highest ideal of the ancient garhastya dharma [householder mode of life] and the other the ideal of a new type of monasticism - one mad with God-intoxication, the other intoxicated with the idea of bringing out the divine in man - but both one in the vision of sannyas and realization.

After mutual salutation and greeting Nag Mahashay exclaimed, "Jaya Shankara! Blessed am I to see before me the living Shiva!" and remained standing before Swami Vivekananda with folded hands, notwithstanding his solicitations to make him sit. On being asked about his health he said, "What is the use of inquiring about a worthless lump of flesh and bones! I feel blissful at seeing Shiva himself!" So saying, he fell prostrate before Swami Vivekananda, who at once raised him up, entreating, "O, please do not do such things!" At this time the Upanishad class was being held. Swami Vivekananda, addressing his disciples, said, "Let the class be stopped. You all come and see Nag Mahashay." When all had sat round the great devotee, Swami Vivekananda, addressing them, observed, "Look, he is a householder, but he has no consciousness whether he has a body, or not; whether the universe exists, or not. He is always absorbed in the thought of God. He is a living example of what man becomes when possessed of supreme bhakti." (59)

April 9, 1899: When Swami Sadananda and Sister Nivedita went over on Saturday to report [on the plague relief work in Calcutta], Swami Vivekananda was so touched by the news that [the monks] had two hours of everything, from the Upanishads onwards: there could be no religion without that activity, that manhood, and cooperation. (60)

October 18, 1899: Ridgely Manor, New York: On Sunday during lunch Swami Vivekananda came and spent three hours with Olea [Bull, who was mentally ill] and left her a different woman. On Monday about 10.30 he came again and spent the morning. He brought the Vedas and Upanishads with him and gave her what was really a class on jnana - all to herself - though many of us were present. (61)

December 26, 1900: Dear Mr. Sevier [Swami Vivekananda's devoted English disciple who dedicated his life to founding the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati] passed away before I [Swami Vivekananda] could arrive. He was cremated on the banks of the river that flows by his ashrama, `a la Hindu, covered with garlands, the brahmins carrying his body and boys chanting the Vedas. (62)

2. Through His Feelings

Swami Vivekananda told us of Hrishikesh and the little hut that each sannyasin would make for himself, and the blazing fire in the evening, and all the sannyasins sitting round it on their own little mats, talking in hushed tones of the Upanishads - "for every man is supposed to have got the truth before he becomes a sannyasin. He is at peace intellectually. All that remains is to realize it. So all need for discussion has passed away; and at Hrishikesh, in the darkness of the mountains, by the blazing fire, they may talk only of the Upanishads. Then, by degrees, the voices die in silence. Each man sits bolt upright on his mat and one by one they steal quietly off to their own huts." (63)

March 3, 1890: You know not... I am a very soft-natured man in spite of the stern Vedantic views I hold. And this proves to be my undoing. At the slightest touch I give myself away; for howsoever I may try to think only of my own good, I slip off in spite of myself to think of other people's interests. (64)

While in the West Swami Vivekananda's mind had always been occupied with the study of the history of the whole world and with the relation of the world to Hindusthan, and of the problems and destiny of India herself. More and more the Spirit of an awakened national consciousness had descended upon him, and he had been writing in his letters to his brother disciples and Indian disciples the method and the means for bringing it about, with a view to inspiring them with his own fire and enthusiasm. Even in the days of his American work, he had felt intuitively that a new epoch in his mission was opening up for him, and now he knew it had come to hand. For many months back, in the city of Detroit, he had once been talking with some disciples concerning the overwhelming difficulties he had met with in presenting Hinduism to an aggressively self-conscious Christian public, and as to how he had spent the best part of his vital forces in creating among the Western nations a religious reverence for what India had given as an intellectual and spiritual inheritance to the world. He was in one of those apostolic moods that often seized him after much strenuous labor. It was a late evening hour; he had been speaking in the stillness and the twilight. Suddenly his whole body shook with a fever of emotion and he cried out, " India will hear me! What are the Western nations! I shall shake India to her foundations! I shall send an electric thrill through its national veins! Wait! You will see how India will receive me. It is India, my own India, that knows how to appreciate as the Spirit of Vedanta what I have given so freely here. India will receive me in triumph." He spoke with a prophetic fervor; and those who heard him said that it was not himself for whom he was praying for recognition, but for that gospel which he felt must become for all future times the gospel for all nations of the world - India's gospel, the gospel of the Vedas and Vedanta. (65)

To a Western devotee, July 25, 1897: I am so glad that you have been helped by Vedanta and yoga. I am unfortunately sometimes like the circus clown who makes others laugh, himself miserable! (66)

[In Calcutta, in 1897, Swami Vivekananda was discussing Vedantic theories of creation with his disciple]. While all this talk was going on the great dramatist, Girish Chandra Ghosh, appeared on the scene. Swami Vivekananda gave him a courteous greeting and continued his lesson to his disciple....

Now, turning to Girish Babu, Swami Vivekananda said, "What do you say, G.C.? Well, you do not care to study all this; you pass your days with your adoration of this and that god, eh?"

Girish Babu: What shall I study, brother? I have neither time nor understanding to pry into all that. But this time, with Sri Ramakrishna's grace, I shall pass by with greetings to your Vedas and Vedanta, and take one leap into the far beyond! He puts you through all these studies because he wants to get many things done by you. But we have no need of them. Saying this, Girish Babu again and again touched the *Rig Veda* volumes to his head, uttering, "All victory to Ramakrishna in the form of the Veda!"

Swami Vivekananda was now in a sort of deep reverie. Girish Babu suddenly called out to him and said, "Well, hear me, please. You have made a good deal of study into the Vedas and Vedanta - but say, did you find anywhere in them the way out for us from all these profound miseries of the country, all these wailings of grief, all this starvation, all these crimes of adultery, and many horrible sins?"

Saying this, he painted over and over again horrid pictures of society. Swami Vivekananda remained perfectly quiet and speechless, while at the thought of the sorrows and miseries of his fellow men, tears began to flow from his eyes, and seemingly to hide his feelings from us he rose and left the room.

Meanwhile, addressing the disciple, Girish Babu said, "Did you see that, Bangal? What a great, loving heart! I don't honor your Swami Vivekananda simply for being a pandit versed in the Vedas; I honor him for that great heart of his which just made him retire weeping at the sorrows of his fellow beings."

The disciple and Girish Babu then went on conversing with each other, the latter proving that knowledge and love were ultimately the same.

In the meantime, Swami Vivekananda returned and asked the disciple, "Well, what was all this talk going on between you?" The disciple said, "Sir, we are talking about the Vedas; and the wonder of it is that our Girish Babu has not studied these books but has grasped their ultimate truths with clean precision."

Swami Vivekananda: All truths reveal themselves to him who has got real devotion to the guru; he has hardly any need of studies. But such faith and devotion are very rare in this world. He who possesses these in the measure of our friend here need not study the Shastras. But he who rushes forward to imitate him will only bring about his own ruin. Always follow his advice, but never attempt to imitate his ways.....

Swami Sadananda arrived there at that moment and, seeing him, Swami Vivekananda at once said, "Do you know, my heart is sorely troubled by the picture of the country's miseries G.C. was depicting just now. Well, can you do anything for our country?"

Sadananda: Maharaj, let the mandate go forth. Your slave is ready.

Swami Vivekananda: First, on a pretty small scale, start a relief center where the poor and distressed may obtain relief and the diseased may be nursed. Helpless people having none to look after them will be relieved and served there, irrespective of creed or color - do you see?

Sadananda: Just as you command, sir.

Swami Vivekananda: There is no greater dharma than this service of living beings. If this dharma can be practiced in the real Spirit, then "liberation comes as a fruit in the very palm of one's hand." [Shankaracharya: *Hastamalaka*].

Addressing Girish Babu now, Swami Vivekananda said, "Do you know, Girish Babu, it occurs to me that even if a thousand births have to be taken in order to relieve the sorrows of the world, surely I will take them. If by my doing that, even a single soul may have a little bit of his grief relieved, why, I will do it. What avails it at all to have only one's own liberation? Everyone should be taken along with oneself on that way. Can you say why a feeling like this comes up foremost in my mind?"

Girish Babu: Ah, otherwise why should Sri Ramakrishna declare you to be greater than all others in spiritual competence? (67)

[In Paris] on September 3, 1900, Swami Vivekananda was evidently still living at the [wealthy] Leggetts' house; but within a week - the exact day is not known - he moved to the lodgings of Jules Bois, a poor scholar.. who lived in a flat on the fifth floor. M. Bois wrote:

Vivekananda approached me as though we had known each other for a long time. A brief conversation followed, at the end of which he startled me by proposing to come and live with me. Expressing my sense of the honor his suggestion implied, I reminded him of the luxury and attention he was enjoying and explained that I was only a young writer who could offer him very little in the way of comfort. "I am a monk and a mendicant", was his reply. "I can sleep on the ground or on the floor. Our luxury will be the wisdom of the Masters. I will bring my pipe with me and upon its incense will recite the verses of the Vedas and Upanishads." (68)

[Towards the end of his life] man-making was now the ideal of our illustrious swami. He held classes on the Vedas and the grammar of Panini, sat in meditation with the monks morning and evening, and received visitors from various parts of India.... His relation with those who came to him was of the sweetest character. His all-embracing love for each and everybody was truly divine. To the visitors he was a personification of humility.... Through a heart weeping at the sight of the suffering and degradation of the illiterate masses of India, through a soul glowing with the fire of disinterested love for humanity, through true patriotism and through self-sacrificing zeal that did not know what tiring was, he showed to his disciples how a God-inspired soul felt and worked for humanity. (69)

[The Himalayas of] India is the land of dreams of our forefathers, in which was born Parvati, the Mother of India. This is the holy land where every ardent soul in India wants to come at the end of its life and to close the last chapter of its mortal career. On the tops of the mountains of this blessed land, in the depths of its caves, on the banks of its rushing torrents, have been thought out the most wonderful thoughts, a little bit of which has drawn so much admiration even from foreigners, and which have been pronounced by the most competent of judges to be incomparable. This is the land in which, since my very childhood, I have been dreaming of passing my life; and, as all of you are aware, I have attempted again and again to live here. Although the time was not ripe and I had work to do and was whirled outside of this holy place, yet it is the hope of my life to end my days somewhere in this Father of Mountains, where rishis lived, where philosophy was born. Perhaps, my friends, I shall not be able to do it in the way I planned before - how I wish that that silence, that unknownness could be given to me - yet I sincerely pray and hope, and almost believe, that my last days will be spent here, of all places on earth. (70)

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PART I, SECTION 1: DEFINITION AND EULOGY OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

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Chapter 2: Some Preliminary Definitions

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a) The "Veda" Is the Sum Total of Eternal Truths

Most of the great religions of the world owe allegiance to certain books which they believe are the words of God or some other supernatural beings, and which are the basis of their religion. Now, of all these books, according to the modern savants of the West, the oldest are the Vedas of the Hindus. A little understanding, therefore, is necessary about the Vedas. (1)

The knowledge of God is what is meant by the Vedas (*vid* - to know). (2)

Veda means the sum total of eternal truths. (3)

Truth is of two kinds: (1) that which is cognizable by the five ordinary senses of man and by reasonings based thereon; (2) that which is cognizable by the subtle, supersensuous power of yoga.

Knowledge acquired by the first means is called science; and knowledge acquired by the second is called the Vedas. (4)

Our own realization is beyond the Vedas, because even they depend upon that. The highest Vedas is the philosophy of the Beyond. (5)

With regard to the whole Vedic collection of truths discovered by the Aryan race, this also has to be understood that those portions alone which do not refer to purely secular matters and which do not merely record tradition or history, or merely provide incentives to duty form the Vedas in the real sense.

Although the supersensuous vision of truths is to be met with in some measure in our Puranas and Itihasas and in the religious scriptures of other races, still the fourfold scripture known among the Aryan race as the Vedas being the first, the most complete, and the most undistorted collection of spiritual truths, deserves to occupy the highest place among all scriptures, command the respect of all nations of the earth, and furnish the rationale of their respective scriptures. (6)

b) The Upanishads Are the "New Testament" of the Vast, Traditional Vedic Literature

The Vedas are, in fact, the oldest sacred books in the world. Nobody knows anything about the time they were written, or by whom. They are contained in many volumes, and I doubt that any one person ever read them all. (7)

The Sanskrit in which the Vedas were written is not the same Sanskrit in which books were written about a thousand years later than the Vedas - the books that you read in your translations of poets and other classical writers of India. The Sanskrit of the Vedas was very simple, archaic in its composition, and possibly it was a spoken language. (8)

That branch of the Aryan race which spoke the Sanskrit language was the first to become civilized and the first to begin to write books and literature. So they went on for thousands of years. How many thousands of years they wrote no one knows. There are various guesses - from 3,000 to 8,000 BC - but all of these dates are more or less uncertain. (9)

This Sanskrit has undergone very much change as a matter of course, having been spoken and written through thousands of years. It necessarily follows that in other Aryan languages, as in Greek and Roman, the literature must be of much later date than Sanskrit. Not only so, but there is this peculiarity, that of all regular books that we have in the world, the oldest are in Sanskrit - and that is the mass of literature called the Vedas. There are very ancient pieces in the Babylonian or Egyptian literature, but they cannot be called literature or books, but just a

few notes, a short letter, a few words, and so on. But as finished, cultured literature, the Vedas are the oldest. (10)

The Vedas existed as a mass of literature, and not as a book - just as you find the Old Testament, the Bible. Now, the Bible is a mass of literature of different ages; different persons are the writers, and so on. It is a collection. [In the same way], the Vedas are a vast collection. I do not know whether, if all the texts were found - nobody has found all the texts; nobody, even in India, has seen all the books - if all the books were known, this room would contain them. It is a huge mass of literature, carried down from generation to generation from God, who gave the scriptures. (11)

The Vedas are divided into four parts. One is called the Rig Veda, another Yajur Veda, another Sama Veda, and the fourth, Atharva Veda. Each one of these, again, was divided into many branches. For instance, the Sama Veda had one thousand branches, of which only about five or six remain; the rest are all lost. So with the others. The Rig Veda had 108, of which only one remains; and the rest are all lost. (12)

This vast mass of literature - the Vedas - we find in three groups. The first group is the Samhitas, a collection of hymns. The second group is called the Brahmanas, or the [group dealing with different kinds of] sacrifice. The word *brahmana* [by usage] means [what is achieved by means of] the sacrifice. And the other group is called the Upanishads (sittings, lectures, philosophic books). Again, the first two parts together - the hymns and the rituals - are called the Karma Kanda, the work portion; and the second, or philosophic portion (the Upanishads), is called the Jnana Kanda, the knowledge portion. This is the same word as your English word *knowledge* and the Greek word *gnos* - just as you have the word in *agnostic*, and so on. (13)

The Upanishads are the Bible of India. [In relation to the Vedas] they occupy the same place as the New Testament does [to the Old]. There are [more than] a hundred books comprising the Upanishads, some very small and some big, each a separate treatise.... They are [as it were] shorthand notes taken down of discussions in [learned assemblies], generally in the courts of kings. The word Upanishad may mean "sittings" [or "sitting near a teacher"]. Those of you who may have studied some of the Upanishads can understand how they are condensed shorthand sketches. After long discussions had been held, they were taken down, possibly from memory.... The origin of ancient Sanskrit is 5,000 BC; the Upanishads [are at least] two thousand years before that. Nobody knows exactly how old they are. (14)

It is the aim of the modern scholar to restore [the sequence of the Vedic compositions]. The old, orthodox idea is quite different, as your orthodox idea of the Bible is quite different from the modern scholar's. (15)

c) Though the Largest Portion of the Vedas Are Lost, They Still Are a Huge Literature

India has been the one country to which every nation that has become strong wants to go and conquer, it being reputed to be very rich. The wealth of the people had become a fable, even in the most ancient history. [Many foreign invaders] rushed to become wealthy in India and conquered the country. Every one of these invasions destroyed one or more of the families [who

were the custodians of the Vedas], burned many libraries and houses. And when that was so, much literature was lost. It is only within the last few years that ideas have begun to spring up about the retention of these various religions and books. Before that, mankind had to suffer all this pillaging and breaking down. Most stupendous creations of art were lost forever. Wonderful buildings - where, from a few bits of remnants now in India, it can be imagined how wonderful they were - are completely gone. (16)

Almost the largest portion of the Vedas has been lost. The priests who carried it down to posterity were divided into so many families; and, accordingly, the Vedas were divided into so many parts. Each part was allotted to a family. The rituals, the ceremonies, the customs, the worship of that family were to be obtained from that [respective] portion of the Vedas. They preserved it and performed the ceremonies according to that. In course of time, [some of] these families became extinct; and with them, their portion of the Vedas was lost, if these old accounts be true. (17)

Some of the Vedic secrets were known to certain families only, as certain powers naturally exist in some families. With the extinction of these families, the secrets have died away. (18)

Many of the texts of the Vedas are lost. They were divided into branches, each branch put into the head of certain priests and kept alive by memory. Such men still exist. They will repeat book after book of the Vedas without missing a single intonation. The larger portion of the Vedas has disappeared. The small portion left makes a whole library by itself. The oldest of these contain the hymns of the Rig Veda. (19)

Ninety-nine percent of the Vedas are missing; they were in the keeping of certain families, with whose extinction the books were lost. But still, those left now could not be contained even in a large hall.... They were written in language archaic and simple; their grammar was very crude, so much so that it was said that some parts of the Vedas have no meaning. (20)

You find in every nation when a new idea, a new form, a new discovery or invention comes in, the old things are not brushed aside all at once, but are relegated to the religion of holiness. The ancient Hindus used to write on palm leaves and birch bark; and when paper was invented they did not throw aside all the palm leaves, but used to consider writing on palm leaves and birch bark holy.... So this form of transmitting the literature of the Vedas from teacher to disciple by word of mouth, although antiquated and almost useless now, has become holy. The student may refresh his memory by books, but has to learn by word of mouth of a teacher. (21)

c) Hinduism Is the Religion of the Vedas

First, in discussing the scriptures, one fact stands out prominently - that only those religions which had one or many scriptures of their own as their basis advanced by leaps and bounds and survive to the present day, notwithstanding all the persecution and repression hurled against them. The Greek religion, with all its beauty, died out in the absence of any scripture to support it; but the religion of the Jews stands undiminished in its power, being based on the authority of the Old Testament. The same is the case with the Hindu religion, with its scripture, the Vedas, the oldest in the world. (22)

By Hinduism, I mean the religion of the Vedas. (23)

The Hindus proper look up to the Vedas as their religious scripture. (24)

The Hindus received their religion through the revelation of the Vedas. (25)

The Hindus founded their creed upon the ancient Vedas, a word derived from *vid*, to know.(26)

The cardinal features of the Hindu religion are founded on the meditative and speculative philosophy and on the ethical teachings contained in the various books of the Vedas. (27)

e) Modern Hinduism Is, Properly, the Religion of the Vedas and Vedanta

In the Vedas we find both [these names]: *sindhu* and *indu* for the river Indus; the Persians transformed them into *hindu* and the Greeks into *indus*, whence we derived the words *India* and *Indian*. (28)

This word *Hindu* was the name that the ancient Persians used to apply to the river Sindhu. Whenever in Sanskrit there is an *s* in ancient Persian it changes into an *h*, so that *sindhu* became *hindu*, and you are all aware how the Greeks found it hard to pronounce *h* and dropped it altogether, so that we became known as Indians. (29)

The word *Hindu* by which it is the fashion nowadays to style ourselves, has lost all its meaning, for this word merely meant those who lived on the other side of the river Indus (in Sanskrit *sindhu*). This name was murdered into *hindu* by the ancient Persians and all people living on the other side of the river Sindhu were called by them Hindus. (30)

Now this word *Hindu*, as applied to the inhabitants of the other side of the Indus, whatever might have been its meaning in ancient times, has lost all its force in modern times; for all the people that live on this side of the Indus no longer belong to one religion. There are the Hindus proper, the Muslims, the Parsees, the Christians, Buddhists and Jains. The word *Hindu* in its real, literal sense ought to include all these, but as signifying the religion, it would not be proper to call all these Hindus. (31)

With the re of Islam the word *Hindu* became degraded and meant " a dark-skinned fellow", as is the case now with the word *native*. (32)

Thus this word has come down to us; and during the Muslim rule we [Indians] took up the word ourselves. There may not be any harm in using the word, of course; but, as I have said, it has lost its significance, for you may mark that all the people who live on this side of the Indus in modern times do not follow the same religion as they did in ancient times. The word, therefore, covers not only Hindus proper, but Muslims, Christians, Jains, and other people who live in India. I therefore would not use the word *Hindu*. What word should we use, then? The other words

which alone we can use are either the Vaidikas, the followers of the Vedas - or, better still, the Vedantists, the followers of the Vedanta. (33)

The word *Vedanta* literally means the end of the Vedas - the Vedas being the scriptures of the Hindu. (34)

The Vedanta means the end of the Vedas, the third section, or Upanishads, containing the ripened ideas which we find more as germs in the earlier portion. (35)

The last part of the Vedas is called the Vedanta, meaning the end of the Vedas. It deals with the theories contained in them, and more especially with the philosophy with which we are concerned. It is written in Sanskrit, and, you must remember, was written thousands of years ago. (36)

Sometimes, in the West, by the Vedas are meant only the hymns and rituals of the Vedas. But at the present time these parts have gone almost out of use; and usually by the word Vedas, in India, the Vedanta is meant. All our commentators, when they want to quote a passage from the scriptures, as a rule, quote from the Vedanta, which has another technical name with the commentators - the Shrutis.... The Vedanta, then, practically forms the scriptures of the Hindus; and all systems of philosophy that are orthodox have to take it as their foundation. (37)

It is very hard... to find any common name for our religion, seeing that this religion is a collection, so to speak, of various religions, of various ideas, of various ceremonials and forms, all gathered together almost without a name, and without a church, and without an organization. The only point where, perhaps, all our sects agree is that we all believe in the scriptures - the Vedas. This perhaps is certain that no man can have a right to be called a Hindu who does not admit the supreme authority of the Vedas.... The spiritual teachings of the Vedas known as the Upanishads and the Vedanta has always been quoted as the highest authority by all our teachers, philosophers, and writers, whether dualist, qualified monist, or monist.... Therefore, perhaps in modern times, the one name which should designate every Hindu throughout the land should be *Vedantist* or *Vaidika*, as you may put it; and in that sense I always use the words *Vedantism* and *Vedanta*. (38)

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PART I, SECTION 1: DEFINITION AND EULOGY OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

Chapter 3: The Glory of the Vedas

a) The Vedas Are Eternal

1. The Vedas Are Ever-Existent, Without Beginning or End

Away back, where no recorded history - nay, not even the dim light of tradition - can penetrate, has been steadily shining that light, sometimes dimmed by external circumstances, at others effulgent, but undying and steady, shedding its luster not only over India, but permeating the whole thought-world with its power, silent and unperceived, gently, yet omnipotent, like the dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unnoticed, yet bringing into bloom the fairest of roses: this has been the thought of the Upanishads, the philosophy of the Vedanta. Nobody knows when it first came to flourish on the soil of India. Guesswork has been vain. The guesses, especially of Western writers, have been so conflicting that no certain date can be ascribed to them. But we Hindus, from the spiritual standpoint, do not admit that they had any origin. This Vedanta, the philosophy of the Upanishads, I would make bold to state, has been the first as well as the final thought on the spiritual plane that has ever been vouchsafed to man. (1)

By the word *Shastras* the Vedas without beginning or end are meant.... The whole body of supersensuous truths, having no beginning or end, and called by the name of the Vedas, is ever-existent.(2)

The date of the Vedas has never been fixed, can never be fixed; and, according to us, the Vedas are eternal. (3)

We [Hindus] believe the Vedas to be the eternal teachings of the secrets of religion. We all believe that this holy literature is without beginning and without end, coeval with nature, which is without beginning and without end; and that all our religious differences, all our religious struggles, must end when we stand in the presence of that holy book; we are all agreed that this is the last court of appeal in all our spiritual differences. (4)

b) It Is the Spiritual Truth Revealed by the Vedas Which Is Eternal and Is Discovered by the Seers

Q: What is the true meaning of the statement that the Vedas are beginningless and eternal? Does it refer to the Vedic utterances or the statements contained in the Vedas? If it refers to the truth involved in such statements, are not the sciences, such as logic, geometry, chemistry, etc., equally beginningless and eternal, for they contain an everlasting truth?

A: There was a time when the Vedas themselves were considered eternal in the sense in which the divine truths contained therein were changeless and permanent and were only revealed to man. At a subsequent time, it appears that the utterances of the Vedic hymns with the knowledge of its meaning was important; and it was held that the hymns themselves must have had a divine origin. At a still later period, the meaning of the hymns showed that many of them could not be of divine origin, because they inculcated upon mankind performance of various unholy acts, such as torturing animals; and we can find many ridiculous stories in the Vedas. The correct meaning of the statement "The Vedas are beginningless and eternal" is that the law or truth revealed by them to man is permanent and changeless. Logic, geometry, chemistry, etc., reveal also a law or truth which is permanent and changeless and in that sense they are also beginningless and eternal. But no truth or law is absent from the Vedas, and I ask any one of you to point out to me any truth which is not treated of in them. (5)

The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. They hold that the Vedas are without beginning and without end. It may sound ludicrous to this audience [in the West] how a book can be without beginning or end. But by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forget them. (6)

[Vedic] principles have existed throughout time; and they will exist. They are non-created - uncreated by any laws which science teaches us today. They remain covered and become discovered, but are existing through all eternity in nature. If Newton had not been born the law of gravitation would have remained all the same and would have worked all the same. It was Newton's genius which formulated it, discovered it, brought it into consciousness, made it a conscious thing to the human race. So are these religious laws, the grand truths of spirituality. They are working all the time. If all the Vedas and Bibles and Korans did not exist at all, if seers and prophets had never been born, yet these laws would exist. They are only held in abeyance, and slowly but surely will work to raise the human race, to raise human nature. But they are the prophets who see them, discover them; and such prophets are discoverers in the field of spirituality. As Newton and Galileo were prophets of physical science, so are they prophets of spirituality. They can claim no exclusive right to any one of these laws; they are the common property of all nature.

The Vedas, as the Hindus say, are eternal. We now understand what they mean by their being eternal, i.e. that the laws have neither beginning nor end. Earth after earth, system after

system, will evolve, run for a certain time, and then dissolve back into chaos; but the universe remains the same. Millions and millions of systems are being born, while millions are being destroyed. The universe remains the same. The beginning and end of time can be told as regards a certain planet; but, as regards the universe, time has no meaning at all. So are the laws of nature, the physical laws, the mental laws, the spiritual laws, without beginning or end; and it is within a few years, comparatively speaking - a few thousand years at best - that man has tried to reveal them. The infinite mass remains before us. Therefore the one great lesson that we learn from the Vedas, at the start, is that religion has just begun. The infinite ocean of spiritual truth lies before us to be worked on, to be discovered, to be brought into our lives. The world has seen thousands of prophets, and the world has yet to see millions. (7)

The Vedas are anadi, eternal. The meaning of the statement is not, as is erroneously supposed by some, that the words of the Vedas are anadi, but that the spiritual laws inculcated by the Vedas are such. These laws, which are immutable and eternal, have been discovered at various times by great men or rishis, though some of them have been forgotten now, while others are preserved. (8)

3. The Vedas Sprang, Like the Breath of God, Out of the Hearts of the Sages

All... Vedantists also believe the Vedas to be the revealed word of God, not exactly in the same sense, perhaps, as the Christians or Muslims believe, but in a very peculiar sense. Their idea is that the Vedas are an expression of the knowledge of God; and as God is eternal, His knowledge is eternally with Him, and so are the Vedas eternal. (9)

Whatever might be the idea of modern scholars, the Hindus are not ready to admit that parts of the Vedas were written at one time and parts written at another time. They, of course, still hold to their belief that the Vedas as a whole were produced at the same time - rather, if I may say so, that they were never produced, but that they always existed in the mind of the Lord. (10)

The Hindus believe that the Vedas are not mere books composed by men in some remote age. They hold them to be an accumulated mass of endless wisdom, which is sometimes manifested and at other times remain unmanifested. (11)

To the Western [mind], their religious books have been inspired, while with us our books have been expired; breath-like they came, the breath of God out of the hearts of the sages they sprang, the mantra-drashtas [*Brih. Up.*, 2.4.10]. (12)

Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvelous book - these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books are but so many pages; and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. (13)

b) The Vedas Are Impersonal

1. The Vedas Deal Almost Entirely with Philosophy

None knows by whom the Vedas were written, they are so ancient. (14)

The mass of writings called the Vedas is not the utterance of persons. (15)

The Upanishads do not reveal the life of any teacher, but simply teach principles. (16)

The Upanishads contain very little history of the doings of any man, but nearly all other scriptures are largely personal histories. The Vedas deal almost entirely with philosophy. Religion without philosophy runs into superstition; philosophy without religion becomes dry atheism. (17)

The Vedanta philosophy is very, very ancient; it is the outcome of that mass of Aryan literature known by the name of the Vedas. It is, as it were, the very flower of all the speculations and experiences and analyses embodied in that mass of literature, collected and culled through centuries. This Vedanta philosophy has certain peculiarities. In the first place, it is perfectly impersonal; it does not owe its origin to any persons or prophet; it does not build itself around one man as its center. Yet it has nothing to say against philosophies which do build themselves around certain persons. In later days in India other philosophies and systems arose, built around certain persons, such as Buddhism, or many of our present sects. They each have a certain leader to whom they owe their allegiance, just as the Christians and Muslims have. But the Vedanta philosophy stands at the background of all these various sects, and there is no fight and no antagonism between the Vedanta and any other system in the world. (18)

I want you to remember... the perfectly impersonal character of the Upanishads. Although we find many names and many speakers and many teachers in the Upanishads, not one of them stands as an authority of the Upanishads, not one verse is based on the life of any one of them. These are simply figures like shadows moving in the background, unfelt, unseen, unrealized; but the real force is in the marvelous, the brilliant, the effulgent texts of the Upanishads, perfectly impersonal. If twenty Yajnavalkyas came and lived and died, it does not matter; the texts are there. And yet it is against no personality; it is broad and expansive enough to embrace all the personalities that the world has yet produced and all that are yet to come. It has nothing to say against the worship of persons or avatars or sages. On the contrary, it is always upholding it. At the same time, it is perfectly impersonal. It is a most marvelous idea, like the God it preaches, the impersonal idea of the Upanishads. For the sage, the thinker, the philosopher, for the rationalist, it is as much impersonal as any modern scientist can wish. And these are our scriptures. (19)

2. The Authority of the Vedas Is the Eternal, Impersonal Truth

All the other religions of the world claim their authority as being delivered by a personal God or a number of personal beings, angels, or special messengers of God, unto certain persons; while the claim of the Hindus is that the Vedas do not owe their authority to anybody; they are themselves the authority, being eternal - the knowledge of God. They were never written, never

created, they have existed throughout time; just as creation is infinite and eternal, without beginning or end, so is the knowledge of God without beginning and without end. (20)

The idea is that the Vedas were never written; the idea is they never came into existence. I was once told by a Christian missionary that their scriptures have a historical character and therefore are true, to which I replied, "Mine have no historical character and *therefore* they are true; yours being historical, they were evidently made by some man the other day. Yours are man-made and mine are not; their non-historicity is in their favor." Such is the relation of the Vedas with all the other scriptures at the present day. (21)

If you tell [the orthodox Hindus who defend the Vedas] that the Vedas must have been pronounced by man first, [they will simply laugh]. You never heard of any [man uttering them for the first time]. Take Buddha's words. [There is a tradition that he lived and spoke these words] many times before. If the Christian stands up and says, "My religion is a historical religion and therefore yours is wrong and ours is true", the mimamsaka [orthodox Hindu] replies, "Yours being historical, you confess that a man invented it nineteen hundred years ago. That which is true must be infinite and eternal. That is the one test of truth. It never decays, it is always the same. You confess your religion was created by such-and-such a man. The Vedas were not. By no prophets or anything... Only infinite words; infinite by their very nature, from which the whole universe comes and goes." In the abstract, it is perfectly correct. (22)

Our religion preaches an impersonal personal God. It preaches any amount of impersonal laws *plus* any amount of personality, but the very fountainhead of our religion is the Shrutis, the Vedas, which are perfectly impersonal; the persons all come in the Smritis and Puranas - the great avatars, the incarnations of God, prophets, and so forth. And this ought also to be observed that, except our religion, every other religion in the world depends upon the life or lives of some personal founder or founders. Christianity is built upon the life of Jesus Christ, Islam upon Muhammad, Buddhism upon Buddha, Jainism upon the Jinas, and so on. It naturally follows that there must be in all these religions a good deal of fight about what they call the historical evidences of these great personalities. If at any time the historical evidences about the existence of these personages in ancient times becomes weak, the whole building of the religion tumbles down and is broken to pieces. We Hindus escaped this fate because our religion is not based upon persons, but upon principles. (23)

3. The Primary Allegiance of the Vedantist Is Always to Principles, Not Persons

Religions divide themselves equally into three parts. There is the first part, consisting of philosophy, the essence, the principles of every religion. These principles find expression in mythology - the lives of saints or heroes, demigods, or gods, or divine beings; and the whole idea of this mythology is that of power. And in the lower class of mythologies - the primitive - the expression of this power is in the muscles; their heroes are strong, gigantic. One hero conquers the whole world. As man advances, he must find expression for his energy higher than in the muscles; so his heroes also find expression in something higher. The higher mythologies have heroes who are gigantic moral men. Their strength is manifested in becoming moral and pure. They can stand alone, they can beat back the surging tide of selfishness and immorality. The third portion of all religions is symbolism, which you call ceremonials and forms. Even the

expression through mythology, the lives of heroes, is not sufficient for all. There are minds still lower. Like children they must have their kindergarten of religion, and these symbologies are evolved - concrete examples which they can handle and grasp and understand, which they can see and feel as material somethings.

So, in every religion you find there are the three stages: philosophy, mythology, and ceremonial. There is one advantage that can be pleaded for the Vedanta: that, in India, fortunately, these three stages have been sharply defined. In other religions the principles are so interwoven with the mythology that it is very hard to distinguish one from the other. The mythology stands supreme, swallowing up the principles; and in the course of centuries the principles are lost sight of. The explanation, the illustration of the principle, swallows up the principle and the people see only the explanation, the prophet, the preacher, while the principles have gone out of existence almost - so much so that today, if a man dares to preach the principles of Christianity apart from Christ, they will try to attack him and think he is wrong and dealing blows at Christianity. In the same way, if a man wants to preach the principles of Islam, Muslims will think the same; because concrete ideas, the lives of great men and prophets, have entirely overshadowed the principles.

In Vedanta the chief advantage is that it was not the work of one single man; and therefore, naturally, unlike Buddhism, or Christianity, or Islam, the prophet or teacher did not entirely swallow up or overshadow the principles. The principles live; and the prophets, as it were, form a secondary group, unknown to Vedanta. The Upanishads speak of no particular prophet, but they speak of prophets and prophetesses. The old Hebrews had something of that idea; yet we find Moses occupying most of the space of the Hebrew literature. Of course, I do not mean that it is bad that these prophets should take hold of a nation; but it certainly is very injurious if the whole field of principles is lost sight of. (24)

Persons are but the embodiment, the illustrations of the principles. If the principles are there, the persons will come by the thousands and millions. If the principle is safe, persons like Buddha will be born by the hundreds and thousands. But if the principle is lost and forgotten and the whole of national life tries to cling round a so-called historical person, woe unto that religion, danger unto that religion! Ours is the only religion that does not depend on a person or persons; it is based upon principles. At the same time, there is room for millions of persons. There is ample ground for introducing persons; but each one of them must be an illustration of the principles. We must not forget that. These principles of our religion are all safe, and it should be the lifework of every one of us to keep them safe, to keep them free from the accumulating dirt and dust of ages. It is strange, that in spite of the degradation that seized upon the race again and again, these principles of Vedanta were never tarnished. No one, however wicked, ever dared to throw dirt upon them. Our scriptures are the best preserved in the world. Compared to other books, there have been no interpolations, no text-torturing, no destroying of the essence of thought in them. It is there just as it was at first, directing the human mind towards the ideal, the goal. (25)

4. The Great Body of Eternal Truths Which Is the Vedas Is Revealed by the Enlightened Ones

Every one of the great religions in the world, excepting our own [Vedanta], is built upon such historical characters; but ours rests upon principles. There is no man or woman who can claim to have created the Vedas. They are the embodiment of eternal principles; sages discovered them; and now and then the names of these sages are mentioned - just their names; we do not even know who or what they were. In many cases we do not know who their fathers were, and in almost every case we do not know when and where they were born. But what cared they, these sages, for their names? They were the preachers of principles; and they themselves, so far as they went, tried to become illustrations of the principles they preached. At the same time, just as our God is an impersonal and yet a personal God, so is our religion a most intensely personal one - a religion based upon principles and yet with an infinite scope for the play of persons; for what religion gives you more incarnations, more prophets and seers, and still waits for infinitely more? The *Bhagavata* says that incarnations are infinite, leaving ample scope for as many as you like to come. Therefore, if any one or more of these persons in India's religious history, any one or more of these incarnations, and any one or more of our prophets are proved not to have been historical, it does not injure our religion at all; even then it remains as firm as ever, because it is based on principles and not upon persons. It is in vain that we try to gather all the peoples of the world around a single personality. It is difficult to make them gather together even round eternal and universal principles. If it ever becomes possible to bring the largest portion of humanity to one way of thinking in regard to religion, mark you, it must always be through principles and not through persons. Yet, as I have said, our religion has ample scope for the authority and influence of persons. There is that most wonderful theory of *ishta* which gives you the fullest and the freest choice possible among these great religious personalities. You may take up any one of the prophets or teachers as your guide and the object of your special adoration; you are even allowed to think that he whom you have chosen is the greatest of the prophets, greatest of all the avatars - there is no harm in that - but you must keep to a firm background of eternally true principles. (26)

If Sri Krishna and Rama and all the saints are proved to be mythical characters, the Vedas still remain, not as a source of blind and imperative faith, not as a rigid and inflexible spiritual possession, but as a great body of eternal truths, of which more and more is to come in the way of revelation by the enlightened ones. (27)

Vedanta finds veneration for some particular person... difficult to uphold. those of you who are students of Vedanta (and by Vedanta is always meant the Upanishads) know that this is the only religion that does not cling to any person. No one man or woman has ever become the object of worship among the Vedantins. It cannot be. A man is no more worthy of worship than any bird, any worm. We are all brothers. The difference is only in degree. I am exactly the same as the lowest worm. You see how very little room there is in Vedanta for any man to stand ahead of us and for us to go and worship him - he is dragging us on and we being saved by him. Vedanta does not give you that. No book, no man to worship, nothing. (28)

c) The Vedas Are the Only Exponent of Universal Religion because Their Sanction Is the Eternal Nature of Man

There is no new religious idea preached anywhere which is not found in the Vedas. (29)

The Vedas are the only exponent of the universal religion. (30)

You hear claims made by every religion as being the universal religion of the world. Let me tell you, in the first place, that there will never be such a thing; but if there is a religion which can lay claim to be that, it is only our religion [Vedanta] and no other, because every other religion depends upon some person or persons. All the other religions have been built around the life of what they think is a historical man; and what they think is the strength of religion is really the weakness - for, disprove the historicity of the man, and the whole fabric tumbles to the ground. Half the lives of these great founders of religions have been broken into pieces, and the other half doubted very seriously. As such, every truth that had its sanction only in their words vanishes into the air. but the truths of our religion, although we have persons by the score, do not depend upon them. (31)

There are these eternal principles which stand upon their own foundations without depending upon any reasoning even, much less on the authority of sages, however great, or incarnations, however brilliant they may have been. We may remark that, as this is the unique position in India, our claim is that Vedanta only can be the universal religion, that it is already the existing universal religion in the world, because it teaches principles and not persons. No religion built upon a person can be taken up as a type by all the races of mankind. In our own country [India] we find that there have been so many grand characters; in even a small city many persons are taken up as types by the different minds in that one city. How is it possible that one person, such as Muhammad, or Buddha, or Christ can be taken up as the one type for the whole world; nay, that the whole of morality, ethics, spirituality and religion can be true from only the sanction of that one person and one person alone? Now, the Vedantic religion does not require any such personal sanction. Its sanction is the eternal nature of man. (32)

The [Vedic] mantras are neither the property of particular persons, nor the exclusive property of any man or woman, however great he or she may be; nor even the exclusive property of the greatest spirits - the Buddhas or Christ - whom the world has produced. They are as much the property of the lowest of the low as they are the property of the Buddha, and as much the property of the smallest worm that crawls as of the Christ, because they are universal principles. (33)

The Vedas are not inspired, but expired; not that they came from anywhere outside, but they are the eternal laws living in every soul. The Vedas are in the soul of the ant, in the soul of the god. The ant has only to evolve and get the body of a sage or rishi, and the Vedas will come out, eternal laws expressing themselves. (34)

Cross reference to:

Mand. Up., 2

d) The Poetry of the Vedas Is Supersensuous

1. The Vedas Are Words of Power Being Pronounced with the Right Attitude of Mind

The Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus, are written in a sort of meter. (35)

All of you have heard of the power of words, how wonderful they are! Every book - the Bible, the Koran, and the Vedas - is full of the power of words. (36)

[Vedic] hymns are not only words of praise, but words of power, being pronounced with the right attitude of mind. (37)

There are one or two more ideas with regard to the Upanishads which I want to bring to your notice, for these are an ocean of knowledge, and to talk about the Upanishads, even for an incompetent person like myself, takes years and not one lecture only. I want, therefore, to bring to your notice one or two points in the study of the Upanishads. In the first place, they are the most wonderful poems in the world. (38)

The last Infinite is painted in the spirituality of the Upanishads. Not only is Vedanta the highest philosophy in the world; it is the greatest poem. (39)

[The ancient Indian philosophers] were of a poetic nature. They go crazy over poetry. Their philosophy is poetry. This philosophy is a poem.... All [high thought] in the Sanskrit is written in poetry. (40)

In the old Upanishads we find sublime poetry; their authors were poets. Plato says inspiration comes to people through poetry, and it seems as if these ancient rishis, seers of Truth, were raised above humanity to show these truths through poetry. They never preached, nor philosophized, nor wrote. Music came out of their hearts. (41)

When in ancient times...knowledge and feeling ...blossomed forth simultaneously in the heart of the rishi, then the highest Truth became poetic, and then the Vedas and other scriptures were composed. It is for this reason that one finds, in studying them, that the two parallel lines of bhava [emotion] and jnana [knowledge] have at last met, as it were, in the plane of the Vedas and combined and become inseparable. (42)

Cross reference: Ka. Up., 2.2.15

2. The Poetry of the Vedas Leads You on beyond the Senses

There is no metaphysical sublimity such as is in the Upanishads. They lead you on beyond the senses, infinitely more sublime than the sun and stars. First they [the rishis] try to describe God by sense sublimities, that His feet are the earth, His head the heavens. But that did not express what they wanted to say, though it was, in a sense, sublime. (43)

In the Samhita portion of the Vedas, all these attempts are external. As everywhere else, the attempts to find the solution to the great problems of life have been through the external world. Just as the Greek or modern European mind wants to find the solution of life and of all the sacred problems of Being by searching into the external world, so also did our forefathers; and, just as the Europeans failed, they failed also. But the Western people never made a move

more; they remained there, they failed in the search for the solution of the great problems of life and death in the external world; and there they remained, stranded. Our forefathers also found it impossible, but were bolder in declaring the utter helplessness of the senses in finding the solution. (44)

Apart from all its merits as the greatest philosophy, apart from its wonderful merits as theology, as showing the path of salvation to mankind, the Upanishadic literature is the most wonderful painting of sublimity that the world has. Here comes out in full force that individuality of the human mind, that introspective, intuitive Hindu mind. We have paintings of sublimity elsewhere in all nations, but almost without exception you will find that their ideal is to grasp the sublime in the muscles. Take, for instance, Milton, Dante, Homer, or any of the Western poets. There are wonderfully sublime passages in them; but there is always a grasping at Infinity through the senses, the muscles, getting the ideal of infinite expansion, the infinite of space. We find the same attempts made in the Samhita portion [of the Vedas]. You know some of those wonderful rikhs where creation is described; the very heights of expression of the sublime in expansion and the infinite in space are attained. But they found out very soon that the Infinite cannot be reached in that way, that even infinite space, expansion and infinite nature could not express the ideas that were struggling to find expression in their minds; and so they fell back upon other explanations. The language became new in the Upanishads; it is almost negative, it is sometimes chaotic, sometimes taking you beyond the senses, pointing out to you something which you cannot grasp, which you cannot sense; and at the same time you feel certain that it is there. (45)

In the Atman they found the solution - the greatest of all atmans, the God, the Lord of the universe, His relation to the Atman of man, our duty to Him; and through that, our relation to each other. And herein you find the most sublime poetry in the world, No more is the attempt made to paint this Atman in the language of matter. Nay, for It they have given up even all positive language. No more is there any attempt to come to the senses to give them the idea of the Infinite, no more is there an external, dull, dead, material, spacious, sensuous Infinite; but instead of that comes something which is as fine as even that mentioned in the saying: "There the sun cannot illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars; a flash of lightning cannot illumine the place, what to speak of this mortal fire." [*Ka. Up.*,2.2.15a] What poetry in the world can be more sublime than that! Such poetry you find nowhere else. (46)

Endless examples can be cited, but we have no time... to do that, or to show the marvelous poetry of the Upanishads, the painting of the sublime, the grand conceptions. But one other idea I must note, that the language and the thought and everything else come direct; they fall upon you like a sword-blade, strong as the blows of a hammer they come. There is no mistaking their meanings. Every tone of that music is firm and produces its full effect - no gyrations, no mad words, no intricacies in which the brain is lost. There are no signs of degradation, no attempts at too much allegorizing, too much piling of adjective after adjective, making it more and more intricate, till the whole of the sense is lost and the brain becomes giddy, and man does not know his way out from the maze of that literature. There was none of that yet. If it be human literature, it must be the production of a race which had not yet lost any of its national vigor. (47)

Cross reference to:

RV, 10.129

Taitt. Up., 2.4

Ka. Up., 2.2.15

Kena 1.3

Mund. Up., 2.2.5

Mund. Up., 3.1.2

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS

INTRODUCTION

PART I: THE ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

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PART I, SECTION 2: VEDIC CULTURE

Chapter 4: The Vedic Rishis

a) The Discoverers of the Vedas Are the Rishis, Who Come Face to Face with Spiritual Truth

The Vedas are said to have been written by rishis. These rishis were sages who realized certain facts. The exact definition of the Sanskrit word rishi is a seer of mantras - of the thoughts conveyed in the Vedic hymns. These men declared that they had realized - sensed, if that word can be used with regard to the supersensuous - certain facts, and these facts they proceeded to put on record. We find the same truth declared amongst both the Jews and the Christians. (1)

The word *mantra* means *thought out*, cogitated by the mind, and the rishi is the seer of those thoughts. (2)

A peculiarity of the Shrutis is that they have many sages as the recorders of truth in them, mostly men, even some women. Very little is known of their personalities, the dates of their birth, and so forth, but their best thoughts - their best discoveries, I should say - are preserved there, embodied in the sacred literature of India, the Vedas. (3)

The mass of knowledge called the Vedanta was discovered by personages called rishis; and the rishi is defined as a mantra-drashta, the seer of thought; not that it was his or her own. Whenever you hear that a certain passage of the Vedas came from a certain rishi, never think that he or she wrote it or created it out of his or her mind; he or she was the seer of the thought which already existed; it existed in the universe eternally. This sage was the discoverer; the rishis were spiritual discoverers. (4)

No one has ever seen the composer of the Vedas, and it is impossible to imagine one. The rishis were only discoverers of the mantras or eternal laws; they merely came face to face with the Vedas, the infinite mine of knowledge which has been there from time without beginning. (5)

The real fact is that there is a state beyond the conscious plane, where there is no duality of the knower, knowledge and the instruments of knowledge, etc. When the mind is merged, that state is perceived. I say it is *perceived* because there is no other word to express that state. Language cannot express that state. Shankaracharya styled it *transcendent perception* (*aparokshanubhuti*). Even after that transcendent perception, avatars descend to the relative plane and give glimpses of that - therefore it is said that the Vedas and other scriptures have originated from the perception of the seers. (6)

We find the word rishi again and again mentioned in the Vedas; and it has become a common word at the present time. The rishi is the great authority . We have to understand that idea. The definition is that the rishi is the mantra-drashta, the seer of thought.... The knowledge which the Vedas declare comes through being a rishi. This knowledge is not in the senses; but are the senses the be-all and end-all of the human being? Who dare say that the senses are the all-in-all of humanity?...

Beyond consciousness is where the bold seek. Consciousness is bound by the senses. Beyond that, beyond the senses, men must go in order to arrive at the truths of the spiritual world, and there are, even now, persons who succeed in going beyond the bounds of the senses. These are called rishis, because they come face to face with spiritual truths. (7)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.10

b) The Competency of the Rishis Is in Superconscious Perception, the Common Property of All

The proof... of the Vedas is just the same as the proof of this table before me - *pratyaksha*, direct perception. This I see with the senses, and the truths of spirituality we also see in a supersensuous state of the human soul. (8)

The idea is that we have to get our knowledge of ordinary objects by direct perception and inference therefrom, and from testimony of people who are competent. By "people who are competent" the yogis always mean the rishis, or the seers of thought recorded in the

scriptures, the Vedas. According to them, the only proof of the scriptures is that they were the testimony of competent persons. (9)

All human knowledge is uncertain and may be erroneous. Who is a true witness? He is a true witness to whom the thing said is a direct perception. Therefore the Vedas are true, because they consist of the evidence of competent persons. But is this power of perception peculiar to any? No! The rishi, the Aryan, the mlechcha [a foreigner, barbarian], all alike have it. (10)

You must always remember that in all other scriptures inspiration is quoted as their authority, but this inspiration is limited to a very few persons, and through them the truth came to the masses - and we all have to obey them. Truth came to Jesus of Nazareth and we must all obey him. But the truth came to the rishis of India - the mantra-drashtas, the seers of thought - and will come to all rishis in the future, not to talkers, not to book-swallowers, not to scholars, not to philologists, but to seers of thought. (11)

The rishi-state is not limited by time or by place, by sex or race. Vatsayana boldly declared that this rishihood is the common property of the descendants of the sage, of the Aryan, of the non-Aryan, of even the Mlechcha. This is the sageship of the Vedas; and constantly we ought to remember this ideal of religion in India, which I wish other nations of the world would also remember and learn, so that there may be less fight and less quarrel. (12)

Who are the rishis? Vatsayana says, "He who has attained through proper means the direct realization of dharma, he alone can be a rishi, even if he is a Mlechcha by birth." Thus it is that in ancient times, Vashishta, born of an illegitimate union; Vyasa, the son of a fisherwoman; Narada, the son of a maidservant of uncertain parentage, and many others of like nature attained to rishihood. (13)

In the Vedic or Upanishadic age, Maitreyi, Gargi, and other ladies of revered memory have taken the place of rishis through their skill in discussing Brahman. (14)

The discoverers of [spiritual] laws, the rishis... we Hindus honor as perfected beings. I am glad to [say] that some of the very greatest of them were women. (15)

It was a female sage who first found the unity of God and laid down this doctrine in one of the first hymns of the Vedas. [*Devi Sukta*] (16)

c) The Rishis Declared Spiritual Law with the Authority of Sympathy, Patience and Self-Sacrifice.

Rishis are discoverers of spiritual laws. (17)

The person in whom... supersensuous power is manifested is called a rishi, and the supersensuous truths he or she realizes by this power are called the Vedas. (18)

The injunction of the rishis [is] the word of divine authority, the revelation of God coming through the inspired rishi. (19)

All the great teachers of the world have declared that they came, not to destroy but to fulfill. [Matt.,5.17] Many times this has not been understood, and their forbearance has been thought to be an unworthy compromise with existing popular opinions. Even now you occasionally hear that these prophets and great teachers were rather cowardly and dared not say and do what they thought was right: but that was not so. Fanatics little understand the infinite power of love in the hearts of the great sages, who looked upon the inhabitants of the world as their children. They were the real fathers and mothers, the real gods, filled with infinite sympathy and patience for everyone; they were ready to bear and forbear. They know how human society should grow; and patiently, slowly, surely, went on applying their remedies, not by denouncing and frightening people, but by gently and kindly leading them upwards, step by step. Such were the writers of the Upanishads. (20)

We may call all that is weak in... the scriptures weak, because they were meant to be so by the ancient sages to help the weak, under the theory of arundhatidarshanam.* (21)

The Indian ideal [is] teaching through life and not through words, and that truth bears fruit only in those lives which have become ready to receive. Persons of that type are entirely averse to preaching what they know, for they are for ever convinced that it is internal discipline alone that leads to truth, and not words. Religion to them is no motive to social conduct, but an intense search after and realization of, *truth* in this life. They deny the greater potentiality of one moment over another; and, every moment in eternity being equal to every other, they insist on seeing the truths of religion face to face now and here, not waiting for death. (22)

Clinging on to little enjoyments and to desire the continuation of this state of things is utter selfishness. It arises, not from any desire for truth, its genesis is not in kindness for other beings, but in the utter selfishness of the human heart, in the idea, "I will have everything, and do not care for anyone else." This is as it appears to me. I would like to see more moral men in the world, like some of those grand old prophets and sages of ancient times who would have given up a hundred lives if they could by so doing benefit on little animal! Talk of morality and doing good to others! Silly talk of the present time! (23)

** When a bride is brought to the house of her husband for the first time he shows her a very tiny star called Arundhati. To do this he has to direct her gaze the right way, which he does by asking her to look at something near and something big in the direction of the star, e.g. a branch of a tree. Next he draws her attention to a Large, bright star observed beyond the branch and so on, till by several steps he succeeds in leading her eyes to the right thing. This method of leading to a subtle object through easy and gradual steps is called Arundhati Nyaya.*

4. The Pride of the Hindus Lies in Their Glorious Rishis

The ideal man or woman of our ancestors was the brahmin. In all our books stands out prominently this ideal of the brahmin. In Europe there is my Lord the Cardinal, who is struggling hard and spending thousands of pounds to prove the nobility of his ancestors; and he will not be satisfied until he has traced his ancestry to some dreadful tyrant who lived on a hill and watched the people passing by and, whenever he had the opportunity, sprang out on them and robbed them. That was the business of these nobility-bestowing ancestors, and my Lord

Cardinal is not satisfied until he has traced his ancestry to one of these. In India, on the other hand, the greatest princes seek to trace their descent to some ancient sage who dressed in a bit of loincloth, lived in a forest, eating roots and studying the Vedas. It is there that the Indian prince goes to trace his ancestry. You are of high caste when you can trace your ancestry to a rishi, and not otherwise. (24)

One thing we may note, that whereas you will find that good and great people of other countries take pride in tracing back their descent from some robber baron who lived in a mountain fortress and emerged from time to time to plunder the passing wayfarers, we Hindus, on the other hand, take pride in being the descendants of rishis and sages who lived on roots and fruits in mountain caves, meditating on the Supreme.(25)

Did you ever hear of a country where the greatest kings tried to trace their descent, not to kings, not to robber-barons living in old castles who plundered poor travelers, but to semi-naked sages who lived in the forest? India is the land. In other countries great priests try to trace their descent to some king; but here the greatest kings would trace their descent to some ancient priest. (26)

I am proud that I am a countryman of [Indians]..., the descendants of the most glorious rishis the world ever saw. Therefore, Indians, have faith in yourselves, be proud of your ancestors, instead of being ashamed of them. (27)

e) Be You All Rishis

1. India's Future Will Be Glorious By Getting a Hold on Spirituality, Like the Rishis

In the remote past our country made gigantic advances in spiritual ideas. Let us, today, bring before our mind's eye that ancient history. But the one great danger in meditating over long-past greatness is that we cease to exert ourselves for new things and content ourselves with vegetating upon that bygone ancestral glory and priding ourselves upon it. We should guard against that. In ancient times there were, no doubt, many rishis and maharishis who came face to face with truth. But if this recalling of our ancient greatness is to be of real benefit, we too must become rishis like them. Ay, not only that, but it is my firm conviction that we shall be even greater rishis than any that our history presents to us. (28)

If there have been rishis and sages in the past, be sure that there will be many now. If there have been Vyasas and Shankaracharyas in ancient times, why may not each one of you become a Shankaracharya? (29)

[The truths of the Vedas] can be experienced only by seers of the supersensuous, and not by common men and women [like us].... That is why, in the Vedas, the term rishi means "the seer of the truths of the mantras", and not [just] any brahmin with the holy thread hanging down from his neck. The division of society into castes came later on.(30)

Whether you believe in spirituality or not, for the sake of Indian national life you have to get hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch out the other hand and gain all you can from

other races; but everything must be subordinated to that one ideal of life; and out of that a wonderful, glorious future India will come - I am sure it is coming - a greater India than ever was. Sages will spring up, greater than all the ancient sages; and your ancestors will not only be satisfied but, I am sure, they will be proud from their positions in other worlds to look down upon their descendants, so glorious and so great. (31)

Cross reference to:

Ka. Up., 1.3.14a

Cha. Up., 4.9.1

2. To Be a Prophet Is the Birthright of Every Living Being

The rishis of old attained realization, and must we fail? We are also men and women. What has happened once in the life of an individual must, through proper endeavor, be realized in the life of others. History repeats itself. (32)

There were times in olden days when prophets were many in every society. The time is to come when prophets will walk through every street in every city in the world. In olden times, in particular, peculiar persons were, so to speak, selected by the operations of the laws of society to become prophets. The time is coming when we shall understand that to become religious means to become a prophet; and none can become religious until he or she becomes a prophet. We shall come to understand that the secret of religion is not in being able to think and say all these thoughts but, as the Vedas teach, to realize them, to realize newer and higher ones than have ever been realized, to discover them, bring them to society; and the study of religion should be the training to make prophets. The schools and the colleges should be the training ground for prophets. The whole universe must become prophets; and until someone becomes a prophet, religion is a mockery and a byword for him or her. We must see religion, feel it, realize it in a thousand times more intense a sense than that in which we see the wall....

In olden times, many did not understand what a prophet meant. They thought it was something by chance, that just by a fiat of will or some superior intelligence someone gained superior knowledge. In modern times we are prepared to demonstrate that this knowledge is the birthright of every living being, whosoever and wheresoever he or she may be; and that there is no chance in this universe. Every one who, we think, gets something by chance, has been working for it slowly and surely through ages. And the whole question devolves upon us: "Do we want to be prophets?" If we want, we shall be.

This, the training of prophets, is the great work that lies before us; consciously or unconsciously, all the great systems of religion are working towards this one great goal, only with this difference, that in many religions you will find they declare that this direct perception of spirituality is not to be had in this life, that humans must die and after their death there will come a time in another world when they will have visions of spirituality, when they will realize things which they now must believe. But Vedanta will ask all people who make such assertions, "Then how do you know that spirituality exists?" And they will have to answer that there must

always have been certain particular people who, even in this life, have got a glimpse of things which are unknown and unknowable.

Even this makes a difficulty. If they were peculiar people, having this power simply by chance, we have no right to believe in them. It would be a sin to believe in anything that is by chance, because we cannot know it. What is meant by knowledge? Destruction of peculiarity.... Our knowledge is knowing the principle. Our non-knowledge is finding the particular without reference to the principle. When we find one case or a few cases separate from the principle and without any reference to the principle, we are in darkness and do not know. Now, if these prophets, as they say, were peculiar persons who alone had the right to catch a glimpse of what is beyond and no one else has the right, we should not believe in these prophets, because they are peculiar cases without any reference to a principle. We can only believe in them if we ourselves become prophets.... We must reason; and when reason proves to us the truth of these prophets and great men and women about whom the ancient books speak in every country, we shall believe in all of them. We shall believe in them when we see such prophets among ourselves. We shall then find that they were not peculiar people, but only illustrations of certain principles. They worked, and that principle expressed itself naturally; and we shall have to work to express that principle in us. They were prophets, we shall believe, when we become prophets. They were the seers of things divine. They could go beyond the bounds of the senses and catch a glimpse of that which is beyond. We shall believe that when we are able to do it ourselves, and not before. (33)

If God had spoken to Christ, Muhammad, and the rishis of the Vedas, why does he not speak also to [us, His children]? (34)

3. Manifest the Power of Supersensuous Perception

This rishihood, this power of supersensuous perception of the Vedas, is real religion. And so long as this does not develop in the life of an initiate, so long is religion a mere empty word to him or her, and it is to be understood that he or she has not yet taken the first step in religion. (35)

Religion is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, nor in talking, not even in reasoning. It is being and becoming. Ay, my friends, until each one of you has become a rishi and come face to face with spiritual facts, religion life has not begun for you. Until the superconscious opens for you, religion is mere talk, it is nothing but preparation. (36)

Whoever realizes transcendental truth, whoever realizes the Atman in his or her own nature, whoever comes face to face with God, sees God alone in everything, has become a rishi. And there is no religious life for you until you have become a rishi. Then alone religion begins for you; now is only the preparation. Then religion dawns upon you; now you are only undergoing intellectual gymnastics and physical tortures. (37)

We must, therefore, remember that our religion [Vedanta] lays down distinctly and clearly that every one who want salvation must pass through the stage of rishihood - must become a mantra drashta, must see God. That is salvation, that is the law laid down in our scriptures. Then it becomes easy to look into the scriptures with our own eyes, understand the meaning for ourselves, to analyze just what we want and to understand the truth for ourselves. This is what has to be done. At the same time, we must pay all reverence to the ancient sages for their work. They were great, these ancients, but we want to be greater. They did great work in the past, but we must do greater work than they. They had hundreds of rishis in ancient India. We will have millions - we are going to have; and the sooner every one of you believes in this, the better for India and the better for the world. Whatever you believe, that you will be. If you believe yourselves to be sages, sages you will be tomorrow. There is nothing to obstruct you. For if there is one common doctrine that runs through all our apparently fighting and contradictory sects, it is that all glory, power and purity are within the soul already. (38)

We have to bow down to [the memory of the rishis]. So, be you all rishis and sages; that is the secret. More or less we shall all be rishis. What is meant by a rishi? The pure one. Be pure first, and you will have power. Simply saying, "I am a rishi" will not do; but when you are a rishi you will find that others obey you instinctively. Something mysterious emanates from you, which makes them follow you, makes them hear you, makes them unconsciously, even against their will, carry out your plans. That is rishihood. (39)

4. Be Real Men and Women, Be Rishis for Your Own Salvation and That of Others

The aim of this institution [the Ramakrishna Order] is to make men and women. You must not merely learn what the rishis taught. Those rishis are gone, and their opinions are gone with them. You must be rishis yourselves. You are also men as much as the greatest men that were ever born - even our incarnations. What can mere book-learning do? What can meditation do, even? What can the mantras and Tantras do? You must stand on your own feet. You must have this new method - the method of man-making. The true *man* is he who is as strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart. You must feel for the millions of beings around you, and yet you must be strong and inflexible and you must also possess obedience; though it may seem a little paradoxical, you must possess those apparently conflicting virtues.(40)

Have faith in yourself. You people were once Vedic rishis. Only, you have come in a different form, that is all. I see it clear as daylight that you all have infinite power within you. Rouse that up; arise, arise - apply yourselves heart and soul, gird up your loins. What will you do with wealth and fame, which are so transitory? Do you know what I think? I don't care for mukti [liberation] and all that. My mission is to arouse within you all such ideas; I am ready to undergo a hundred thousand rebirths to train up a single man. (41)

The rishi, as he or she is called in the Upanishads is not an ordinary man or woman, but a mantra-drashta. He or she is a true human being who sees religion, to whom religion is not

merely book-learning, nor argumentation, nor speculation, nor much talking, but actual realization, a coming face to face with truths which transcend the senses. This is rishihood, and that rishihood does not belong to any age, or time, or even to sects or caste. Vatsayana says that truth must be realized; and we have to remember that you, and I, and every one of us will be called upon to become rishis; and we must have faith in ourselves, we must become world-movers, for everything is in us. We must see religion face to face, experience it, and thus solve our doubts about it; and then, standing up in the glorious light of rishihood, each one of us will become a giant, and every word falling from our lips will carry behind it that infinite sanction of security; and before us evil will vanish by itself without the necessity of cursing anyone, without the necessity of abusing anyone, without the necessity of fighting anyone in the world. May the Lord help us... to realize rishihood, for our own salvation and for that of others! (42)

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PART I, SECTION 2: VEDIC CULTURE

Chapter 5: Vedic Culture

a) The Aryans, Lovers of Peace

1. The Ideal of the Aryan Was the Assimilative Base of the Vast Number of Indian Races

Three mountains stand as typical of progress - the Himalayas of the Indo-Aryan, Sinai of the Hebrew, and Olympus of the Greek civilization. (1)

The loom of the fabric of the Aryan civilization is a vast, warm, level country, interspersed with broad, navigable rivers. The cotton of this cloth is composed of highly civilized, semi-civilized, and barbarian tribes, mostly Aryan. (2)

The problem [in India] has been as it has been everywhere else - the assimilation of various races; but nowhere has it been so vast as here. (3)

We [find] a multitude surrounded by the snows of the Himalayas in the north and the heat of the south - vast plains, interminable forests through which mighty rivers roll their tides. We catch a glimpse of different races - Dravidians, Tartars and aboriginals, pouring in their quota of blood, of speech, or manners, and religions. (4)

Community of language, government and, above all, religion has been the power of fusion.

In other lands this has been attempted by *force*, that is, the enforcement of the culture of *one* race only over the rest, the result being the production of a short-lived, vigorous national life; then, dissolution.

In India, on the other hand, the attempts have been as gentle as the problem is vast; and, from the earliest times, the customs, and especially the religions, of the different elements tolerated.

When it was a small problem and force was sufficient to form a unity, the effect really was the nipping in the bud of various healthy types in the germ of all the elements except the dominant one. It was only one set of brains using the vast majority for its own good, thus losing the major portion of the possible amount of development; and thus, when the dominant type had spent itself, the apparently impregnable building tottered to its ruin, e.g. Greece, Rome, the Norman.

A common language would be a great desideratum; but the same criticism applies to it - the destruction of the vitality of the existing ones.

The only solution to be reached was the finding of a great sacred language of which all the others would be considered manifestations, and that was found in Sanskrit.

The Dravidian languages may or may not have been originally Sanskritic, but for practical purposes they are so now; and every day we see them approaching the ideal more and more, yet keeping their distinctive vital peculiarities.

[In addition], a racial background was found - the Aryas. (5)

The attempt at fusion between races and tribes of various degrees of culture: just as Sanskrit has been the linguistic solution, so the Arya is the racial solution. (6)

And at last a great nation emerges to our view - still keeping the type of the Aryan - stronger, broader, and more organized by assimilation. We find the central assimilate core giving its type and character to the whole mass, clinging on with great pride to its name of *Aryan*. (7)

2. Brushing Off the Cobwebs of the "Aryan Invasion Theory"

A gentle, yet clear brushing off of the cobwebs of the so-called Aryan theory and all its vicious corollaries is... absolutely necessary, especially for the South [of India]; and a proper self-respect created by a knowledge of the past grandeurs of the ancestors of the Aryan race - the great Tamils. (8)

[There has been] speculation whether there was a distinct, separate race called the Aryas living in Central Asia to the Baltic. [Also as to] so-called types - the "blonde" and the "brunette". [But] the races were always mixed.

Coming to practical common sense from so-called historical imagination: the Aryas in their oldest records were in the land between Turkistan and the Punjab and Northwest Tibet. (9)

The Americans, the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese got hold of the poor Africans and made them work hard while they lived; and their children of mixed birth were born in slavery and kept in that condition for a long period. From that wonderful example, the mind jumps back several thousand years and fancies that the same thing happened [in India]; and our archeologist dreams of India being full of dark-eyed aborigines, and the bright Aryan came from - the Lord knows where. According to some, they came from Central Asia. There are patriotic Englishmen who think that the Aryans were all red-haired. Others, according to their idea, think that they were all black-haired. If the writer happens to be a black-haired man, the Aryans were all black-haired! Of late, there was an attempt made to prove that the Aryans lived on the Swiss lakes. I should not be sorry if they had all been drowned there, theory and all.

Some say now that they lived at the North Pole. Lord bless the Aryans and their habitations! As for the truth of these theories, there is not one word in our scriptures, not one, to prove that the Aryan ever came from anywhere outside of India - and in ancient India was included Afghanistan. There it ends. And the theory that the shudra castes were all non-Aryans and that they were a multitude, is equally illogical and equally irrational. It could not have been possible in those days that a few Aryans settled and lived there with a hundred thousand slaves at their command. These slaves would have eaten them up, made "chutney" of them in five minutes. The only explanation is to be found in the *Mahabharata*, which says that in the beginning of the Satya Yuga there was one caste, the brahmins; and then, by difference of occupation, they went on dividing themselves into different castes, and that is the only true and rational explanation that has been given. And in the coming Satya Yuga all the other castes will have to go back to the same condition. (10)

What your European pundits say about the Aryans' swooping down from some foreign land, snatching away the lands of the aborigines and settling in India by exterminating them, is all pure nonsense, foolish talk! Strange that our Indian scholars, too, say amen to them; and all these monstrous lies are being taught to our boys! This is very bad indeed.

I am an ignoramus myself; I do not pretend to any scholarship; but with the little that I understand, I strongly protested against these ideas at the Paris Congress [in 1901]. I have been talking with the Indian and European savants on the subject, and hope to raise many objection to this theory in detail, when time permits. And this I say to you, to our pundits, also: "You are learned men; hunt up your old books and scriptures, please, and draw your own conclusions."

Whenever Europeans find an opportunity, they exterminate the aborigines and settle down in ease and comfort on their lands; and therefore they think the Aryans must have done the same! The Westerners would be considered wretched vagabonds if they lived in their native homes, depending wholly on their own internal resources; and so they have to run wildly about the world seeking how they can feed upon the fat of the land of others by spoliation and slaughter; and therefore they conclude that the Aryans must have done the same! But where is your proof?

Guess-work? Then keep your fanciful guesses to yourselves! In what Veda, in what Sukta, do you find that the Aryans came into India from a foreign country? Where do you get the idea that they slaughtered the wild aborigines? What do you gain by talking such nonsense?... India has never [exterminated weaker races and settled on their lands for ever]. The Aryans were kind and generous; and in their hearts, which were Large and unbounded as the ocean, and in their brains, gifted with superhuman genius, all these ephemeral and apparently pleasant, but virtually beastly practices never found a place.(11)

3. The Hindus Are Aryans, Whether of Pure or Mixed Blood

According to the Hindu Shastras, the three Hindu castes - brahmana, kshatriya and vaishya, and several nations outside of India, to wit, Cheen, Hun, Darad, Pahlava, Yavana, and Khash are all Aryans.... There was a distinct, powerful nation called Cheen, living in the northeastern parts of Kashmir; and the Darads lived where are now seen the hill-tribes between India and Afghanistan. Some remnants of the ancient Cheen are yet to be found in very small numbers, and Daradisthan is yet in existence. In the *Rajatarangini*, the history of Kashmir, references are often made to the supremacy of the powerful Darad-raj. An ancient tribe of Hun reigned for a long period in the northwestern parts of India. The Tibetans now call themselves Huns; but this Hun is perhaps "Hune". The fact is that the Huns referred to in Manu are not the modern Tibetans; but it is quite probable that the modern Tibetans are the product of the mixture of the ancient Aryan Huns and some other Mongol tribes that came to Tibet from Central Asia. According to Prjevalski and the Duc d'Orleans, the Russian and French travelers, there are still found in some parts of Tibet tribes with faces and eyes of the Aryan type. *Yavana* was the name given to the Greeks.... not only the Hindus but also the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians called the Greeks by that name. By the word *Pahlava* is meant the ancient Parsees, speaking the Pahlavi tongue. Even now, Khash denotes the semi-civilized Aryan tribes living in mountainous regions and in the Himalayas, the word is still used in that sense. In that

sense, the present Europeans are the descendants of the Khash; in other words, these Aryan tribes that were uncivilized in ancient days are all Khash.

In the opinion of modern savants, the Aryans had reddish-white complexion, black or red hair, straight noses, well-drawn eyes, etc.; and the formation of the skull varied a little according to the hair. Where the complexion is dark, there the change has come to pass owing to the mixture of the pure Aryan blood with black races. They hold that there are still some tribes to the west of the Himalayan borders who are of pure Aryan blood, and that the rest are all of mixed blood; otherwise, how could they be dark? But the European pundits ought to know by this time that, in the southern part of India, many children are born with red hair, which after two or three years turns into black, and that in the Himalayas many have red hair and blue or gray eyes.

Let the pundits fight among themselves; it is the Hindus who have all along called themselves Aryas. Whether of pure or mixed blood, the Hindus are Aryas; there it rests. If the Europeans do not like us, Aryas, because we are dark, let them take another name for themselves - what is that to us? (12)

Whatever may be the import of the philological terms *Aryan* and *Tamilian*, even taking for granted that both of these grand sub-divisions of Indian humanity came from outside the Western frontier, the dividing line has been, from the most ancient times, one of language and not of blood. Not one of the epithets expressive of contempt for the ugly physical features of the Dasyus of the Vedas would apply to the great Tamilian race; in fact, if there be a toss up for good looks between the Aryans and Tamilians, no sensible man would prognosticate the result. (13)

We stick, in spite of our Western theories, to that definition of the word *Arya* which we find in our sacred books, and which includes only the multitude we now call Hindus. This Aryan race, itself a mixture of the great races, Sanskrit-speaking and Tamil-speaking, applies to all Hindus alike. That the shudras have in some Smritis been excluded from this epithet means nothing, for the shudras were, and still are, only the waiting Aryas - Aryas in novitiate. (14)

4. The True Aryan Is He Who Is Born through Prayer, the Descendant of the Whole Universe

What is an Aryan? He is a man whose birth is through religion. This is a peculiar subject, perhaps, in the USA, but the idea is that a man must be born through religion, through prayers. (15)

The child whose very conception and whose death is according to the rules of the Vedas, such is an Aryan. (16)

He is of the "Aryan race" who is born through prayer, and he is a non-Aryan who is born through sensuality. (17)

Re [the theory of] the Accado-Sumerian racial identity of the ancient Tamilians: this makes us proud of the blood of the great civilization which flowered before all others - compared to whose antiquity the Aryans and the Semites are babies....

As for us Vedantins and sannyasins [monks], we are proud of our Sanskrit-speaking ancestors of the Vedas; proud of our Tamil-speaking ancestors whose civilization is the oldest yet known; we are proud of our Kolaran ancestors, older than either of the above - who lived and hunted in forests; we are proud of our ancestors with flint implements - the first of the human race; and, if evolution be true, we are proud of our animal ancestors, for they antedated man himself. We are proud that we are the descendants of the whole universe, sentient or insentient. Proud that we are born, and work, and suffer - proudest still that we die when the task is finished and enter for ever the realm where there is no more delusion. (18)

b) The Indian Aryans Sought, above All, to Master the Mind and Go Beyond Physical Pleasures

1. Through Culture of the Mind and Intellect the Indian Aryans Evolved the Upanishads

We find three ideas wherever the Aryans go: the village community, the rights of women, and a joyful religion. The first is the system of village communities...; each man was his own and owned the land. All these political institutions of the world that we now see are the development of these village systems; as the Aryans went to different countries and settled, certain circumstances developed this institution, others that. (19)

When the Aryans reached India, they found the climate so hot that they could not work incessantly, so they began to think; thus they became introspective and developed religion. They discovered that there is no limit to the power of the mind. They therefore sought to master that, and through it they learned that there is something infinite coiled up in the frame we call man, and that it is seeking to become kinetic. To evolve this became their chief aim. (20)

The Aryans were lovers of peace, cultivators of the soil, and were quite happy and contented if only they could rear their families undisturbed. In such a life they had ample leisure, and therefore greater opportunity of being thoughtful and civilized. Our King Janaka tilled the soil with his own hands, and he was also the greatest of knowers of Truth of his time. With us, rishis, munis, and yogis have been born from the very beginning; they have known from the first that the world is a chimera. Plunder and fight as you may, the enjoyment that you are seeking is only in peace; and peace, in the renunciation of physical pleasures. Enjoyment lies, not in physical development, but in the culture of the mind and intellect. (21)

The Upanishads were preached and oblations offered in hermitages near which deer grazed. (22)

2. The Bold Intellectual Analysis of the Indian Aryans Produced Great Contributions to Science

In ancient India the centers of national life were always the intellectual and spiritual, not political. Of old, as now, political and social power have always been subordinated to spiritual and intellectual. The outburst of national life was round colleges of sages and spiritual teachers. We thus find the samitis of the Panchalas, of the Kasyas (of Varanasi), the Maithilas standing out as great centers of spiritual culture and philosophy, even in the Upanishads. Again, these centers in turn became the focus of political ambitions of the various divisions of the Aryans. (23)

There was an inquisitiveness in the race to start with, which very soon developed into bold analysis; and though, in the first attempt, the work turned out might be like the attempts with shaky hands of the future master-sculptor, it very soon gave way to science, bold attempts, and startling results.

Its boldness made these men search every brick of their sacrificial altars - scan, cement, and pulverize every word of their scriptures, arrange, rearrange, doubt, deny, or explain the ceremonies. (24)

Vedic anatomy was no less perfect than the Ayurvedic. There were many names for many parts of the Organs, because they had to cut up animals for sacrifice.(25)

Their boldness turned their gods inside out and assigned only a secondary place to the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Creator of the universe, their ancestral Father-in-Heaven; or threw Him altogether overboard as useless and started a world religion without Him [Buddhism], with even now the largest following of any religion. (26)

The sea is described as full of ships. Sea voyage was prohibited later on, partly because there came the fear that people might thereby become Buddhists. (27)

The Vedic sacrificial altar was the origin of geometry. (28)

The Aryans were by nature an analytical race. In the science of mathematics and grammar, wonderful fruits were gained, and by the analysis of the mind the full tree was developed. (29)

[The boldness of the Aryans] evolved the science of geometry from the arrangement of the bricks to build various altars and startled the world with astronomical knowledge that arose from the attempts to time accurately their worship and oblations. It made their contribution to the science of mathematics the largest of any race, ancient or modern; and to their knowledge of chemistry, or metallic compounds in medicine, their scale of musical notes, their invention of the bow-instruments - all of great service in the building of the modern European civilization. It led them to invent the science of building up the child-mind through shining fables, of which every child in every civilized country learns in a nursery or school and carries an impress through life. (30)

3. Poetic Insight Was the Other Great Peculiarity of the Indian Aryans

Behind and before this analytical keenness, covering it as in a velvet sheath, was the other great mental peculiarity of the race - poetic insight. Its religion, its philosophy, its history, its ethics, its politics, were all inlaid in a flowerbed of poetic imagery - the miracle of language which was called Sanskrit, or *perfected*, lending itself to expressing and manipulating them better than any other tongue. The aid of melodious numbers was involved even to express the hard facts of mathematics.

This analytical power and the boldness of poetical visions which urged it onwards are the two great internal causes in the makeup of the Hindu race. They together formed, as it were, the keynote of the national character. This combination is what is always making the race press onwards beyond the senses - the secret of those speculations which are like the steel blades the artisans used to manufacture - cutting through bars of iron, yet pliable enough to be bent into a circle.

They wrought poetry in silver and gold; the symphony of jewels, the maze of marble wonders, the music of colors, the fine fabrics which belong more to the fairyland of dreams than to the real - have back of them thousands of years of working of this national trait.

Arts and sciences, even the realities of domestic life, are covered with a mass of poetical conceptions, which are pressing forward till the sensuous touched the supersensuous, and the real gets the rose-hue of the unreal.

The earliest glimpses we have of this race show it already in possession of this characteristic, as an instrument of some use in its hands. Many forms of religion and society must have been left behind in the onward march before we find the race as depicted in the scriptures, the Vedas.

An organized pantheon, elaborate ceremonials, divisions of society into hereditary classes necessitated by a variety of occupations, a great many necessities and a good many luxuries of life are already there. (31)

c) The Caste System, the Indian Method of Social Fusion and Rejection of Competition

1. The Method of Bringing Indian Humanity Together under the Guidance of Spiritualized Intellect

The history of India is a veritable ethnological museum. Possibly, the half-ape skeleton of the recently discovered Sumatra link will be found on search here, too. Dolmens are not wanting, flint implements can be dug out almost anywhere. The lake-dwellers - at least, the river-dwellers - must have been abundant at one time. The cavemen and leaf-wearers still persist. The primitive hunters living in forests are in evidence in various parts of the country. Then there are the more historical varieties - the Negrito-Kolaran, the Dravidian, and the Aryan. To these

have been added from time to time dashes of nearly all the known races, and a great many yet unknown - various breeds of Mongoloids, Mongols, Tartars, and the so-called Aryans of the philologists. Well, here are the Persian, the Greek, the Yunchi, the Hun, the Chin, the Scythian, and many more, melted and fused; the Jews, the Parsees, Arabs, Mongols, down to the descendants of the Vikings and the lords of the German forests, yet undigested - an ocean of humanity, composed of these race-waves, seething, boiling, struggling, constantly changing form, rising to the surface and spreading and swallowing little ones, again subsiding.

In the midst of this madness of nature, one of the contending factions discovered a method and, through force of its superior culture, succeeded in bringing the largest number of Indian humanity under its sway. The superior race styled themselves the Aryas or nobles; and their method was the varnashramacharya - the so-called caste. (32)

The warp of Aryan civilization is varnashrama, and its woof, the conquest of strife and competition in nature. (33)

Of course, the men of the Aryan race reserved for themselves, consciously or unconsciously, a good many privileges; yet the institution of caste has always been very flexible, sometimes too flexible to ensure a healthy uprising of the races very low in the scale of culture. (34)

There is a theory that there was a race of mankind in Southern India called Dravidians, entirely differing from another race in Northern India called Aryans; and that the Southern Indian brahmins are the only Aryans that came from the North; the other men of Southern India belong to an entirely different caste and race to those of Southern India brahmins. Now I beg your pardon, Mr. Philologist, this is entirely unfounded. The only proof of it is that there is a difference of language between the North and the South. I do not see any other difference. We are so many northern men here [in Madras in Southern India]; and I ask my European friends to pick out the northern and southern men from this assembly. Where is the difference? A little difference of language. But the brahmins are a race that came here speaking the Sanskrit language! Well then, they took up the Dravidian language and forgot their Sanskrit. Why should not the other castes have done the same? Why should not all the other castes have come one after the other from Northern India, taken up the Dravidian language, and so forgotten their own? That is an argument working both ways. Do not believe in such silly things. There may have been a Dravidian people who vanished from here, and the few who remained lived in forests and other places. It is quite possible that the language may have been taken up, but all these are Aryans who came here from the North. The whole of India is Aryan, nothing else. (35)

Would there have been this institution of varnashrama if the Aryans had exterminated the aborigines in order to settle on their lands?

The object of the peoples of Europe is to exterminate all in order to live themselves. The aim of the Aryans is to raise all up to their own level; nay, even to a higher level than themselves. The means of European civilization is the sword; of the Aryans, the division into different varnas [castes]. This system of division into different varnas is the stepping-stone to civilization, making one re higher and higher in proportion to one's learning and culture. In

Europe, it is everywhere victory to the strong and death to the weak. In the land of Bharata [India] , every social rule is for the protection of the weak. (36)

The institution of caste put, at least theoretically, the whole of India under the guidance, not of wealth, nor of the sword, but of intellect, intellect chastened and controlled by spirituality. (37)

2. The Different Vedic Castes

The very basis of Vedic religion and Vedic society is the jati dharma, that is, one's own dharma enjoined according to the different castes - the svadharma, that is , one's own dharma or set of duties prescribed for man according to his capacity and position. (38)

The Vedas teach that he who knows God is a brahmin; he who protects his fellows is a kshatriya; while he who gains his livelihood in trade is a vaishya. (39)

The leading caste in India is the highest of the Aryans - the brahmins. (40)

The Indian climate again gave a higher direction to the genius of the race. In a land where nature was propitious and yielded easy victories, the national mind started to grapple with and conquer the higher problems of life in the field of thought. Naturally the thinker, the priest, became the highest class in Indian society, and not the man of the sword. (41)

Brahminhood was the solution to the varying degrees of progress and culture as well as that of all social and political problems. The great ideal of India is brahminhood: property-less, subject to no laws nor kings, except the moral. Brahminhood by descent - various races have claimed and acquired the right in the past as well as in the present. (42)

It was the knowers [those cultured in mind and intellect] who reclaimed the jungles for cultivation. Then, over that cleared plot of land was built the Vedic altar; in that pure sky of Bharata, up rose the sacred smoke of yajnas [sacrifices]; in that air breathing peace, the Vedic mantras echoed and re-echoed - and cattle and other beasts grazed without any fear of danger. The place of the sword was assigned at the feet of learning and dharma. Its only work was to protect dharma and save the lives of men and of cattle. The hero was the protector of the weak in danger - the kshatriya. Ruling over the plough and the sword was dharma, the protector of all. He is the King of kings; he is ever-awake, even when the world sleeps. Everyone was free under the protection of dharma. (43)

As, during the supremacy of the brahmin and the kshatriya there is a centralization of learning and advancement of civilization, so the result of the supremacy of the vaishya is an accumulation of wealth. (44)

3. Castes Coalesce in the Long Run in Spite of Attempts by the Higher Castes to Preserve Privilege

Though apparently different from the social methods of other nations, on close inspection the Aryan method of caste will not be found so very different, except on two points:

The first is, in every other country the highest honor belongs to the kshatriya, the man of the sword. The Pope of Rome will be glad to trace his descent to some robber-baron on the banks of the Rhine. In India, the highest honor belongs to the man of peace - the sharma, the brahmin, the man of God.

The greatest Indian king would be gratified to trace his descent to some ancient sage who lived in the forest, probably a recluse, possessing nothing, dependent upon the villagers for his daily necessities, and all his life trying to solve the problems of this life and the life hereafter.

The second point is the difference of *units*. The law of caste in every other country takes the individual man or woman as the sufficient unit. Wealth, power, intellect or beauty suffices for the individual to leave the status of birth and scramble up to anywhere he or she can.

In India, the unit is all the members of a caste community.

Here, too, one has every chance of rising from a low caste to a higher or the highest; only, in this land of the birth of altruism, one is compelled to take his whole caste along with him or her.

In India you cannot, on account of your wealth, power, or any other merit, leave your fellows behind and make common cause with your superiors; you cannot deprive those who helped you to acquire the excellence of any benefit therefrom and give them in return only contempt. If you want to rise to a higher caste in India, you have to elevate all your caste first, and then there is nothing in your onward path to hold you back.

This is the Indian method of fusion; and this has been going on from time immemorial. For in India, more than elsewhere, such words as Aryans and Dravidians are only of philological import, the so-called craniological differentiation finding no solid ground to work upon.

Even so are the names such as brahmin, kshatriya, etc. They simply represent the status of a community, in itself continuously fluctuating, even when it has reached the summit; and all further endeavors are towards fixity of the type by non-marriage, by being forced to admit fresh groups from lower castes or foreign lands within its pale.

Whatever caste has the power of the sword becomes kshatriya; whatever learning, brahmin; whatever wealth, vaishya.

The groups that have already reached the coveted goal, indeed, try to keep themselves aloof from the newcomers by making subdivisions in the same caste; but the fact remains that they coalesce in the long run. This is going on before our eyes all over India.

Naturally, a group having raised itself up would try to preserve the privileges to itself. Hence, whenever it was possible to get the help of a king the higher castes, especially the brahmins, have tried to put down similar aspirations in the lower castes, by the sword, if practicable. But

the question is: did they succeed? Look closely into your Puranas and Upapuranas, look especially into the local khanda of the big Puranas, look round and see what is happening before your eyes, and you will find the answer.

We are, in spite of our various castes, and in spite of our modern system of marriage restricted within the subdivisions of a caste (though this is not universal), a mixed race in every sense of the word. (45)

4. There Is No Vedic Sanction for Hereditary Barriers in the Caste System, Which Is to Be Evolved According to Social, Not Religious, Law

The Hindus said in olden times that life must be made easier and smoother. And what makes everything alive? Competition. Hereditary trade kills. You are a carpenter? Very good; your son can only be a carpenter. What are you? A blacksmith? Blacksmithing becomes a caste; your children will become blacksmiths. We do not allow anybody else to come into that trade, so you will be quiet and remain there. You are a military man, a fighter? Make a caste. You are a priest? Make a caste. The priesthood is hereditary, and so on. Rigid, high power! That has a great side, and that side is that it really rejects competition. It is that which has made the nation live while other nations have died - that caste. But there is a great evil; it checks individuality. I will have to be a carpenter because I am born a carpenter; but I do not like it. That is in the books, and that was before Buddha was born. I am talking to you of India as it was before Buddha. (46)

The doctrine of caste in the *Purusha Sukta* of the Vedas does not make it hereditary. What are those instances in the Vedas where caste has been made a matter of hereditary transmission? (47)

Social customs as barriers [were] founded upon the Smritis, but none from the Shrutis. The Smritis must change with time. This is the admitted law. (48)

Caste is continually changing, rituals are continuously changing; so are forms. It is the substance, the principle, that does not change. It is in the Vedas that we have to study our religion. With the exception of the Vedas, every book must change. The authority of the Vedas is for all time to come; the authority of every one of our other books is for the time being. For instance, one Smriti is powerful for one age, another for another age. Great prophets are always coming and pointing the way to work. Some prophets worked for the lower classes, others, like Madhva, gave to women the right to study the Vedas. Caste should not go, but should be readjusted occasionally. Within the old structures is to be found life enough for the building of two hundred thousand new ones. It is sheer nonsense to desire the abolition of caste. The new method is: evolution of the old. (49)

5. When the Whole World Will Again Attain to the Ideal of the Brahmin, Caste Will Be at an End

The general policy of our national lawgivers was to give the priests... honor. They also had the same socialistic plan [you in the West are just ready to try], that checks them from getting money. What [was] the motive? Social honor. Mind you, the priest in all countries is the highest

in the social scale, so much so in India that the poorest brahmin is greater than the greatest king in the country, by birth. He is the nobleman in India. But the law does not allow him ever to become rich. The law grinds him down to poverty - only it gives him... honor. He cannot do a thousand things; and the higher the caste in the social scale, the more restricted are its enjoyments. The higher the caste, the less the number of kinds of food that people can eat, the less the amount of food that people may eat, the less the number of occupations [they may] engage in. To the West, their lives would be only a perpetual train of hardships - nothing more than that. It is a perpetual discipline in eating, drinking, and everything; and all [penalties] which are required from the lower caste are required from the higher ten times more. The lowest person tells a lie; the fine is one dollar. A brahmin must pay, say a hundred dollars, for he or she knows better. (50)

The brahmin or high caste person devotes the first part of his life to the study of the Vedas or sacred books and the latter part of meditating on the divinity, being supposed to have overcome the human in himself, and to be only a soul. (51)

Our ideal of high birth, therefore, is different from that of others. Our ideal is the brahmin of spiritual culture and renunciation. By the brahmin ideal, what do I mean? I mean the ideal brahminness in which worldliness is altogether absent and true wisdom is abundantly present. That is the ideal of the Hindu race. Have you not heard it declared that he, the brahmin, is not amenable to law, that he has no law, that he is not governed by kings, and that his body cannot be hurt? That is perfectly true. Do not understand it in the light thrown upon it by interested and ignorant fools, but understand it in the light of the true and original Vedantic conception. If the brahmin is one who has killed all selfishness and who lives and works to propagate wisdom and the power of love - if a country is altogether inhabited by such brahmins, by men and women who are spiritual and moral and good, is it strange to think of that country as being above and beyond all law? What police, what military, are necessary to govern them? Why should they live under a government? Why should anyone govern them at all? They are good and noble, and they are the men and women of God. These are our ideal brahmins. (52)

The ideal of this world is that state when the whole world will again be brahmin in nature. When there will be no more necessity of the shudra, vaishya, and kshatriya powers, when human beings will be born with yoga powers, when spiritual force will completely triumph over material force, when disease and grief will no more overtake the human body, the sense-organs will no more be able to go against the mind; when the application of brute force will be completely effaced from men's memory, like a dream of primeval days, when love will be the only motive power in all actions on this earth - then only will the whole of mankind be endowed with brahminical qualities and attain brahminhood. Then only the distinction of caste will be at an end, ushering in the Satya-Yuga (Golden Age) visualized by the ancient rishis. We must adopt only that kind of caste division which gradually leads to this goal. That division into caste which is the best way to abolish caste should be most cordially welcomed. (53)

c) **The Mythological and Allegorical Aryan Gods**

In France the "rights of man" was long a watchword of the race; in America the rights of women still beseech the public ear; in India we have concerned ourselves always with the rights of Gods. (54)

Spirit-worship was the beginning of the Hindu religion. At first the Hindus used to invoke the spirits of their departed ancestors in some man, and then worship and offer him food. By and by it was found that the men who acted as mediums for these disembodied spirits suffered very much physically afterwards. So they gave up the practice and substituted instead an effigy of grass (kushaputtali) and, invoking the departed spirits of their ancestors in it, offered to it worship and pindas. The Vedic invocation of the devas for worship and sacrifice... was a development of this Spirit worship. (55)

The Samhitas... are collections of hymns forming, as it were, the oldest Aryan literature; properly speaking, the oldest literature in the world. There may have been scraps of literature of older date here and there, older than that even, but not books or literature properly so-called. As a collected book this is the oldest the world has; and herein is portrayed the earliest feelings of the Aryans, their aspirations, the questions that arose about their manners and methods, and so on. At the very outset we find a curious idea. These hymns are sung in praise of different gods, devas as they are called, the bright ones. There is quite a number of them. One is called Indra, another Varuna, another Mitra, Parjanya, and so on. Various mythological and allegorical figures come before us, one after the other - for instance, Indra the thunderer, striking the serpent who has withheld the rains from mankind. Then he lets fly his thunderbolt, the serpent is killed, and rain comes down in showers. The people are pleased and they worship Indra with oblations. They make a sacrificial pyre, kill some animals, roast their flesh upon spits and offer that meat to Indra. And they had a popular plant called soma. What plant it was nobody knows now; it has entirely disappeared; but from the books we gather that, when crushed it produced a sort of milky juice and that was fermented; and it can also be gathered that this fermented soma juice was intoxicating. This they also offered to Indra and the other gods and they also drank it themselves. Sometimes they drank a little too much, and so did the gods. Indra on occasion got drunk. There are passages to show that Indra at one time drank so much of this soma juice that he talked irrelevant words. So with Varuna. He is another god, very powerful, and is in the same way protecting his votaries; and they are praising him with their libations of soma. So is the god of war, and so on....

In some of the books you will find that Indra has a body, is very strong, sometimes wearing golden armor, and comes down, lives and eats with his votaries, fights the demons, fights the snakes, and so on. Again, in one hymn we find that Indra has been given a very high position; he is omnipresent and omnipotent, and Indra sees the heart of every being. So with Varuna. This Varuna is the god of the air and is in Charge of the water, just as Indra was previously; and then, all of a sudden, we find him raised up and said to be omnipresent, omnipotent, and so on [*Atharva Veda* 4.16.2]. (56)

Sometimes Indra came and helped man; sometimes he drank too much soma. Now and again adjectives such as *all-powerful*, *all-pervading*, were attributed to him; the same was the case with Varuna. In this way it went on, and some of the mantras depicting the characteristics of these gods were marvelous, and the language was exceedingly grand. (57)

It is curious that, though in modern times, many hideous and cruel forms of religion have crept into India, there is one peculiar idea that divides the Aryan from all other races of the world: that their religion, in the Hindu form, accepted this Indra as one [with the Ultimate Reality]. Three-quarters of the mythology of the Vedas is the same as that of the Greeks; only the old gods became saints in the new religion. But they were originally the gods of the Samhitas. (58)

In the Vedic hymns Varuna and Indra shower the choicest gifts and blessing on devotees, a very human idea, more human than humanity itself (59)

The invocation of the devas, or bright ones, was the basis of worship. The idea is that one invokes and is helped and helps. (60)

d) Aryan Ideals of Womanhood

1. The Freedom of Aryan Woman and Their Equality with Men

The next idea of the Aryans was the freedom of women. (61)

The great Aryans, Buddha among the rest, have always put woman on an equal position with man. For them, sex in religion did not exist. (62)

The earliest [Aryan] system was a matriarchal one; that is, one in which the mother was the center, and in which girls acceded to her station. This led to the curious system of polyandry, where five and six brothers often married one wife. Even the Vedas contain a trace of it in the provision that, when a man died without leaving any children, his widow was permitted to live with another man until she became a mother; but the children she bore did not belong to their father, but to her dead husband. In later years the widow was allowed to marry again, which the modern idea forbids her to do. (63)

In ancient times the privileges extended to women [included] coeducation. (64)

Could anything be more complete than the equality of boys and girls in our old forest universities? (65)

The old Aryan conception of marriage, symbolized in the fire lighted at marriage and worshipped morning and evening by husband and wife together, pointed to no inequality of standards of responsibilities as between the two. (66)

According to the Aryan, a man cannot perform a religious action without a wife. (67)

The ideal of womanhood centers in the Aryan race of India, the most ancient in the world's history. In that race, men and women were priests, saha-dharmini, or co-religionists, as the Vedas call them. There every family had its hearth or altar on which, at the time of the wedding, the marriage fire was kindled, which was kept alive until either spouse died, when the funeral pyre was lighted from its spark. There man and wife together offered their sacrifices, and this idea was carried so far that a man could not even pray alone, because it was held that

the was only half a being. For that reason no unmarried man could become a priest. The same held true in ancient Greece and Rome. (68)

2. Some of the Most Beautiful Portions of the Vedas Were Written by Women

In the Vedas and Upanishads women taught the highest truths and received the same veneration as men. (69)

Some of the most beautiful portions of the Vedas... were written by women; there is no other bible in the world in which they had any part. (70)

In the records of the saints in India there is the unique figure of the prophetess. In the Christian creed [the saints] are all prophets, while in India holy women occupy a conspicuous place in the holy books. (71)

It was a female sage who first found the unity of God and laid down this doctrine in one of the first hymns of the Vedas, [the *Devi Sukta*]. (72)

It is in the Aryan literature that we find women in ancient times taking the same share as men, and in no other literature of the world. Going back to our Veda books, the oldest literature the world possesses and composed by the common ancestors [of India and America] (these were not written in India, perhaps on the coast of the Baltic, perhaps in Central Asia - we do not know); their oldest portion is composed of hymns and these are to the gods whom the Aryans worshipped. I may be pardoned for using the word *gods* - the literal translation is *the bright ones*. These hymns are dedicated to Fire and to the Sun, to Varuna and other deities. The titles run: *such and such a sage composed this verse dedicated to such and such a deity*. After the fourth or fifth comes a peculiar hymn, for the sage is a woman and it is dedicated to the one god who is at the background of all these gods...[In the Upanishads], too, we find women prominent; a large portion of these books are words which have proceeded out the mouths of women. It is there recorded with their names and teachings... There arose in India the great questions about the soul and God and these came from the mouths of women. (73)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 10.125,2-3

e) Sannyasins, People Who Have Given Up the World

1. The Ideal of Personal Purity Has Imprinted Itself Very Deeply into the Heart of the Aryan Race

The married teacher and the celibate are both as old as the Vedas. Whether the soma-sipping rishi... was the first in order of appearance, or the... celibate rishi was the primeval form it is hard to decide at present.... But whatever be the order of genesis, the celibate teachers of the Shrutis and Smritis stand on an entirely different platform from the married ones, which is perfect chastity, brahmacharya. (74)

On every page the Vedas preach personal purity. The laws in this respect were extremely strict. Every boy and girl was sent to the university, where they studied until their twentieth or thirtieth year; there the least impurity was punished almost cruelly. This idea of personal purity has imprinted itself very deeply into the heart of the race, amounting almost to a mania. (75)

The disciple of old used to repair to the hermitage of the guru, fuel in hand; and the guru, after ascertaining his or her competence, would teach him or her the Vedas after initiation, fastening round the waist the threefold filament of munja, a kind of grass, as the emblem of his or her vow to keep the body, mind, and speech in control. With the help of this girdle the disciples used to tie up their kaupinas (loincloths). Later on, the custom of wearing the sacred thread superseded this girdle of munja grass. (76)

2. The Freedom of Giving Up Marriage and Property

The Indian people are intensely socialistic. But, beyond that, there is a wealth of individualism. They are as tremendously individualistic [as the West] - that is to say, after laying down all these minute regulations: they have regulated how you should eat, drink, sleep, die! Everything is regulated there; from early morning to when you go to bed and sleep, you are following regulations and law. Law, law, law. Do you wonder that a nation should [live] under that? Law is death. The more of law in a country, the worse for the country. [But to be an individual], we go to the mountains where there is no law, no government....

[The Vedic Aryans] were thinkers. They knew that this tremendous regulation of law would not lead to real greatness. So they left a way out for them all. After all, they found out that all these regulations are only for the world and the life of the world. As soon as you do not want money [and] you do not want children - no business for this world - you can go out entirely free. Those that go out were called sannyasins - people who have given up. They never organized themselves, nor do they now; they are a free order of men and women who refuse to marry, who refuse to possess property, and they have no law - not even the Vedas bind them. They stand on [the] top of the Vedas. They are [at] the other pole [from] our social institutions. They are beyond caste. They have grown beyond. They are too big to be bound by these little regulations and things. Only two things [are] necessary for them: they must not possess property and they must not marry. If you marry, settle down, or possess property, immediately the regulations will be upon you; but if you do not do either of these two, you are free. They were the living gods of the race, and ninety-nine percent of our great men and women were to be found among them.

In every country, real greatness of the soul means extraordinary individuality; and that individuality you cannot get in society. It frets and fumes and wants to burst society. If society wants to keep it down, that soul wants to burst society to pieces. And they made an easy channel. They say, "Well, once you get out of society, then you may teach and preach everything that you like. We only worship you from a distance." So, there were the tremendous, individualistic men and women; and they are the highest persons in all society. If one of those yellow-clad shaven-heads comes, the prince, even, dare not remain seated in his presence; he must stand. The next half hour, one of these sannyasins might be at the door of one of the cottages of the poorest subjects, glad to get only a piece of bread. And he has to mix with all grades; now he sleeps with a poor man in his cottage; tomorrow [he] sleeps on the beautiful bed

of a king. One day he dines on gold plates in kings' palaces; the next day, he has not any food and sleeps under a tree. Society looks upon these great men and women with great respect; and some of them, just to show their individuality, will try to shock the public ideas. But the people are never shocked so long as they keep to these principles: perfect purity and no property. (77)

The Vedas say, "The sannyasin stands on the head of the Vedas!" - because he is free from churches and sects and religions and prophets and books and all of that ilk! (78)

In the Order to which I belong, we are called sannyasins. The word means *a man who has renounced*. This is a very, very ancient order. Even Buddha, who was 560 years before Christ, belonged to that order. He was one of the reformers of his order. That was all. So ancient! You find it mentioned way back in the Vedas, the oldest book in the world.

In old India there was the regulation that every man and woman, towards the end of their lives, must get out of social life altogether and think of nothing except God and their own salvation. This was to get ready for the great event - death. (79)

The brahmin, the kshatriya and the vaishya all have equal rights to be sannyasins; the traivarnikas have equal rights to the Vedas. (80)

So old people used to become sannyasins in those early days. Later on, young people began to give up the world. And young people are active. They could not sit down under a tree and think all the time of their own death, so they went about preaching and starting sects, and so on....

The order is not a church, and the people who join the order are not priests. There is an absolute difference between the priests and sannyasins. In India, priesthood, like every other business in social life, is a hereditary profession. A priest's son will become a priest, just as a carpenter's son will soon be a carpenter, or a blacksmith's son a blacksmith. The priest must always be married. The Hindu does not think a man is complete unless he has a wife. An unmarried man has no right to perform religious ceremonies.

The sannyasin does not possess property, and they do not marry. Beyond that, there is no organization. The only bond that is there is the bond between the teacher and the taught - and that is peculiar to India. The teacher is not a man who comes just to teach me, and I pay so much and there it ends. In India, it is really like an adoption. The teacher is more than my own father, and I am truly his child, his son in every respect. I owe him obedience and reverence first, before my own father, even; because, they say, the father gave me this body, but *he* showed me the way to salvation; he is greater than a father. And we carry this love, this respect for our teacher, all our lives. And that is the only organization that exists. (81)

3. The Real Aim of Sannyasa Is "For One's Highest Freedom and for the Good of the World"

The real aim of sannyasa is "For one's highest freedom and for the good of the world." Without having sannyasa none can really be a knower of Brahman - that is what the Vedas and the Vedanta proclaim. (82)

The stinking monks of certain religious sects [the Jains], who do not bathe lest the vermin on their bodies should be killed, never think of the discomfort and disease they bring to their fellow human beings. They do not, however, belong to the religion of the Vedas! (83)

It is men of [sannyasa] stamp who have been, through a succession of disciples, spreading Brahma-vidya (knowledge of Brahman) in the world. Where and when have you heard that a man, being the slave of lust and wealth, has been able to liberate another, or to show the path of God to him? Without himself being free, how can he make others free? In Veda, Vedanta, Itihasa (history), Purana (ancient tradition), you will find everywhere that the sannyasins have been the teachers of religion in all ages and climes.(84)

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PART I, SECTION 2: VEDIC CULTURE

Chapter 6: The Work Portion of the Vedas

a) The Evolution of Thought on the Meaning of Ritual

1. The Two Parts of the Vedas: External Ceremonial and Spiritual Knowledge

The two great divisions of the Vedas are the Karma Kanda - the portion pertaining to doing or work, and Jnana Kanda - the portion treating of knowing, true knowledge. (1)

The Vedas are divided into two portions: one, the Upanishads, the philosophical portion, the other the work portion. (2)

The work portion contains ceremonials, rules as to eating, living, doing charitable work, etc. The knowledge came afterwards and was enunciated by kings. (3)

One part of the Vedas deals with karma - form and ceremonies. The other part deals with the knowledge of Brahman and discusses religion. (4)

2. The Idea of Sacrifice in India

The idea of sacrifice in India was not with the first portion of the Vedas [mythology]. But in the next portion we find the same idea in India too, in the Brahmanas. The idea of sacrifice was originally simply giving food [to the gods], but gradually it was raised and raised until it became a sacrifice to God. Philosophy came in to mystify it still more and to spin webs of logic round it.

Bloody sacrifices came into vogue. Somewhere we read that three hundred bullocks have been roasted, or that the gods are smelling the sacrifices and becoming very glad. Then all sorts of mystical notions got about - how sacrifice was to be made in the form of a triangle or square, a triangle within a square, a pentagon, and all sorts of figures. But the great benefit was the evolution of geometry. When they had to make all these figures - and it was laid down strictly how many bricks should be used, and how they should be laid, and how big they should be - naturally, geometry came into being. The Egyptians evolved geometry [by] their [irrigation] - [they] made canals to take the Nile water inside their fields - and the Hindus, by their altars. (5)

3. Ceremonies Are Optional and Subject to Change

The ceremonies and fruits of the Karma Kanda are confined within the limits of the world of maya, and therefore they have been undergoing and will undergo transformation according to the law of change which operates through time, space and personality. (6)

The Karma Kanda includes various sacrifices and ceremonials, of which the larger part has fallen into disuse in the present age. (7)

The work portion consists of various sacrifices; most of them of late have been given up as not practicable under present circumstance, but others remain to the present day in some shape or other. (8)

The perfect religion is the Vedic religion. The Vedas have two parts, mandatory and optional. The mandatory injunctions are eternally binding upon us [and] constitute the Hindu religion. The optional ones are not so. They have been changing and been changed by rishis to suit the times. The brahmins at one time ate beef and marred shudras. A calf was killed to please the guest. shudras cooked for brahmins. The food cooked by a male brahmin was regarded as polluted food. But we have changed our habits to suit the present yuga. (9)

b) The Ceremonial Vedic Religion was Exclusively in the Hands of the Priests, the First Messengers from the Gods to Man

We will try to give a little idea of the work portion. It consists of rituals and hymns, various hymns addressed to various gods. (10)

The ritual portion is composed of ceremonies, some of them very elaborate. A great many priests are required. The priestly function became a science by itself, owing to the elaboration of the ceremonials. (11)

In studying all religions you will notice the fact that whatever is old becomes holy. For instance, our forefathers in India used to write on birch bark, but in time they learned how to make paper. Yet the birch bark is still looked upon as very holy. When the utensils in which they used to cooked in ancient times were improved upon, the old ones became holy; and nowhere is this idea more kept up than in India. Old methods, which must be nine or ten thousand years old, as of rubbing two sticks together to make a fire, are still followed. At the time of sacrifice no

other method will do. So with the other branch of the Asiatic Aryans [the Zoroastrians]. Their modern descendants still like to obtain fire from lightning, showing that they used to get fire that way. Even when they learned other customs, they kept up the old ones, which then became holy. So with the Hebrews. They used to write on parchment. Now they write on paper, but parchment is very holy. So with all nations. Every rite which you now consider holy was simply an old custom, and the Vedic sacrifices were of that nature. In course of time, as they found better methods of life, their ideas were much improved; still these old forms remained, and from time to time they were practiced and received a holy significance.

Then a body of men made it their business to carry on these sacrifices. These were the priests, who speculated on the sacrifices, and the sacrifices became everything to them. The gods came to enjoy the fragrance of the sacrifices, and it was considered that everything in this world could be got by the power of sacrifices. If certain oblations were made, certain hymns chanted, certain peculiar forms of altars made, the gods would grant everything. (12)

The work portion was [finally] exclusively in the hands of the priests and pertained entirely to the sense life. (13)

The foundation of priestly power rests on intellectual strength, and not on the physical strength of arms. Therefore, with the supremacy of the priestly power, there is a great prevalence of literary and intellectual culture. Every human heart is always anxious for communication with and help from the supersensuous spiritual world. The entrance to that world is not possible for the generality of mankind; only a few great souls who can acquire perfect control over their sense-organs and who are possessed with a nature preponderating with the essence of sattva guna are able to pierce the formidable wall of matter and come face to face, as it were, with the supersensuous - it is only they who know the workings of the kingdom that bring messages from it and show the way to others. These great souls are the priests, the primitive guides, leaders, and movers of human societies.

The priest knows the gods and communicates with them; he is therefore worshipped as a god. Leaving behind the thoughts of the world, he has no longer to devote himself to the earning of his bread by the sweat of his brow. The best and foremost parts of all food and drink are due as offerings to the gods; and of these gods, the visible proxies on earth are the priests. It is through their mouths that they partake of the offerings. Knowingly or unknowingly, society gives the priest abundant leisure and he can therefore get the opportunity of being meditative and of thinking higher thoughts. Hence the development of wisdom and learning originates with the supremacy of priestly power.

There stands the priest between the dreadful lion - the king - on the one hand, and the terrified flock of sheep - the people - on the other. The destructive leap of the lion is checked by the controlling rod of spiritual power in the hands of the priest. The flame of the despotic will of the king, maddened in the pride of his wealth and men, is able to burn into ashes everything that comes in his way; but it is only a word from the priest, who has neither wealth nor men behind him, but whose sole strength is his spiritual power, that can quench the despotic royal will, as water the fire.

With the ascendancy of the priestly supremacy are seen the first advent of civilization, the first victory of the divine nature over the animal, the first mastery of Spirit over matter, and the first manifestation of the divine power which is potentially present in this very slave of nature, this lump of flesh, this human body. The priest is the first discriminator of Spirit from matter, the first to help bring this world in communion with the next, the first messenger from the gods to man, and the intervening bridge that connects the king with his subjects. The first offshoot of universal welfare and good is nursed by his spiritual power, by his devotion to learning and wisdom, by his renunciation, the watchword of his life and watered even by the flow of his own lifeblood. It is therefore that in every land it was he to whom the first worship was offered. It is therefore that even his memory is sacred to us. (14)

c) **The Vedic Doctrine of Karma as Applied to the Vedas**

1. Purification of the Heart by External Forms

The Vedic doctrine of karma is the same as in Judaism and all other religions, that is to say, the purification of the mind through sacrifices and other such external means. (15)

We had our sacrifices as the Jews had. Our sacrifices mean simply this: Here is some food that I am going to eat, and until some portion is offered to God, it is bad; so I offer the food. This is the pure and simple idea. (16)

All external forms of prayer and worship are included in the Karma Kanda. These are good when performed in a Spirit of unselfishness and not allowed to degenerate into mere formality. They purify the heart. (17)

As sacred charm and strength [dwells] on Aryan altars, flaming, free. (18)

2. The Duties of Humanity and the Origins of the Dharma Shastras

The Hindu says that what is in the Vedas is his or her duty. (19)

Dharma is based on work. The nature of the dharmika is constant performance of action with efficiency. Why, even the opinion of some mimamsakas [ritualists] is that those parts of the Vedas which do not enjoin work, are not, properly speaking, Vedas at all. (20)

The main ideas of the Karma Kanda, which consists of the duties of humanity, the duties of the student, of the householder, of the recluse, and the various duties of the different stations in life, are followed more or less down to the present day. (21)

The *Samhitas of Manu* and other sages [Dharma-Shastras], following the lines laid down in the Karma Kanda, have mainly ordained rules of conduct conducive to social welfare, according to the exigencies of time, place, and persons. (22)

The powerful men in every country move society whatever way they like, and the rest are only like a flock of sheep. Now the question is this: who were these men of power in India? They who

were giants in religion. It is they who led our society; and it is they again who change our social laws and usages when necessity demands; and we listen to them silently and do what they command. (23)

3. The Power of Words to Produce Certain Effects if Pronounced Correctly

The Karma-Kanda [is] the Samhitas and Brahmanas. The Brahmanas deal with sacrifice. The Samhitas are songs composed in chhandas known as anushtup, trishtup, jagati, etc. Generally they praise deities such as Varuna and Indra; and the question arose who were these deities; and if any theories were raised about them, they were smashed up by other theories, and so it went on. (24)

The work portion consists of rituals and hymns, various hymns addressed to various gods... Gradually the popular idea of veneration grew round these hymns and rituals. The gods disappeared and in their place were left the rituals. That was the curious development in India. The orthodox Hindu [the mimamsaka] does not believe in gods, the unorthodox [do]. If you ask the orthodox Hindu what is the meaning of these gods in the Vedas [he will not be able to give a satisfactory answer]. The priests sing these hymns and pours libations and offerings into the fire. When you ask the orthodox Hindu the meaning of this, he says that the words have the power to produce certain effects. That is all. There is all the supernatural power that ever existed. The Vedas are simply words that have the mystical power to produce effects if the sound intonation is right. If one sound is wrong, it will not do. Each one must be perfect. [Thus], what in other religions is called prayer disappeared and the Vedas became the gods. (25)

From the time of the Vedas, two different opinions have been held about the mantras. Yaska and others say that the Vedas have meanings, but the ancient mantra-shastris say that they have no meaning, and that their use consists only in uttering them in connection with certain sacrifices, when they will surely produce effect in the form of various material enjoyments or spiritual knowledge. The latter arises from the utterance of the Upanishads. (26)

The strictly orthodox believers in the Vedas, the Karma Kanda, do not believe in God, the soul, or anything of the sort, but that we are the only beings in the universe, material or spiritual. When they were asked what the many allusions to God in Vedas mean, they say that they mean nothing at all; that the words properly articulated have a magical power, a power to create certain results. Apart from that, they have no meaning. (27)

According to the orthodox Hindus, the Vedas are not written words at all, but they consist of the words themselves orally spoken with the exact enunciation and intonation. This vast mass of religion has been written and consists of thousands upon thousands of volumes. Anyone who knows the precise pronunciation and intonation knows the Vedas, and no one else. In ancient times, certain royal families were the custodians of certain parts of the Vedas. The head of the family could repeat every word of every volume he had without missing a word or an intonation. These men had giant intellects, wonderful memories. (28)

Those old priests with their tremendous [claims about eternal words], having dethroned the gods, took the place of the gods. [They said], "You do not understand the power of words. We

know how to use them. We are the living gods of the world. Pay us; we will manipulate the words, and you will get what you want. Can you pronounce the words yourself? You cannot, for mind you, one mistake will produce the opposite effect. You want to be rich, handsome, have a long life, a fine husband? Only pay the priest and keep quiet! (29)

4. The Whole Universe Was Created by the Words of the Vedas, the Only Authentic Word of God

Those who believe in the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, as eternal revelations of truth, are called orthodox, and those that stand on other authorities, rejecting the Vedas, are heterodox in India. (30)

You see the tremendous importance that was attached to the words of the Vedas: these are the eternal words out of which the whole universe has been produced. There cannot be any thought without the word. Thus, whatever there is in this world is the manifestation of thought, and thought can only manifest itself through words. This mass of words through which the unmanifested becomes manifest, that is what is meant by the Vedas. It follows that the external existence of everything [depends on the Vedas, for thought] does not exist without the word. If the word *horse* did not exist, none could think of a horse. [So] there must be [an intimate relation between] thought, word, and the external object. What are these words [in reality?] The Vedas. They do not call it Sanskrit language at all. It is Vedic language, divine language. Sanskrit is a degenerate form. So are all other languages. There is no language older than the Vedic. You may ask, "Who wrote the Vedas?" They were not written. The words are the Vedas. A word is Veda if I can pronounce it rightly. Then it will immediately produce the [desired] effect....

This mass of Vedas exists eternally and all the world is the manifestation of this mass of words. Then, when the cycle ends, all this manifestation of energy becomes finer and finer, becomes only words, then thought. In the next cycle, first the thought changes into words and then out of those words [the whole universe] is produced. If there is something that is not in the Vedas, it is your delusion. It does not exist.

Numerous books upon that subject alone defend the Vedas....[The mimamsaka (orthodox Hindu) says]: The sound must be the beginning of creation. There must be germ sounds like germ plasm. There cannot be any ideas without the words.... Wherever there are sensations, ideas, emotion, there must be words. The difficulty is when they say that these four books are the Vedas, and nothing else. The Buddhist will then stand up and say, "Ours are the Vedas. They were revealed to us later on." That cannot be. Nature does not go on in that way. Nature does not manifest her laws bit by bit, an inch of gravitation today, and [another inch] tomorrow. No, every law is complete. There is no evolution in law at all. It is [given] once and for ever. It is all nonsense, this "new religion and better inspiration" and all that. It means nothing. There may be a hundred thousand laws and man may know only a few today. We discover them - that is all. (31)

The idea about the scriptures in India became tremendously orthodox. You complain about your orthodoxies in book-worship. If you get the Hindus' idea, where will you be? The Hindus think that the Vedas are the direct knowledge of God, that God has created the whole universe in and through the Vedas, and that the whole universe exists because it is in the Vedas. The cow exists outside because the word *cow* is in the Vedas; man exists outside because of the word in the Vedas. Here you see the beginning of that theory which later on the Christians developed and expressed in the text: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God." [John,1.1] It is the old, ancient theory of India. Upon that is based the whole idea of the scriptures. And mind, every word is the power of God. The word is only the external manifestation on the material plane. So, all this manifestation is just the manifestation on the material plane; and the Word is the Vedas, and Sanskrit is the language of God. God spoke once. He spoke in Sanskrit, and that is the divine language. Every other language, they consider, is not more than the braying of animals; and to denote that they call every other nation that does not speak Sanskrit [*mlechchas*], the same word as the barbarians of the Greeks. They are braying, not talking, and Sanskrit is the divine language. (32)

The orthodox followers of the Vedas claim that the Vedas are the only authentic word of God in the world; that God has spoken to the world only through the Vedas; not only that, but that the world itself exists by virtue of the Vedas. Before the world was, the Vedas were. Everything in the world exists because it is in the Vedas. A cow exists because the name *cow* is in the Vedas; that is, because the animal we know as a cow is mentioned in the Vedas. The language of the Vedas is the original language of God, all other languages are mere dialects and not of God. Every word and syllable in the Vedas must be pronounced correctly, each sound must be given its true vibration, and every departure from this rigid exactness is a terrible sin and unpardonable.

Thus, this kind of bigotry is predominant in the orthodox element of all religions. But this fighting

over the letter is indulged in only by the ignorant, the spiritually blind. All who have actually attained any real religious nature never wrangle over the form in which the different religions are expressed. They know that the life of all religions is the same and, consequently, they have no quarrel with anybody because he does not speak the same tongue. (33)

5. The Vedas Determine Morality and Cannot Be Questioned

In India these Vedas are regarded in a much higher light than even the Christians regard their Bible. [The Christian] idea of revelation is that a man was inspired by God; but in India the idea is that things exist because they are in the Vedas. In and through the Vedas the whole creation has come. All that is called knowledge is in the Vedas. Every word is sacred and eternal, eternal as the soul, without beginning and without end. The whole of the Creator's mind is in this book, as it were. That is the light in which the Vedas are held. Why is thing moral? Because the Vedas say so. Why is this thing immoral? Because the Vedas say so. (34)

[The mimamsakas] say that you must kill such and such an animal at a certain time if the effect is to be produced. [You may reply], "But [there is] also the sin of taking the life of the animal;

you will have to suffer for that." They say that is all nonsense; [they say] "How do you know what is right and what is wrong? Your mind says so? Who cares what your mind says! What nonsense you are talking! You are setting your mind against the scriptures. If your mind says something and the Vedas say something else, stop your mind and believe in the Vedas. If they say killing a man is right, that is right." If you say, "No, my conscience says [otherwise", it won't do]. The moment you believe in any book as the eternal word, as sacred, no more can you question.... It is no use comparing, because - what is the authority? There it ends. [They say], "If you think something is not right, go and get it right according to the Vedas." (35)

This is Indian orthodoxy: the Vedas were not written by anybody, they were eternally coexistent with God. God is infinite. So is knowledge; and through this knowledge God created this world. Their idea of ethics is [that a thing is good] because the law says so. Everything is bounded by that book - nothing can go beyond that, because the knowledge of God - you cannot go beyond that....

You quote a passage from the Vedas - "That is not good," you say. "Why?" "There is a positive evil injunction" - the same as you see in the Old Testament. There are a number of things in all old books, curious ideas which we would not like in our present day. You say, "This doctrine is not at all good; why, it shocks my ethics!" [The orthodox would reply]: "How did you get your idea? Merely by your own thought? Get out! If it is ordained by God, what right have you to question? When the Vedas say, 'Do not do this, this is immoral', and so on, you no more have the right to question at all." (36)

d) The Doctrine of Qualification of Understanding the Vedas Made Slaves of Humanity

There is another idea in philosophy which is according to your modern ideas: humanity is a slave of nature, and slave eternally has to remain. We call it karma. Karma means law, and it applies everywhere. Everything is bound by karma.

"Is there no way out?"

"No! Remain slaves all through the years - fine slaves. We will manipulate the words so that you will only have the good and not the bad side of all - if you will pay [us] enough." That was the ideal of the mimsakas.

These are the ideals which are popular throughout the ages. The vast mass of humankind are never thinkers. Even if they try to think, the [effect of the] vast mass of superstitions on them is terrible. The moment they weaken, one blow comes and the backbone breaks into twenty pieces. They can only be moved by lures and threats. They can never move of their own accord. They must be frightened, horrified or terrorized - and they are your slaves for ever. They have nothing else to do but to pay and obey. Everything else is done by the priest.... How much easier religion becomes! You see, you have nothing to do. Go home and sit quietly. Somebody is doing the whole thing for you. Poor, poor animals! (37)

With all of my respect for the rishis of yore, I cannot but denounce their method in instructing the people. They always enjoined on them to do certain things but took care never to explain to

them the reason for it. This method was pernicious to the very core; and instead of enabling men to attain the end, it laid upon their shoulders a mass of meaningless nonsense. Their excuse for keeping the end hidden from view was that the people could not have understood their real meaning even if they had presented it to them, not being worthy recipients. This doctrine of *adhikarvada* [special rights and privileges] is the outcome of pure selfishness. They knew that by this enlightenment on their special subject they would lose their superior position of instructors to the people. Hence their endeavor to support this theory. If you consider a man too weak to receive these lessons, you should try the more to teach and educate him; you should give him the advantage of more teaching, instead of less, to train his intellect, so as to enable him to comprehend the more subtle problems. These advocates of *adhikarvada* ignored the tremendous fact of the infinite possibilities of the human soul. Every man is capable of receiving knowledge if it is imparted in his own language. A teacher who cannot convince others should weep on account of his own inability to teach the people in their own language, instead of cursing them and dooming them to live in ignorance and superstitions, setting up the plea that the higher knowledge is not for them. Speak out the truth boldly, without any fear that it will puzzle the weak. People are selfish; they do not want others to come up to the same level of their knowledge for fear of losing their own privilege and prestige over others. Their contention is that the knowledge of the highest spiritual truths will bring about confusion the understanding of weak-minded people. (38)

Cross reference to:

Gita 3.26

e) When the Book Becomes God, the Growth of Humanity Is Stunted

You find that in every country the book becomes God. There are sects in India that believe that God incarnates and becomes human, but even God incarnate as a human being must conform to the Vedas; and if his or her teachings do not so conform, they will not take him or her. Buddha is worshipped by the Hindus, but if you say to them, "If you worship Buddha, why don't you take his teachings?", they will say, "Because the Buddhists deny the Vedas." Such is the meaning of book-worship.....

People do not want anything new if it is not in the Vedas or the Bible. It is a case of nerves; when you hear a new and striking thing, you are startled; or, when you see a new thing, you are startled; it is constitutional. It is much more so with thoughts. The mind has been running in ruts, and to take up a new idea is too much of a strain; so the idea has to be put near the ruts and then we slowly take it. It is good policy, but bad morality. (39)

The glory of human beings is that they are thinking beings. It is the nature of humans to think and therein they differ from animals. I believe in reason and in following reason, having seen enough of the evils of authority, for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority.

The Hindus believe that the creation has come out of the Vedas. How do you know there is a cow? Because the word *cow* is in the Vedas. How do you know there is a man outside? Because

the word *man* is there. If it had not been, there would have been no man outside. That is what they say. Authority with a vengeance! And it is not studied as I have studied it; but some of the most powerful minds have taken it up and spun out wonderful logical theories round it. They have reasoned it out, and there it stands - a whole system of philosophy; and thousands of the brightest intellects have been dedicated through thousands of years to the working out of this theory. Such has been the power of authority, and great are the dangers thereof. It stunts the growth of humanity, and we must not forget that we want growth. Even in all relative truth, more than the truth itself we want the exercise. (40)

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BOOK I: THE ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

Section 3: The Historical Roots of the Vedanta

Chapter 7: The Emergence of Vedanta, the Spiritual Gist and Goal of the Vedas

Chapter 8: The Struggle to Establish the Kingdom of Vedanta

Chapter 9: The Sources of Authority in Vedanta

PART I, SECTION 3: THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE VEDANTA

Chapter 7: The Emergence of Vedanta, the Spiritual Gist and Goal of the Vedas

a) The Crystallization of Religion in India

1. The Oppression of Vedic Society by Regulations and Priestly Power

The work portion... pertained entirely to the sense life. It taught to do good works and that one might go to heaven and enjoy eternal happiness. Anything, in fact, that one might want could be provided for one by the work or ceremonials. It provided for all classes of people, good and bad. Nothing could be obtained through the ceremonials except by the intercession of the priests. So, if one wanted anything, even if it was to have an enemy killed, all one had to do was to pay the priest and the priest, through these ceremonials, would procure the desired results. It was, therefore, in the interests of the priest that the ceremonial portion of the Vedas should be preserved. By it they had their living. They consequently did all in their power to preserve that portion intact. Many of these ceremonials were very complicated, and it took years to perform some of them. (1)

Society [was] so oppressed by regulations, [and] the power was in the hands of the priests. In the social scale, the highest caste is [that of] the priest, and that being a business - I do not know any other word - that is why I use the word *priest*. It is not in the same sense as in [the USA], because our priest is not a man who teaches religion or philosophy. The business of a priest is to perform all those minute details of regulations which have been laid down. The priest is the man who helps you in these regulations. He marries you; to your funeral he comes to pray. So at all the ceremonies performed upon a man or a woman, the priests must be there. In society the ideal is marriage. [Everyone] must marry. It is the rule. Without marriage, man is not able to perform any religious ceremony; he is only half a man; [he] is not competent to officiate as a priest, except he marries.

Now, the power of the priests increased tremendously. (2)

The priest naturally said to himself, "Why should I part with the power that has made the devas [gods] subservient to me, has given me mastery over physical and mental illnesses, and has gained for me the service of ghosts, demons, and other unseen spirits? I have dearly bought this power by the price of extreme renunciation. Why should I give to others that, to get which I had to give up my wealth, name, fame - in short, all my earthly comforts and happiness? Again, that power is entirely mental. And how many opportunities are there of keeping it a perfect secret! Entangled in this wheel of circumstances, human nature becomes what it inevitably would; being used to practice constant self-concealment, it becomes a victim of extreme selfishness and hypocrisy and at last succumbs to the poisonous consequences which they bring in their train. In time, the reaction of this very desire to concealment rebounds upon oneself. All knowledge, all wisdom is almost lost for want of proper exercise and diffusion, and what little remains is thought to have been obtained from some supernatural source; and therefore, far from making fresh efforts to go in for originality and gain knowledge of new sciences, it is considered useless and futile to attempt even to improve the remnants of the old by cleansing

them of their corruptions. Thus lost to former wisdom, the former indomitable Spirit of self-reliance, the priest, now glorifying himself merely in the name of his forefathers, vainly struggles to preserve untarnished for himself the same glory, the same privilege, the same veneration, and the same supremacy as was enjoyed by his great forefathers. (3)

2. The Tremendous Mass of Rituals Almost Killed the True Religion

As the spiritual ideas [of the Vedas] progressed an arithmetical progression, so the ritualistic ideas progressed in geometrical progression. The old superstitions... developed into a tremendous mass of rituals, which grew and grew until it almost killed Hindu life. And it is still there, it has got hold of and permeated every portion of our life and made us born slaves. Yet, at the same time, we find a fight against this advance of ritual from the very earliest days. The one objection raised there is this: that ceremonials, dressing at certain times, eating in a certain way, and shows and mummeries of religion like these are only external religion, because you are satisfied with the senses and do not want to go beyond them. This is a tremendous difficulty with us, with every human being. At best, when we want to hear of spiritual things our standard is the senses; or someone hears about philosophy, about God, and transcendental things, and after hearing about them for day, asks: after all, how much money will they bring, how much sense-enjoyments will they bring? For his enjoyment is only in the senses, quite naturally. But that satisfaction in the senses, say our sages, is one of the causes which have spread the veil between the truth and ourselves. (4)

In the Vedic ashwamedha sacrifice worse things [than marrying off girls before puberty] would be done.... All the Brahmanas mention them, and all the commentators admit them to be true. (5)

Before [the orthodox priests] came, the popular ideas of a God ruling the universe, and that man was immortal, were in existence. But there they stopped. It was thought that nothing more could be known. Here came the daring of the expounders of Vedanta. They knew that a religion meant for children is not good for thinking men, that there is something more to humanity and God....

The crystallization of religion in India had been going on for many years. Already there were elaborate ceremonies; already there had been perfected a system of morals for the different stages of life. But there came a rebellion against the mummeries and mockeries that enter into many religions in time, and great men came forth to proclaim through the Vedas the true religion. (6)

[When] the priests, even at that dawn of history [were putting] most of their energies into elaborating rituals; and when the nation began to find the load of ceremonies and lifeless rituals too heavy - came the first philosophical speculations, and the royal race was the first to break through the maze of killing rituals. (7)

b) The Struggle against the Spiritual Tyranny of the Priesthood

1. The Great Conflict between the Conservative Priests and the Kings Who Promulgated the Philosophic Portion of the Vedas

The priests differentiated themselves into a separate caste. The second caste was the caste of the kings.... All the Upanishadic philosophy is from the brains of kings, not priests. (8)

The Vedic priests based their superior strength on the knowledge of the sacrificial mantras. By the power of these mantras, the devas are made to come down from their heavenly abodes, accept the drink and food offerings and grant the prayers of the yajamanas [the men who perform sacrifices]. The kings as well as their subjects are, therefore, looking up to these priests for welfare during their earthly life. Raja soma [*King soma* - the Vedic name for the soma plant] is worshipped by the priests and is made to thrive by the power of his mantras. As such, the devas whose favorite food is the juice of the soma plant is offered in oblation by the priest, are always kind to him and bestow his desired boons. Thus strengthened by divine grace, he defies all human opposition; for what can the power of rituals do against that of the gods? Even the king, the center of all earthly power, is a supplicant at this door. A kind look from him is the greatest help; his mere blessing a tribute to the state, preeminent above everything else.

Now commanding the king to be engaged in affairs fraught with death and ruin, now standing by him as his fastest friend, with kind and wise counsels, now spreading the net of subtle, diplomatic statesmanship in which the king is easily caught - the priest is seen oftentimes to make the royal power totally subservient to him. Above all, the worst fear is in the knowledge that the name and fame of the royal forefathers and of himself and his family lie at the mercy of the priest's pen. He is the historian. The king might have paramount power; attaining great glory in his reign, he might prove himself as the father and mother in one to his subjects; but if the priests are not appeased, the sun of his glory goes down with his last breath for ever; all his worth and usefulness deserving of universal approbation are lost in the great womb of time, like the fall of the gentle dew in the ocean. Others, who inaugurated the huge sacrifices lasting many years, the performers of the ashwamedha and so on - those who showered, like incessant rain in the rainy season, uncounted wealth on the priests - their names, thanks to the grace of the priests, are emblazoned in the pages of history. The name of Pryadasi Dharmashoka [the Buddhist emperor], the beloved of the gods, is nothing but a name in the priestly world, while Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit [a performer of the snake sacrifice], is a household word in every Hindu family. (9)

Ancient India [was] for centuries... the battlefield for the ambitious projects of two of her foremost classes - the brahmins [priests] and the kshatriyas [kings].

On the one had, the priesthood stood between the lawless social tyranny of the princes over the masses, whom the kshatriyas declared to be their legal food. On the other hand, the kshatriya power was the one potent force which struggled with any success against the spiritual tyranny of the priesthood and the ever-increasing chain of ceremonials which they were forging to bind down the people with. (10)

Between the kings, who promulgated that philosophic portion of the Vedas, and the priests, a great conflict arose. The priests had the people on their side because they had all the utility which appealed to the popular mind. The kings had all the spirituality and none of the economic element; but as they were powerful and the rulers of the nation, the struggle was a hard and bitter one. The kings gradually gained a little ground, but their ideas were too elevated for the

masses, so the ceremonial or work portion always had the mass of the people Always remember this - whenever a religious system gains ground with the people at Large, it has a strong economic side to it. It is the economic side to a religion that finds lodgement with the people at Large, and never its spiritual or philosophic side. If you should preach the grandest philosophy in the streets for a year, you would not have a handful of followers; but if you could preach the most arrant nonsense with an economic element, you would have the whole people with you. (11)

There [runs] an economic struggle through every religious one. This animal called human has some religious influence, but is guided by economy. Individuals are guided by something else, but the mass of humankind never make a move unless economy is [involved]. You may [preach a religion that may not be perfect in every detail], but if there is an economic background [to it], and you have the most [ardent champions] to preach it, you can convince a whole country....

For the religion of the Upanishads to be popularized was a hard task. Very little economy is there, but tremendous altruism. (12)

2. The Renunciation of World-Weary Kings Gave Them New and Stronger Life to Replace the Decaying Priestly Power

According to the law of nature, whenever there is an awakening of a new and stronger life, there it tries to conquer and take the place of the old and decaying. Nature favors the dying out of the unfit and the survival of the fittest.....

That renunciation, self-control and asceticism of the priest which, during his ascendancy were devoted to the pursuit of earnest researches of truth, were on the eve of his decline employed anew and spent solely in the accumulation of objects of self-gratification and in the extension of privileged authority over others. That power, the centralization of which in himself gave him all honor and worship, had now been dragged down from its high, heavenly position to the lowest abyss of hell. Having lost sight of the goal, drifting aimless, the priestly power was entangled, like the spider, in the webs spun by itself. The chain that had been forged from generation to generation with the greatest care to be put on others' feet was now tightened round its own in a thousand coils, and was thwarting its own movement in hundreds of ways. Caught in the endless thread of the net of infinite rites, ceremonies, and customs, which it spread on all sides as external means for the purification of the body and mind, with a view to keeping society in the iron grasp of these innumerable bonds - the priestly power, thus hopelessly entangled from head to foot, was then asleep in despair! (13)

On the other side, the king was like the lion; in him were present both the good and the evil propensities of the lord of beasts. Never for a moment were his fierce nails held back from tearing to pieces the heart of innocent animals, living on herbs and grass, to allay his thirst for blood when occasion arises; again, the poet says, though himself stricken with old age and dying from hunger, the lion never kills the weakest fox that throws itself into his arms for protection.

If the subject classes, for a moment, stand as impediments in the way of the gratification of the senses of the royal lion, their death knell is inevitably tolled; if they humbly bow down to his

commands, they are perfectly safe. Not only so. Not to speak of ancient days, even in modern times, no society can be found in any country where the effectiveness of individual self-sacrifice for the good of the many and of the oneness of purpose and endeavor actuating every member of the society for the common good of the whole have been fully realized. Hence the necessity of kings, who are the creations of society itself. They are the centers where all the forces of society, otherwise loosely scattered about, are made to converge, and from which they start and course through the body politic and animate society.

As during the brahminical supremacy, at the first stage is the awakening of the first impulse for search after knowledge and later the continual and later the careful fostering of the growth of that impulse, still in its infancy - so, during the kshatriya supremacy, a strong desire for pleasure pursuits made its appearance at the first stage and later have sprung up inventions and developments of arts and sciences as the means of gratification. Can the king, in the height of his glory, hide his proud head within the lowly cottages of the poor? Or can the common good of his subjects ever minister to his royal appetite with satisfaction?...

It was in India, again, that the kings, having enjoyed for some time earthly pleasures to their full satisfaction, were stricken at the latter part of their lives with heavy world-weariness, as is sure to follow on extreme sense-gratification; and thus being satiated with worldly pleasures, they retired in their old age into secluded forests and there began to contemplate the deep problems of life. The results of such renunciation and deep meditation were marked by a strong dislike for cumbrous rites and ceremonials and an extreme devotion to the highest spiritual truths which we find embodied in the Upanishads, Gita, and the Jain and Buddhist scriptures. Here also was a great conflict between the priestly and the royal powers. Disappearance of the elaborate rites and ceremonials meant a death-blow to the priests' profession. Therefore, naturally, at all times and in every country, the priests gird up their loins and try their best to preserve the ancient customs and usages, while on the other side stand in opposition kings like Janaka, backed by kshatriya prowess as well as spiritual power....

As the priest is busy about centralizing all knowledge and learning at a common center - to wit, himself - so the king is ever up and doing in collecting all the earthly powers and focusing them in a central point, i.e. his own self. Of course, both are beneficial to society. At one time they are both needed for the common good of society, but that is only at its infant stage. But if attempts be made, when society has passed its infant stage and reached its vigorous youthful condition, to clothe it by force with the dress which suited it in its infancy and keep it bound within narrow limits, then either it bursts the bonds by virtue of its own strength and tries to advance; or, where it fails to do so, it retraces its footsteps and by slow degrees returns to its primitive, uncivilized condition. (14)

3. The Kings Were More Universal in Their Teachings, While the Priests Were Exclusive

On the one hand, the majority of the priests, impelled by economic considerations, were bound to defend that form of religion which made their existence a necessity of society and assigned them the highest place in the scale of caste; on the other hand, the king-caste, whose strong right hand guarded and guided the nation and who now found itself as leading the higher

thoughts also, were loath to give up the first place to men who only knew how to conduct a ceremonial. (15)

Actual power was in the hands of the second caste, the kingly caste. Not only so - they have produced all of our great thinkers, and not the brahmins. It is curious. All our great prophets, almost without one exception, belong to the kingly caste. The great man Krishna was also of that caste; Rama - he also, and all our great philosophers, almost all sat on the throne; thence came all the great philosophers of renunciation. From the throne came the voice that always cried, "Renounce". These military people were their kings; and they also were their philosophers; they were the speakers in the Upanishads. In their brains and their thought, they were greater than the priests, they were more powerful, they were the kings - and yet the priests got all the power and tried to tyrannize over them. And so that was going on - political competition between the two castes, the priests and the kings. (16)

In various Upanishads we find that the Vedanta philosophy was not the outcome of meditation in the forests only, but that the very best parts of it were thought out and expressed by brains which were busiest in the everyday affairs of life. We cannot conceive of any man busier than an absolute monarch, a man who is ruling over millions of people; and yet, somehow, some of these rulers were deep thinkers. (17)

Brahmins and kshatriyas have always been our teachers, and most of the Upanishads were written by kshatriyas, while the ritualistic portions of the Vedas came from the brahmins. Most of our great teachers throughout India have been kshatriyas, and were always universal in their teachings, whilst the brahmin prophets, with two exceptions, were very exclusive - Rama, Krishna, Buddha - worshipped as incarnations of God - were kshatriyas. (18)

They speak of the meat-eating kshatriya. Meat or no meat, it is they who are the fathers of all that is noble and beautiful in Hinduism. Who wrote the Upanishads? Who was Rama? Who was Krishna? Who was Buddha? Who were the Tirthankaras of the Jains? Whenever kshatriyas have preached religion, they have given it to everybody; and whenever the brahmins wrote anything, they would deny all right to others. (19)

c) The Ideal of Enjoyment Is Subject to Change, but the Spiritual Ideal Is the Goal of the Vedas

In the latter part of the Vedas you see the highest, the spiritual. In the early portions there is the crude part. (20)

The ideal of the first part of the Vedas is entirely different from the ideal of the other part, the Upanishads. The ideal of the first part coincides with [that of] all other religions of the world except Vedanta. The ideal is enjoyment here and hereafter - man and wife, husband and children. Pay your dollar, and the priest will give you a certificate, and you will have a happy time afterwards in heaven. You will find all your people there and have this merry-go-round without end. No tears, no weeping - only laughing. No stomach-ache, but yet eating. No headache, but yet [parties]. That, considered the priests, was the highest goal of humanity. (21)

Therefore, in the second portion - the Jnana Kanda - we find there is an altogether different procedure. The first search was in external nature for the truths of the universe; it was an attempt to get the solution of the deep problems of life from the material world. (22)

The knowledge portion came after the work portion and was promulgated exclusively by kings. It was called the *knowledge of kings*. The great kings had no use for the work portion with all its frauds and superstitions and did all in their power to destroy it. This knowledge consisted of a knowledge of God, the soul, the universe, etc. These kings had no use for the ceremonials of the priests, their magical works, etc. They pronounced it all humbug; and when the priests came to them for gifts, they questioned them about God, the soul, etc.; and as the priests could not answer such questions, they were sent away. The priests went back to their fathers to inquire about the things the kings had asked them, but could learn nothing about them, so they came back again to the kings and became their disciples. [*Cha. Up.*, 5.3.17] Very little of the ceremonials are followed today. They have been mostly done away with, and only a few of the more simple ones are followed today. (23)

The ceremonies and the fruits of the Karma Kanda are confined within the limits of the world of maya, and therefore they have been undergoing and will undergo transformation according to the law of change which operates through time, space and personality. Social laws and customs likewise, being based on this Karma Kanda, have been changing and will continue to change hereafter. (24)

The spiritual portion of our [Vedantic] religion is in the... Jnana Kanda, the Vedanta - the end of the Vedas - the gist, the goal of the Vedas. (25)

d) The Upanishads Are Diametrically Opposite to the Karma-Kanda in all Their Conclusions

The Upanishads are diametrically opposite [to the Karma Kanda] in all their conclusions:

1. God, Karma and Sacrifice

First of all, the Upanishads believe in God, the creator of the universe, its ruler. You find later on [the idea of a benign Providence]. It is an entirely opposite [conception]. Now, although we hear the priest, the ideal is much more subtle. Instead of many gods, they made one God.

The second idea, that you are all bound by the law of karma the Upanishads admit, but they declare the way out. The goal of man is to go beyond law. And enjoyment can never be the goal, because enjoyment can only be in nature.

In the third place, the Upanishads condemn all the sacrifices and say that that is mummery. That may give you all you want, but it is not desirable, for the more you get, the more you [want], and you run round and round in a circle eternally, never getting to the end - enjoying and weeping. Such a thing as eternal happiness is impossible anywhere. It is only a child's dream. The same energy becomes joy and sorrow... Eternal happiness and misery are a child's dream.... The other point of divergence is: the Upanishads condemn all rituals, especially those that involve the killing of animals. They declare those all nonsense....

2. Philosophy and Renunciation

The Upanishads believe in [getting things right according to the Vedas, but they have a higher standard, too]. On the one hand they do not want to overthrow the Vedas, but on the other, they see these animal sacrifices and the priests stealing everybody's money. But in the psychology, they are all alike All the differences have been in the philosophy [regarding] the nature of the soul. Has it a body and a mind? And is the mind only a bundle of nerves? Psychology, they all take for granted, is a perfect science. There cannot be any difference there. All the fight has been regarding philosophy - the nature of the soul, and God, and so on. (26)

The germs of all the ideas that were developed in the Upanishads had been taught already in the Karma Kanda. The idea of the cosmos which all sects of Vedantists had to take for granted, the psychology of which has formed the common basis of all the Indian schools of thought, had been worked out already and presented before the world [Sankhyan cosmology and psychology]. (27)

You remember that the Vedas have two parts, the ceremonial and the knowledge portions. In time ceremonials had multiplied and become so intricate that it was almost hopeless to disentangle them, and so in the Upanishads we find that the ceremonials were almost done away with, but gently, by explaining them. We see that in olden times they had these oblations and sacrifices; then the philosophers came and, instead of snatching away the symbols from the hands of the ignorant, instead of taking the negative position, which we unfortunately find so general in modern reforms, they gave them something to take their place. "Here is the symbol of fire", they said. "Very good! But here is another symbol, the earth. What a grand, great symbol! Here is this little temple, but the whole universe is a temple; a man can worship anywhere. There are the peculiar figures that men draw on the earth, and there are the altars, but here is the greatest of altars, the living, conscious human body; and to worship at this altar is far higher than the worship of any dead symbols." (28)

Then another great difference between the priests and the Upanishads: the Upanishads say *renounce*. That is the test of everything. Renounce everything. It is the creative faculty that brings us into all this entanglement. The mind is in its own nature when it is calm. The moment you can calm it, that [very] moment you will know the truth. What is it that is whirling the mind? Imagination, creative activity. Stop creation and you know the truth. All power of creation must stop and then you know the truth at once. (29)

On the other hand, the priests are all for [creation]. Imagine a species of life [in which there is no creative activity. It is unthinkable]. The people had to have a plan [of evolving a stable society. A system of rigid selection was adopted. For instance,] no people who are blind and halt can be marred. [As a result], you will find so much less deformity [in India] than in any other country in the world. Epileptics and insane [people] are very rare [there]. That is owing to direct selection. The priests say, " Let them become sannyasins." On the other hand, the Upanishads say, " Oh no, [the] earth's best and finest and freshest flowers should be laid upon the altar." (30)

If the performance of yajnas is the cornerstone of the work portion of the Vedas, as surely is brahmacharya the foundation of the knowledge portion. (31)

The spiritual portion of the Vedas is specially studied by monks. (32)

Cross reference to:

Taitt. Up., 2.8.1

3. The Highest Is the Knowledge of Brahman

The Upanishads point out that the goal of man is neither misery nor happiness; we have to be the master of that out of which these are manufactured. We must be masters of the situation at the very root, as it were. (33)

The philosophical portion denounced all work, however good, and all pleasure such as loving and kissing wife, husband or children, as useless. According to this doctrine, all good works and pleasures are nothing but foolishness and, in their very nature, impermanent. "All this must come to an end sometime, so end it now; it is vain" - so say the philosophical portion of the Upanishads. It claims that all the pain in the world is caused by ignorance; therefore the cure is knowledge. This idea of one being held down fast by past karma or work, is all nonsense. No matter how dense one may be, or how bad, one ray of light will dissipate it all. A bale of cotton, however large, will be utterly destroyed by one spark. If a room has been dark for untold ages, a lamp will end it all. So with each soul, however benighted it may be, it is not absolutely bound down by its past karma to work for ages to come. "One ray of light will reveal to him his true nature." (34)

The knowledge portion deals with the knowledge of Brahman and discusses religion. The Vedas in this part teach of the Self; and because they do, their knowledge is approaching real knowledge. Knowledge of the Absolute depends upon no book, nor upon anything; it is absolute in itself. (35)

Cross reference to:

Mund. Up., 1.1.5

4. Denial of the Ultimate Authority of Any Book

The farthest that any religion can see is the existence of a spiritual entity. So no religion can teach beyond that point. In every religion there is the essential truth and the non-essential casket in which this jewel lies. Believing in the Jewish book or the Hindu book is non-essential. Circumstances may change, the receptacle is different, but the central truth remains. The essentials being the same, the educated people of every community retain the essentials. (36)

There is a place in the Vedas [even] for superstition, for ignorance. The whole secret is to find out the proper place for everything. (37)

One peculiarity of the Vedas is that they are the only scriptures that again and again declare that you must go beyond them. The Vedas say that they were written just for the child-mind, and when you have grown, you must go beyond them. (38)

The rest - all these talks and reasonings and philosophies and dualisms and monisms, and even the Vedas themselves are but preparations, secondary things. The other is primary. (39)

Books are useless to us until our own book opens; then all books are good so far as they confirm our book. (40)

Our own realization is beyond the Vedas because even they depend upon that. The highest Vedanta is the philosophy of the Beyond. (41)

In spite of [the idea that things exist because they are in the Vedas], look at the boldness of these sages who proclaimed that the truth is not found by much study of the Vedas. (42)

Do you find in any other scripture such a bold assertion as this: not even by the study of the Vedas will you reach the Atman? (43)

The glory of the Vedic scriptures is unique in the history of religion, not merely because of their great antiquity, but vastly more for the fact that they alone amongst all the authoritative books of the world, warned man that he must go beyond all books. (44)

Cross reference to:

Ka. Up., 1.2.23

Mund. Up., 1.1.5

Taitt. Up., 2.4, 9

5. Truth Is beyond All System and Is Based on the Nature of Humanity Itself

Personally, I take as much of the Vedas as agrees with reason. Parts of the Vedas are apparently contradictory. They are not considered inspired in the Western sense of the word, but as the sum total of the knowledge of God, omniscience, which we possess. But to say that only those books which we call the Vedas contain this knowledge is mere sophistry. We know it is shared in varying degrees by the scriptures of all sects. Manu says that only that part of the Vedas which agrees with reason is the Vedas; and many of our philosophers have taken this view. (45)

There are truths that are true only in a certain line, in a certain directions, under certain circumstances, and for certain times - those that are founded on the institutions of the times. There are other truths which are based on the nature of humanity itself and which must endure so long as humanity itself endures. These are the truths that alone can be universal; and in spite of all the changes that have come to India as to our social surroundings, our methods of dress,

our manner of eating, our mode of worship - these universal truths of the Shrutis, the marvelous Vedantic ideas, stand out in their own sublimity. (46)

It is true that we have created a system of religion in India which we believe to be the only rational religious system extant; but our belief in its rationality rests upon its all-inclusion of the searchers after God, its absolute charity towards all forms of worship, and its eternal receptivity of those ideas tending towards the evolution of God in the universe. We admit the imperfections of our system, because the Reality must always be beyond all system; and in this admission lies the portent and promise of an eternal growth. Sects, ceremonies, and books, so far as they are the means of man's realizing his own nature, are all right; when he has realized that, he gives up everything. "I reject the Vedas!" is the last word of the Vedanta philosophy. Ritual, hymns and scriptures through which he has traveled to freedom vanish for him. (47)

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Chapter 8: The Struggle to Establish the Kingdom of the Upanishads

a) The Revolutionizing of Indian Society through Religion

In the Vedic and adjoining periods the royal power could not manifest itself on account of the grinding pressure of the priestly power. ` (1)

The Upanishads had very little kingdom, although they were discovered by kings who held all the royal power in their hands. So the struggle... began to be fiercer. (2)

It is the evidence of history that at a certain time every society attains its manhood, when a strong conflict ensues between the ruling power and the common people. The life of society, its expansion and civilization, depend on its victory or defeat in this conflict.

Such changes, revolutionizing society, have been happening in India again and again, only [there] they have been effected in the name of religion, for religion is the life of India, religion is the language of that country, the symbol of all its movements. (3)

[A Vedantic Sanskrit masque, *Prabodha Chandrodaya*, expresses the truth that we must] feed religion and help it grow, and it will become a giant. King Desire and King Knowledge fought, and just as the latter was about to be defeated, he was reconciled to Queen Upanishad, and a child was born to him - Realization - which saved the victory for him. (4)

The Charvaka, the Jain, the Buddhist, Shankara, Ramanuja, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, the Brahmo-Samaj, the Arya Samaj - of all of these, and similar sects, the wave of religion, foaming, thundering, surging, breaks in the front, while in the rear follows the filling-up of social wants. If all desires can be accomplished by the mere utterance of some meaningless syllables, then who will exert himself to go through difficulties to work out the fulfillment of his desires? If this malady enters into the entire body of any social system, then that society becomes slothful and indisposed to any exertion, and soon hastens to its ruin. Hence, the slashing sarcasm of the Charvakas, who believed only in the reality of sense-perceptions and nothing beyond. What could have saved Indian society from the ponderous burden of omniferous ritualistic ceremonialism with its animal and other sacrifices, which all but crushed the very life out of it, except the Jain revolution which took its strong stand exclusively on chaste morals and philosophical truth? Or without the Buddhist revolution what could have delivered the suffering millions of the lower classes from the violent tyrannies of the influential higher castes? When, in course of time, Buddhism declined and its extremely pure and moral character gave place to equally bad, unclean and immoral practices, when Indian society trembled under the infernal dance of the various races of barbarians who were allowed into the Buddhistic fold by virtue of its all-embracing Spirit of equality - then Shankara, and

later Ramanuja, appeared on the scene and tried their best to bring society back to its former days of glory and to re-establish its lost status. (5)

b) The Beginning of the Triangular Fight between Ceremonialism, Philosophy and Materialism

1. The Charvakas, Who Upheld Materialism as the Highest Goal of Life

[Besides the priests and the kings engaged in struggle], there were others - recruited from both the priests and the king castes - who ridiculed equally the ritualizes and philosophers, declared spiritualism as a fraud and priestcraft, and upheld the attainment of material comforts as the highest goal of life. The people, tired of ceremonials, and wondering at the philosophers, joined the materialists in masses. (6)

The Charvaka, or materialist, basing his doctrine on the first part - the sacrificial portion - of the Vedas, believed that all was matter and that there is neither a heaven nor a hell, neither a soul nor a God. (7)

The Charvakas... preached horrible things, the most rank, undisguised materialism, such as in the nineteenth century they dare not openly preach. These Charvakas were allowed to preach from temple to temple and city to city, that religion was all nonsense, that it was priestcraft, that the Vedas were the words and writings of fools, rogues, and demons, and that there was neither a God nor an eternal soul. If there were a soul, why did it not come back after death, drawn by the love of wife and child? Their idea was that, if there were a soul, it must still love after death and want good things to eat and nice dress. Yet no one hurt these Charvakas. (8)

[The Charvaka movement] was the beginning of that caste question, and that triangular fight in India between ceremonials, philosophy and materialism which has come down unsolved to our own days. (9)

2. Krishna, Who Brought Reconciliation by His Unique Spirituality and Superhuman Genius

i) The Reconciliation between the Priests and the People Brought about by Krishna's Eclectic Teachings

So the great struggle began in India and it comes to one of its culminating points in the Gita. When it was causing fear that all India was going to be broken up between the [priests and the people], there rose this man Krishna, and in the Gita he tries to reconcile the ceremony and the philosophy of the priests and the people. (10)

The first solution of the difficulty attempted was by applying the eclecticism which, from the earliest days, had taught the people to see in differences the same truth in various garbs [*Rig Veda* 1.164.46] The great leader of this school, Krishna - himself of royal race - and his sermon, the Gita have, after various vicissitudes brought about by the upheavals of the Jains, the Buddhists, and other sects, fairly established themselves as the "Prophet of India" and the truest philosophy of life. (11)

This Krishna preceded Buddha by some thousand years... A great many people do not believe that he ever existed. Some believe that [the worship of Krishna grew out of] the old sun worship. There seem to have been several Krishnas; one was mentioned in the Upanishads, another was a king, another a general. All have lumped into one Krishna. It does not matter much. The fact is, some individual comes who is unique in spirituality. (12)

ii) The Teaching of Motiveless Work Brought a Momentary Lull in the Struggle between the Priests and the Kings

The tug of war [between the brahmins and the kshatriyas had begun] in the earliest periods of the history of the [Indian race], and throughout the Shrutis it can be distinctly traced. A momentary lull came when Sri Krishna, leading the faction of kshatriya power and of jnana, showed the way to reconciliation. The result was the teachings of the Gita - the essence of philosophy, of liberality, of religion. (13)

When the Gita was first preached, there was going on a great controversy between two sects. One party considered the Vedic yajnas and animal sacrifices and suchlike karmas to constitute the whole of religion. The other preached that the killing of numberless horses and cattle cannot be called religion. The people belonging to the latter party were mostly sannyasins and followers of jnana. They believed that the giving up of all work and the gaining of knowledge of the Self was the only path to moksha [liberation]. By the preaching of his great doctrine of work without motive, the author of the Gita put at rest the dispute of these two antagonistic sects. (14)

Krishna was, from his childhood, against snake-worship and Indra-worship. Indra worship is a Vedic ritual. Throughout the Gita he is not favorable to Vedic ritual. (15)

Krishna saw plainly through the vanity of all the mummeries, mockeries and ceremonials of the old priests; and yet he saw some good in them.

If you are a strong man, very good! But do not curse others who are not strong enough for you... Everyone says, "Woe unto you people!" Who says, "Woe unto me that I cannot help you. The people are doing all right to the best of their ability and means and knowledge. Woe unto me that I cannot lift them to where I am"?

So, the ceremonials, worship of gods, and myths are all right, says Krishna.... Why? Because they all lead to the same goal. Ceremonies, books and forms - all these are the links in the chain. Get hold! That is the one thing. If you are sincere and have really got hold of one link, do not let go; the rest is bound to come. [But people] do not get hold. They spend the time quarreling and determining what they should get hold of, and do not get hold of anything.... We are always after truth, but never want to get it. We simply want the pleasure to go about and ask. We have a lot of energy and spend it that way. That is why Krishna says: Get hold of any one of these chains that are stretched out from a common center. No one step is greater than another.... Blame no view of religion so far as it is sincere. Hold on to one of these links and it will pull you to the center. Your heart itself will teach all the rest. The teacher within will teach all the creeds, all the philosophies. (16)

That priestly power which began its strife for superiority with the royal power from the Vedic times and continued it down through the ages, that hostility against the kshatra power, Bhagavan Sri Krishna succeeded by his superhuman genius in putting a stop to, at least for the time being, during his earthly existence. (17)

3. The Conservative Force of the Ethical Principles and Good Works of the Jains

[Of the pre-Buddhistic sects which took up whatever portion of the Vedas they liked], the Jains were very moral atheists who, while rejecting the idea of a God, believed that there is a soul, striving for more perfect development. (18)

The Jains... are a very ancient sect [who are] a conservative force in India [even] today.... This sect was at least five hundred years before Buddha, and he was five hundred and fifty years before Christ....

They declared against the validity of the scriptures of the Hindus, the Vedas. They wrote some books themselves, and they said, "Our books are the only original books, the only original Vedas, and the Vedas that are now going under that name have been written by the brahmins to dupe the people."...

In their methods and manners they were different.... By work, they mean doing good to others. That has, of course, something in it; but mostly, as to the brahmins, work means to perform these elaborate ceremonials: killing of cows and bulls, killing of goats and all sorts of animals, that are taken fresh and thrown into the fire, and so on. "Now", declared the Jains, "that is no work at all, because injuring others can never be any good work." And they said, "This is the proof that your Vedas are false Vedas, manufactured by the priests, because you do not mean to say that any good book will order us [to be] killing animals and doing these things. You do not believe it. So all this killing of animals and other things that you see in the Vedas, they have been written by the brahmins, because they alone are benefited. It is the priest only [who] pockets the money and goes home. So, therefore, it is all priestcraft."

It was one of their doctrines that there cannot be any God. "The priests have invented God that the people may believe in God and pay them money. All nonsense! There is no God. There is nature and there are souls, and that is all. Souls have got entangled in this life and got round them the clothing of man you call a body. Now, do good work."...

These Jains were the first great ascetics, but they did some great work. "Don't injure any, and do good to all that you can, and that is all the morality and ethics, and that is all the work there is and the rest is all nonsense - the brahmins created that. Throw it all away." And then they went to work and elaborated this one principle all through - and it is a most wonderful ideal: how all that we call ethics they simply bring out from that one great principle of non-injury and doing good. (19)

c) The Ancient Order of Things Was Overwhelmed by the Buddha

1. The Social Wants at the Time of Buddha

Buddhism was the rebellion of the newly formed kshatriyas against Vedic priestcraft. (20)

The struggle [between the priests and kings] began to be fiercer. Its culminating point came two thousand years after [the Upanishads] in Buddhism. The seed of Buddhism is here, [in] the ordinary struggle between the king and the priest; and [in the struggle] all religion declined. One wanted to sacrifice religion and the other wanted to cling to the sacrifices, the Vedic gods, etc. (21)

[After the lull caused by the reconciliation effected by Sri Krishna], the ambition of the two classes - brahmin and kshatriya - to be the masters of the poor and ignorant was [still] there, and the strife once more became fierce. The meager literature that has come down to us from that period brings to us but faint echoes of that mighty past strife, but at last it broke out as a victory for the kshatriyas, a victory for jnana, for liberty - and ceremonial had to go down, much of it forever. This upheaval is what is known as the Buddhistic reformation. On the religious side, it represented freedom from ceremonial; and on the political side, overthrow of the priesthood by the kshatriyas.

It is a significant fact that the two greatest men ancient India produced were both kshatriyas - Krishna and Buddha - and still more significant that both of these God-men threw open the door of knowledge to everyone, irrespective of birth or sex. (22)

Though tension [in the triangular fight between ceremonials, philosophy and materialism had been toned down for the time being by Krishna's teaching], it did not satisfy the social wants which were among the causes - the claim of the king-race to stand first in the scale of caste and the popular intolerance of priestly privilege. Krishna had opened the gates of spiritual knowledge and attainment to all, irrespective of sex or caste, but he left undisturbed the same problem on the social side. This again has come down to our own days, in spite of the gigantic struggle of the Buddhists Vaishnavas, etc., to attain social equality for all. (23)

The struggle [was] renewed all along the line in the seventh century before the Christian era and finally in the sixth, overwhelming the ancient order of things under Shakyamuni, the Buddha. (24)

On the one hand there was the political jealousy between the kings and priests, and then these different dissatisfied sects [such as the Jains were] springing up everywhere. And there was the greater problem: the vast multitudes of people wanting the same rights as the Aryans, dying of thirst while the perennial stream of nature went flowing by them, and no right to drink a drop of water....

In India [there are] two great races: one is called the Aryan, the other, the non-Aryan. It is the Aryan race that has the three castes, but the whole of the rest are dubbed with one name - shudras - no caste. They are not Aryans at all. (Many people came from outside India and they found the shudras there, the aborigines of the country.) However it may be, these vast masses of non-Aryan people and the mixed people among them, gradually became civilized, and they began to scheme for the same rights as the Aryans.... And the brahmin priest was the great antagonist of such claims. You see, it is the nature of priests in every country - they are the

most conservative people, naturally. So long as it is a trade, it must be; it is to their interest to be conservative. So this tide of murmur outside the Aryan pale the priests were trying to check with all their might. Within the Aryan pale, there was also a tremendous religious ferment, and [it was] mostly led by the military caste. (25)

2. Buddhism Combated Not Only Priestcraft and Animal Sacrifice: It was the First to Break Down the Barriers of Caste

The intellectual world was divided before Buddha came. But for a correct understanding of his religion, it is also necessary to speak of the caste then existing.... These different social divisions developed or degenerated into iron-bound castes and an organized and crystallized priestcraft stood upon the necks of the nation. At this time Buddha was born and his religion is therefore the culmination of an attempt at religious and social reformation.

The air was full of the din of discussion: 20,000 blind priests were trying to lead 20,000,000 blind men, fighting amongst themselves. What was more needed at that time than for a Buddha to preach? "Stop quarreling, throw your books aside, and be perfect!" Buddha never fought true castes, for they are nothing but the congregation of those of a particular natural tendency, and they are always valuable. But Buddha fought the degenerated castes with their hereditary privileges, and spoke to the brahmins: " True brahmins are not greedy, nor criminal, nor angry - are you such? If not, do not mimic the genuine, real men. Caste is a state, not an iron-bound class, and everyone who knows and loves God is a true brahmin." And with regard to the sacrifices, he said, "Where do the Vedas say that sacrifices make us pure? They may please, perhaps, the angels, but they make us no better. Hence, let off these mummeries - love God and strive to be perfect."

Original Buddhism... was but an attempt to combat caste and priestcraft; it was the first in the world to stand as champion of dumb animals, the first to break down caste, standing between human beings.(26)

Buddhism... broke the chains of the masses. All castes and creeds alike became equal in a minute.(27)

Brahmanya power was almost effaced from its field of work in Indian during the Jain and Buddhist revolutions; or, perhaps, was holding its feeble stand by being subservient to the strong, antagonistic religions. (28)

3. Buddha Broke the Mental and Spiritual Bonds of Men by Preaching Vedanta to the Whole World

Buddha was the triumph in the struggle that had been going on between the priest and the prophets in India. One thing can be said for these Indian priests - they were not, and never are, intolerant of religion; they never have persecuted religion. Any man was allowed to preach against them. Theirs is such a religion; they never molested any one for his religious views. But they suffered from the peculiar weakness of all priests: they also sought power, they also

promulgated rules and regulations and made religion unnecessarily complicated, and thereby undermined the strength of those who followed their religion. (29)

India was full of witchcraft in Buddha's day. There were the masses of the people, and they were debarred from all knowledge. If just a word of the Vedas entered the ears of a man, terrible punishment was visited upon him. The priests had made a secret of the Vedas - the Vedas that contained the spiritual truths discovered by the ancient Hindus!

At last, one man could bear it no more. He had the brain, the power and the heart - a heart as infinite as the broad sky. He felt how the masses were being led by the priests and how the priests were glorying in their power, and he wanted to do something about it. He did not want power over any one, and he wanted to break the mental and spiritual bonds of men. (30)

What Buddha did was to break wide open the gates of that very religion which was confined in the Upanishads and to a particular caste. (31)

Advaita (which gets its whole force on the subjective side of man), was never allowed to come to the people. At first some monks got hold of it and took it to the forests, and so it came to be called the "forest philosophy". By the mercy of the Lord, the Buddha came and preached it to the masses, and the whole nation became Buddhists. (32)

Shakya Muni was himself a monk, and it was his glory that he had the largeheartedness to bring out the truths from the hidden Vedas and throw them broadcast all over the world. (33)

Before the Buddha came, materialism had spread to a fearful extent; and it was of a most hideous kind, not like that of the present day, but of a far worse nature. I am a materialist in a certain sense, because I believe that there is only One. That is what the materialist wants you to believe; only he calls it matter and I call it God. The materialists admit that out of this matter all hope and religion and everything has come. I say all these have come out of Brahman. But the materialism that prevailed before Buddha was that crude sort of materialism which taught, "eat, drink and be merry; there is no God, soul, or heaven; religion is a concoction of wicked priests." It taught the morality that as long as you live, you must try to live happily; eat, though you have to borrow money for the food, and never mind about repaying it. That was the old materialism and that kind of philosophy spread so much that even today it has the name of "popular philosophy". Buddha brought the Vedanta to light, gave it to the people, and saved India. (34)

How much good to the world and its beings came out of Buddha's ["fanaticism"]! How many monasteries and schools and colleges, how many public hospitals and veterinary refuges were established! How developed architecture became! ... What was there in India before Buddha's advent? Only a number of religious principles recorded on bundles of palm leaves - and those, too, known only to a few. It was Lord Buddha who brought them down to the practical field and showed how to apply them in the everyday life of the people. In a sense *he* was the living embodiment of true Vedanta. (35)

Shakya Muni came not to destroy; he was the fulfillment, the logical conclusion, the logical development of the religion of the Hindus. (36)

Buddhism, one of the most philosophical religions in the world, spread all through the populace, the common people of India. What a wonderful culture there must have been among the Aryans twenty-five hundred years ago, to be able to grasp such ideas! (37)

Buddha cut through all the excrescences [of rules and regulations promulgated by the priests]. He preached the most tremendous truths. He taught the very gist of the philosophy of the Vedas to one and all without distinction; he taught it to the world at Large, because one of his great messages was the equality of humanity. Human beings are all equal. No concession there to anybody! Buddha was the great preacher of equality. Every man and woman has the same right to attain spirituality - that was his teaching. The difference between the priests and the other castes he abolished. Even the lowest were entitled to the highest attainments; he opened the door to nirvana to one and all. His teaching was bold, even for India. No amount of preaching can ever shock the Indian soul, but it was hard for India to swallow Buddha's doctrine. (38)

d) The Reasons Why Buddhism Had to Die a Natural Death in India

a) To Break the Tyranny of Priestcraft Buddhism Swept Away the Idea of the Personal God

The aim of Buddhism was reform of the Vedic religion, by standing against ceremonials requiring offerings of animals, against hereditary caste and exclusive priesthood, and against belief in permanent souls. It never attempted to destroy that religion, or to overturn the social order. It introduced a vigorous method by Organizing a class of sannyasins into a strong monastic brotherhood and the brahmavadinis into a body of nuns - by introducing images of saints in the place of altar fires....

In their reaction against the privileged priesthood, Buddhists swept off almost every bit of the old ritual of the Vedas, subordinated the gods of the Vedas to the position of servants to their own, human saints, and declared the "Creator and Supreme Ruler" as an invention of priestcraft and superstition. (39)

Tyranny and priestcraft have prevailed wherever the idea [of the personal God] existed, and until the lie is knocked on the head, say the Buddhists, tyranny will not cease. So long as man thinks he has to cower before a supernatural being, so long will there be priests to claim rights and privileges to make men cower before them, while these poor men will continue to ask some priest to act as interceder for them. You may do away with the brahmin; but, mark me, those who do so will put themselves in his place and be worse, because the brahmin has a certain amount of generosity in him, but these upstarts are always the worst of tyrannizers. If a beggar gets wealth, he thinks the whole world is a bit of straw. So these priests there must be so long as this personal God idea persists; and it will be impossible to think of any great morality in society. (40)

The result of Buddha's constant inveighing against a personal God was the introduction of idols into India. In the Vedas they knew them not, because they saw God everywhere; but the reaction against the loss of God as creator and friend was to make idols, and Buddha became an idol. (41)

2. Buddha's Rejection of All Religious Forms Was an Impossible Ideal Which Could Only Be Carried Out through Monasticism

Buddha is said to have denied the Vedas because there was so much killing. (42)

Buddha wanted to make truth shine as truth. No softening, no compromise, no pandering to the priests, the powerful, the kings. No bowing before superstitious traditions, however hoary; no respect for forms and books just because they came down from the distant past. He rejected all scriptures, all forms of religious practice. Even the very language, Sanskrit, in which religions had traditionally been taught in India, he rejected, so that his followers would not have any chance to imbibe the superstitions that were associated with it. (43)

Buddha made the fatal mistake of thinking that the whole world could be lifted to the height of the Upanishads. And self-interest spoilt all. Krishna was wiser, because he was more politic. But Buddha would have no compromise. (44)

The great point of contrast between Buddhism and Hinduism lies in the fact that Buddhism said, "Realize all this as illusion", while Hinduism said, "Realize that within the illusion is the Real." Of *how* this was to be done, Hindus never presumed to enunciate any rigid law. The Buddhist command could only be carried out through monasticism; the Hindu might be fulfilled through any state of life. All alike were roads to the one Real... Thus Buddhism became the religion of a monastic order, but Hinduism, in spite of its exaltation of monasticism, remains ever the religion of faithfulness to daily duty, whatever it be, as the path by which man may attain God. (45)

3. Indian Buddhism's Extreme Desire to Be of the People Debased Buddha's Pure and Glorious Ideals

We must not have an impossible ideal. An ideal which is too high makes a nation weak and degraded. This happened after the Buddhist and Jain reforms. On the other hand, too much practicality is also wrong. If you have not even a little imagination, if you have no ideal to guide you, you are simply a brute. So we must not lower our idea, neither are we to lose sight of practicality. We must avoid the two extremes. (46)

Buddha's work had one great defect, and for that we Indians are suffering, even today. No blame attaches to the Lord. He was pure and glorious; but, unfortunately, such high ideals could not be well assimilated by the different uncivilized and uncultured races of mankind who flocked within the fold of the Aryans. These races, with varieties of superstition and hideous worship, rushed within the fold of the Aryan, and for a time appeared as if they had become civilized; but, before a century had passed, they brought out their snakes, their ghosts, and all the other things their ancestors used to worship, and thus the whole of India became one

degraded mass of superstition. The earlier Buddhists, in their rage against the killing of animals, had denounced the sacrifices of the Vedas, which used to be held in every house. There would be a fire burning and that was all the paraphernalia of worship. These sacrifices were obliterated, and in their place came gorgeous temples, gorgeous ceremonies, and gorgeous priests - and all that you see in India in modern times. I smile when I read books written by some modern people who ought to have known better, that the Buddha was the destroyer of brahminical idolatry. Little do they know that Buddhism created brahminism and idolatry in India. (47)

I have every respect for and veneration of Lord Buddha but, mark my words, the spread of Buddhism was less owing to the doctrines and the personality of the great preacher, than to the temples that were built, the idols that were erected, and the gorgeous ceremonials that were put before the nation. Thus Buddhism progressed. The little fireplaces in the houses in which people had poured their libations were not strong enough to hold their own against these gorgeous temples and ceremonies; but later on, the whole thing degenerated. It became a mass of corruption of which I cannot speak before this audience; but those who want to know about it may see a little of it in those big temples, full of sculptures, in Southern India; and that is all the inheritance we have from the Buddhists. (48)

The exclusiveness of the old form of Vedic religion debarred it from taking ready help from outside. At the same time, it kept it pure and free from many debasing elements which Buddhism, in its propagandist zeal was forced to assimilate.

This extreme adaptability in the long run made Indian Buddhism lose almost all its individuality, and extreme desire to be of the people made it unfit to cope with the intellectual forces of the mother religion in a few centuries. The Vedic party in the meanwhile got rid of a good deal of its most objectionable features, such as animal sacrifice, and took lessons from its rival daughter in the judicious use of images, temple processions, and other impressive performances, and stood ready to take within her fold the whole empire of Buddhism, already tottering to its fall.

And the crash came with the Scythian invasions and the total destruction of the empire of Pataliputra.

The invaders, already incensed at the invasion of their central Asiatic home by the preachers of Buddhism, found in the sun-worship of the brahmins a great sympathy with their own solar religion - and when the brahminist party was ready to adapt and spiritualize many of the customs of the newcomers, the invaders threw themselves heart and soul into the brahmanic cause. (49)

The aims of the Buddhist and Vedic religions were the same, but the means adopted by the Buddhists were not right. If the Buddhist means were correct, then why has [India] been hopelessly lost and ruined? It will not do to say that the efflux of time has naturally wrought this. Can time work, transgressing the laws of cause and effect? (50)

On the philosophic side, the disciples of the great Master [Buddha] dashed themselves against the theoretical rocks of the Vedas and could not crush them; and on the other side they took

away from the nation that eternal God to which everyone, man or woman, clings so fondly. And the result was that Buddhism had to die a natural death in India. At the present day there is not one who calls himself a Buddhist in India, the land of its birth. (51)

e) **The Reconquest of India by Systematized Vedanta**

1. **The Dissipation of Both Priests and Kings in the Period after Buddha**

It is probable that the [Buddhist] reformers had for centuries the majority of the Indian people with them. The older forces, however, were never entirely pacified, and they underwent a good deal of modification during the centuries of Buddhist supremacy. (52)

With the deluge that swept the land at the advent of Buddhism the priestly power fell into decay and the royal power was in the ascendant. Buddhist priests are renouncers of the world, living in monasteries and as homeless ascetics, unconcerned with secular affairs. They have neither the will nor the endeavor to bring and keep the royal power under their control through the threat of curses or magic arrows. Even if there were any remnant of such a will, its fulfillment had become then an impossibility. For Buddhism had shaken the thrones of all the oblation-eating gods and brought them down forever from their heavenly positions. The state of being a Buddha was superior to the heavenly positions of many a Brahma or an Indra, who vie with each other in offering their worship at the feet of Buddha, the God-man! And to this Buddhahood, every man or woman has the privilege to attain; it is open to all even in this life. From the descent of the gods, as a natural consequence, the superiority of the priests who were supported by them was gone.

Accordingly, the reins of that mighty sacrificial horse - the royal power - were no longer held in the firm grasp of the Vedic priest; and, now being free, it could roam anywhere by its unbridled will. The center of power in that period was neither with the priests chanting the Sama hymns and performing the yajnas according to the Yajur Veda; nor is the power vested in the hands of the kshatriya kings separated from each other and ruling over small, independent states. The center of power in that age was in emperors whose unobstructed sway extended over vast areas bounded by the ocean, covering the whole of India, from one end to the other. The leaders of that age were no longer Vishvamitra or Vashishtha [Vedic rishis], but emperors like Chandragupta, Dharmashoka, and others. There never were emperors who ascended the throne of India and led her to the pinnacle of glory such those lords of the earth who ruled over her in paramount sway during the Buddhist period. The end of this period is characterized by the appearance of Rajput power on the scene, and the re of modern Hinduism. With the re of Rajput power on the decline of Buddhism, the scepter of Indian empire, dislodged from its paramount power, was again broken into a thousand pieces and wielded by small, powerless hands. At this time the brahminical (priestly) power again succeeded in raising its head, not as an adversary as before, but this time as an auxiliary to the royal supremacy.

During this revolution, that perpetual struggle for supremacy between the priestly and the royal classes, which began from the Vedic times and continued through the ages till it reached its climax at the time of the Jain and Buddhist revolutions, had ceased for ever. Now these two powers were friendly to each other; but neither was there any more that glorious kshatra

(warlike) valor of the kings, nor that spiritual brilliance which characterized the brahmins; each had lost its former intrinsic strength. As might be expected, this new union of the two forces was soon engaged in the satisfaction of mutual self-interest, and became dissipated by spending its vitality on extirpating their common opponents, especially the Buddhists of the time, and on similar other deeds. Being steeped in the vices consequent on such a union, e.g. sucking of the blood of the masses, taking revenge on the enemy, spoliation of others' property, etc., they in vain tried to imitate the rajasuya and other Vedic sacrifices of the ancient kings, and only made a ridiculous farce of them. The result was they were bound hand and foot by the formidable train of sycophantic attendance and its obsequious flatterers; and, being entangled in an interminable net of rites and ceremonies with flourishes of mantras and the like they soon became a cheap and ready prey to the Islamic invaders from the West....

Brahmanya power, since the appearance of the Rajput power (which held sway over India under the Mihira dynasty and others), made its last effort to recover its lost greatness; and in its effort to establish that supremacy, it sold itself at the feet of the fierce hordes of barbarians [Scythians] newly come from Central Asia; and to win their pleasure, introduced into the land their hateful manners and customs. Moreover, the brahmanya power, solely devoting itself to the easy means to dupe the ignorant barbarians, brought into vogue mysterious rites and ceremonies backed by its new mantras, and the like; and, in doing so, itself lost its former wisdom, its former vigor and vitality, and its own chaste habits of long acquirement. Thus it turned the whole of Aryavarta into a deep and vast whirlpool of the most vicious, the most horrible, the most abominable, barbarous customs; and, as the inevitable consequence of countenancing these detestable customs and superstitions, it soon lost all its own internal strength and stamina and became the weakest of the weak. (53)

2. Kumarila Bhatta in the North Led the Reaction of Vedic Ritualism against the Immoral Rites of Degraded Buddhism

Under the sway of kings who took up Buddhism and preached broadcast the doctrine of ahimsa (non-violence) the performances of the Vedic yaga-yajnas became a thing of the past, and no one could kill any animal in sacrifice for fear of the king. But subsequently among the Buddhists themselves - who were converts from Hinduism - the best parts of these yaga-yajnas were taken up and practiced in secret. From these sprang up the Tantras. (54)

I think that the Tantrika form of worship originated from the time that Buddhism began to decline and, through the oppression of the Buddhists, people began to perform their Vedic sacrifices in secret. They had no more the opportunity to conduct them for two months at a stretch, so they made clay images, worshipped them, and consigned them to the water - finishing everything in one night, without leaving the least trace! Man longs for a concrete symbol, otherwise his heart is not satisfied. So in every home that one-night sacrifice began to take place. By then, the tendencies of men had become sensual.... so the spiritual teachers of that time saw that those who could not perform any religious rite owing to their evil propensities also needed some way of coming round by degrees to the path of virtue. For them these queer Tantrika rites came to be invented. (55)

Barring some of the abominable things in the Tantra, such as the vamachara, etc., the Tantras are not so bad as people are inclined to think. There are many high and sublime Vedantic thoughts in them. In fact, the Brahmana portions of the Vedas were modified a little and incorporated into the body of the Tantras. All the forms of worship and the ceremonials of the present day, comprising the Karma Kanda, are observed in accordance with the Tantras. (56)

The Tantrika rites among the Tibetans... arose in India itself during the decline of Buddhism. It is my belief that the Tantras in vogue amongst us were the creation of the Buddhists themselves. Those Tantrika rites are even more dreadful than our doctrine of vamachara; for in them adultery got free rein; and it was only when the Buddhists became demoralized through immorality that they were driven away by Kumarila Bhatta. (57)

Whether for good or for evil, the Karma Kanda has fallen into disuse in India, though there are some brahmins in the Deccan who still perform yajnas now and then with the sacrifice of goats; and we also find here and there traces of the Vedic kriya kanda in the mantras used in connection with our marriage and sraddha [funeral] ceremonies, etc. But there is no chance of its being reestablished on its original footing. Kumarila Bhatta once tried to do so, but he was not successful in his attempt. (58)

[That] Northern reaction of ritualism was followed by the fitful glory of the Malava empire. With the destruction of that in a short time, northern India went to sleep, as it were, for a long period, to be rudely awakened [some centuries later] but the thundering onrush of Muslim cavalry across the passes of Afghanistan. (59)

3. The Renewal of Vedanta and Priestly Power from the South of India

In spite of its wonderful moral strength, Buddhism was extremely iconoclastic; and much of its force being spent in merely negative attempts, it had to die out in the land of its birth, and what remained of it became full of superstitions and ceremonials a hundred times more crude than those it was intended to suppress. Although it partially succeeded in putting down animal sacrifices of the Vedas, it filled the land with temples, images, symbols and bones of saints.

Above all, in the medley of Aryans, Mongols and aborigines which it created, it unconsciously led the way to some of the hideous vamacharas [left-handed Tantra]. This was especially the reason why this travesty of the teaching of the great Master, Buddha, had to be driven out of India by Sri Shankaracharya and his band of sannyasins.

Thus, even the current of life set in motion by the greatest soul that ever wore a human form, the Bhagavan Buddha himself, became a miasmatic pool, and India had to wait for centuries until Shankara arose, followed in quick succession by Ramanuja and Madhva.

By this time an entirely new chapter had opened in the history of India. The ancient kshatriyas and brahmins had disappeared. The land between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas, the home of the Aryas, the land which gave birth to Krishna and Buddha, the cradle of the great rajarshis and brahmarshis, [had] become silent. (60)

The empire of Magadha was gone. Most of northern India was under the rule of petty chiefs always at war with one another. Buddhism was almost extinct, except in some eastern and Himalayan provinces and in the extreme south; and the nation, after centuries of struggle against the power of hereditary priesthood, awoke to find itself in the clutches of a double priesthood of hereditary Brahmins and exclusive monks of the new regime, with all the power of the Buddhist organization and without their sympathy for the people. (61)

From the very father end of the Indian peninsula, from races alien in speech and form, from families claiming descent from the ancient brahmins, came the reaction against corrupted Buddhism.

What had become of the brahmins and kshatriyas of Aryavarta? They had entirely disappeared, except here and there a few mongrel clans claiming to be brahmins and kshatriyas; and, in spite of their inflated, self-laudatory assertions... they had to sit in sackcloth and ashes in all humility, to learn at the feet of the Southerners. The result was the bringing back of the Vedas to India - a revival of Vedanta such as India had never before seen; even the householders began to study the Aranyakas [Forest books of the Vedas]. (62)

A renascent India, bought by the valor and blood of the heroic Rajputs, defined by the merciless intellect of a brahmin from the same historical thought-center of Mithila (Kumarila Bhatta), led by a new philosophical impulse organized by Shankara and his band of sannyasins, and beautified by the arts and literature of the courts of Malava - arose on the ruins of the old. (63)

4. The Marvelous Boy Shankara, Having Brought the Vedas back to Life, Modern India Belongs to the Spiritual Part of the Vedas

A thousand years after Buddha's death... the mobs, the masses, and various races had been converted to Buddhism; naturally, the teachings of the Buddha became in time degenerated, because most of the people were very ignorant. Buddhism taught no God, no Ruler of the universe, so gradually the masses brought their gods and devils and hobgoblins out again and a tremendous hotchpotch was made of Buddhism in India. Again materialism came to the fore, taking the form of license with the upper classes and superstition with the lower. Then Shankaracharya arose and once more revived Vedanta philosophy. He made it a rationalistic philosophy. In the Upanishads the arguments were often very obscure. By Buddha the moral side of the philosophy was laid stress upon, and by Shankaracharya, the intellectual side. He worked out, rationalized, and placed before people the wonderful, coherent system of Advaita. (64)

In spite of the preaching of mercy to animals, in spite of the sublime ethical religion, in spite of the hair-splitting discussions about the existence or non-existence of a permanent soul, the whole building of Buddhism tumbled down piecemeal; and the ruin was simply hideous. I have neither the time nor the inclination to describe to you the hideousness that came in the wake of Buddhism. The most hideous ceremonies, the most horrible, the most obscene books that human hands ever wrote or the human brain conceived, the most bestial forms that ever passed under the name of religion, have all been the creation of degraded Buddhism.

But India had to live.... The Lord came again, and this time the manifestation was in the South, and up rose that young brahmin of whom it has been declared that, at the age of sixteen he had completed all his writings; the marvelous boy Shankaracharya arose. The writings of this boy of sixteen are the wonders of the modern world, and so was the boy. He wanted to bring back the Indian world to its pristine purity - but think of the amount of the task before him. I have told you a few points about the state of things that existed in India.... The Tartars and Baluchis and all the hideous races of mankind came to India and became Buddhists and assimilated with us, and brought their national customs, and the whole of our national life became a huge page of the most horrible and bestial customs. That was the inheritance which that boy got from the Buddhists; and from that time to this, the whole work of India is a reconquest of this Buddhistic degradation by the Vedanta. It is still going on, it is not yet finished. Shankara came, a great philosopher, and showed that the real essence of Buddhism and that of Vedanta are not very different, but that the disciples did not understand the Master and have degraded themselves, denied the existence of the soul and have become atheists. (65)

When Buddhism broke down everything by introducing all sorts of foreign barbarisms into India - their manners and customs and such things - there was a reaction, and that reaction was led by a young monk, Shankaracharya. And [instead] of preaching new doctrines and always thinking new thoughts and making sects, he brought back the Vedas to life; and modern Hinduism has thus an admixture of ancient Hinduism, over which the Vedantists predominate. But, you see, what once dies never comes back to life, and those ceremonials of Hinduism never came back to life. You will be astonished if I tell you that, according to the old ceremonials, he is not a good Hindu who does not eat beef. On certain occasions he must sacrifice a bull and eat it. That is disgusting now. However they may differ from each other in India, in that all Hindus are one - they never eat beef. The ancient sacrifices and the ancient gods - they are all gone; modern India belongs to the spiritual part of the Vedas. (66)

5. Ramanuja Opened the Door to the Highest Spiritual Worship to All and Thus Brought the Masses back to the Vedic Religion

Shankara showed [that the real essence of Buddhism and Vedanta are not very different], and all the Buddhists began to come back to the old religion. But then, they had become accustomed to all these [Buddhist] forms. What could be done? (67)

In the Buddhist movement, the kshatriyas were the real leaders, and whole masses of them became Buddhists. In the zeal of reform and conversion, the popular dialects had been almost exclusively cultivated to the neglect of Sanskrit, and the larger portion of kshatriyas had become disjoined from the Vedic literature and Sanskrit learning. Thus this wave of reform which came from the South, benefited to a certain extent the priesthood, and the priests only. For the rest of India's millions, it forged more chains than they had ever known before. (68)

The movement of Shankara forced its way through its high intellectuality; but it could be of little service to the masses, because of its adherence to strict caste-laws, very small scope for ordinary emotion, and making Sanskrit the only vehicle of communication. Ramanuja, on the other hand, with a most practical philosophy, a great appeal to the emotions, an entire denial of

birthright before spiritual attainments, and appeals through the popular tongue, completely succeeded in bringing the masses back to the Vedic religion. (69)

Shankara, with his great intellect, I am afraid, had not as great a heart [as Ramanuja]. Ramanuja's heart was greater. He felt for the downtrodden, he sympathized with them. He took up the ceremonies, the accretions that had gathered, made them pure so far as they could be, and instituted new ceremonies, new methods of worship, for the people who absolutely required them. At the same time, he opened the door to the highest spiritual worship from the brahmin to the pariah. That was Ramanuja's work. That work rolled on, invaded the North, was taken up by some great leaders there; but that was much later, during the Muslim rule; and the brightest of these prophets of comparatively modern times in the North was Chaitanya. (70)

In the South, the spiritual upheaval of Shankara and Ramanuja was followed by the usual Indian sequence of united races and powerful empires. It was the home of refuge of Indian religion and civilization, when northern India from sea to sea lay bound at the feet of the Central Asiatic conquerors. (71)

f) Through Slow Assimilation the Pure, Eternal Vedic Religion Has Evolved India towards the Highest Ideal

The task before [renascent India] was profound, problems vaster than their ancestors had ever faced. A comparatively small and compact race of the same blood and speech and the same social and religious aspiration [the Aryans], trying to save its unity by unscalable walls around itself, grew huge by multiplication and addition during the Buddhist supremacy; and it was divided by race, color, speech, spiritual instinct, and social ambitions into hopelessly jarring factions. And this had to be unified and welded into one gigantic nation. This task Buddhism had also come to solve, and had taken it up when the proportions were not so vast.

So long it had been a question of Aryanizing the other types that were pressing for admission and thus of making a huge Aryan body of its different elements. In spite of concessions and compromises, Buddhism was eminently successful and remained the national religion of India. But the time came when the allurements of sensual forms of worship, indiscriminately taken in along with various low races, were too dangerous for the central Aryan core, and a longer contact would certainly have destroyed the civilization of the Aryans. Then came a natural reaction for self-preservation, and Buddhism as a separate sect ceased to live in most parts of the land of its birth.

The reaction movement, led in close succession by Kumarila in the North and Shankara and Ramanuja in the South, has become the last embodiment of that vast accumulation of sects and doctrines and rituals called Hinduism. For the last thousand years or more, its great task has been assimilation, with now and then and outburst of reformation. This reaction first wanted to revive the rituals of the Vedas - failing which, it made the Upanishads or the philosophic portions of the Vedas its basis. It brought Vyasa's system of mimamsa philosophy (the *Vedanta Sutrās*) and Krishna's sermon, the Gita, to the forefront; and all succeeding movements have followed the same. (72)

During these hundreds of years since the time [of the great reformer Shankaracharya] to the present day, there has been the slow bringing back of the Indian masses to the pristine purity of the Vedantic religion. These reformers knew full well the evils which existed, yet they did not condemn. They did not say, "All that you have is wrong; you must throw it away". It can never be so.... Sudden changes cannot be, and Shankaracharya knew it. So did Ramanuja. The only way left to them was slowly to bring up the existing religion to the highest ideal. If they had sought to apply the other method, they would have been hypocrites, for the very fundamental doctrine of their religion is evolution, the soul going towards the highest goal, through all these various stages and phases which are, therefore, necessary and helpful. And who dares condemn them? (73)

In India, Kumarila again brought into currency the Karma Marga, the way of karma only; and Shankara and Ramanuja firmly reestablished the eternal Vedic religion, harmonizing and balancing in due proportions dharma, artha, kama and moksha [duty, gain, pleasure and liberation]. Thus the nation was brought to the way of regaining its lost life; but India has three hundred million souls to awake, and hence the delay. To revive three hundred millions - can it be done in a day? (74)

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26. SVW, Volume 2, Chapter 13: The Last Battle, pp.274-275.
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43. CW, Vol.8: Buddha's Message to the World, p.100.
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45. Ibid., #34, pp.273-274.
46. CW, Vol.3: Sannyasa, Its Ideal and Practice, p.447.
47. CW, Vol.3: The Sages of India, pp.263-264.
48. CW, Vol.3: My Plan of Campaign, p.217.
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59. CW, Vol.6: The Historical Evolution of India, p.165.
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62. CW, Vol.4: Reply to the Address of the Maharaja of Khetri, pp.326-327.
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69. CW, Vol.6: The Historical Evolution of India, pp.164-165.

70. CW, Vol.3: The Sages of India, pp.265-266.

71. CW, Vol.6: The Historical Evolution of India, p.165.

72. Ibid., pp.163-164.

73. CW, Vol.3: My Plan of Campaign, pp.217-218.

74. CW, Vol.5: The East and the West, pp.454-455

PART I, SECTION 3: THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE VEDANTA

Chapter 9: The Sources of Authority in Vedanta

a) The Three Prasthanas in the Study of the Hindu of Vedic Religion

My mind can best grasp the religions of the world, ancient or modern, dead or living, through this fourfold division:

1. Symbology - the employment of various external aids to preserve and develop the religious faculty of man.
2. History - the philosophy of each religion as illustrated in the lives of divine or human teachers acknowledged by each religion. This includes mythology, for what is mythology to one race or period is, or was, history to other races or periods. Even in cases of human teachers, much of their history is taken as mythology by successive generations.
3. Philosophy - the rationale, or the scope of each religion.
4. Mysticism - the assertion of something superior to sense-knowledge and reason which particular persons, or all persons under certain circumstances, possess; runs through the other divisions also.

All the religions of the world, past or present, embrace one or more of these principles, the highly developed ones having all four. Of these highly developed religions, again, some had no sacred book or books, and they have disappeared; but those which were based on sacred books are living to the present day. As such, all the great religions of the world today are founded on sacred books.

The Vedic religions [misnamed the Hindu or Brahminic] is founded on the Vedas. (1)

In modern India the three Prasthanas are considered equally important in the study of all systems of [the Hindu or Vedic] religion. First of all there are the revelations - the Shrutis - by which I mean the Upanishads. Secondly, among our philosophies, the Sutras of Vyasa have the greatest prominence on account of their being the consummation of all the preceding systems of philosophy. These systems are not contradictory to one another, but one is based on another; and there is a gradual unfolding of the theme which culminates in the Sutras of Vyasa. Then, between the Upanishads and the Sutras, which are the systematizing of the marvelous truths of the Vedanta, comes in the Gita, the divine commentary on the Vedanta.

The Upanishads, the Vyasa-Sutras, and the Gita, therefore, have to be taken up by every sect in India that wants to claim authority for orthodoxy, whether dualist, or vishishtadvaitists, or advaitist; the authorities of each of these are the three Prasthanas. We find that a Shankaracharya, or a Ramanuja, or a Madhvacarya, or a Vallabhacarya, or a Chaitanya - anyone who wanted to propound a new sect - had to take up these three systems and write... a new commentary on them. (2)

The three Prasthanas, then, in the different explanations of Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita, or Advaita, with a few minor recensions, form the "authorities" of the Hindu religion. (3)

b) The Upanishads

1. The Jnana Kanda or Upanishads Contain the Noblest Truths Ever Preached to Humanity

All the books known by the name of Vedanta were not entirely written after the ritualistic portion of the Vedas. For instance, one of them - the Isha Upanishad - forms the fortieth chapter of the Yajur-Veda, that being one of the oldest parts of the Vedas. There are other Upanishads which form portions of the Brahmanas or ritualistic writings, and the rest of the Upanishads are independent, not comprised in any of the Brahmanas or other parts of the Vedas; but there is no reason to suppose that they were entirely independent of other parts for, as we well know, many of these have been lost entirely and many of the Brahmanas have become extinct. So it is quite possible that the independent Upanishads belong to some Brahmanas, which in course of time fell into disuse while the Upanishads remained. These Upanishads are also called Forest Books or Aranyakas. (4)

The Indian mind got all that could be had from the external world, but it did not feel satisfied with that; it wanted to search further, to dive into its own soul, and the final answer came.

The Upanishads, or the Vedanta, or the Aranyakas, or Rahasya is the name of this portion of the Vedas...

Here we at once find that religion has got rid of all external formalities. Here we find at once that spiritual things are told, not in the language of matter, but in the language of the Spirit; the superfine in the language of the superfine. No more is any grossness attached to it, no more is there any compromise with things of worldly concern. Bold, brave beyond the conception of the present day, stand the giant minds of the sages of the Upanishads, declaring the noblest truths that have ever been preached to humanity, without any compromise, without any fear.

This... I want to lay before you. Even the Jnana Kanda of the Vedas is a vast ocean; many lives are necessary to understand even a little of it. Truly has it been said of the Upanishads by Ramanuja that they form the head, the shoulders, the crest of the Vedas, and surely enough the Upanishads have become the Bible of modern India. The Hindus have great respect for the Karma Kanda of the Vedas; but, for all practical purposes, we know that for ages by Shruti has been meant the Upanishads, and the Upanishads alone. (5)

In the Upanishads there are certain passages which are called *great words*, which are always quoted and referred to. (6)

2. Only the Upanishads Have Always Ruled India

At all times in all countries the Karma Kanda, comprising the social customs and observances, changes form. Only the Jnana Kanda endures. Even in the Vedic age you find that the rituals gradually changed in form. But the philosophic portion of the Upanishads has remained unchanged up till now - only there have been many interpreters, that is all. (7) The Jnana Kanda, as embodying the spiritual teachings of the Vedas known as the Upanishads and the Vedanta, has always been cited as the highest authority by all our teachers, philosophers and writers, whether dualist, qualified monist, or monist. (8)

However great may be the merits of the Samhita and Brahmana portions of the Vedas to the ethnologists or the philologists, however desirable may be the results that the [mantras], *agnim ile* or *isetvorjetva* or *sanno devirabhisthaye* in conjunction with which the different altars and sacrifices and libations produce - it was all in the way of enjoyment, and no one ever contended that it could produce Moksha [liberation]. As such, the Jnana Kanda, the Aranyakas, the Shrutis par excellence, which teach the way to spirituality - the moksha marga - have always ruled and will always rule India. (9)

It is the Jnana Kanda of Vedanta only that has for all time commanded recognition for leading men across maya and bestowing salvation on them through the practice of yoga, bhakti, jnana, or selfless work; and, as its validity and authority remain unaffected by any limitations of time, place, or persons, it is the only exponent of the universal and eternal religion for all humankind. (10)

3. The Authority of the Upanishads Is Based on Verification by Seeing Truth Directly, Which Anyone May Do

In matters of religious duty the Vedas are the only capable authority... The authority of the Vedas extends to all ages, climes and persons. (11)

The Veda is our only authority and everyone has the right to it. (12)

The Upanishads teach us all there is of religion. (13)

The Upanishads treat alone of [attaining life and becoming immortal]. The path of the Upanishads is a very pure path. Many manners, customs, and local allusions cannot be understood today. Through the Upanishads, however, truth becomes clear. (14)

One has to believe in the Vedas. The Vedas contain the truths experienced by the sages and seers of old who went beyond the range of duality and perceived unity. Depending on mere reasoning, we cannot pass any judgment as to whether the waking state or the dream state is the true one. How can we know which of the two is true so long as we cannot take our stand on something beyond both of them, from where we can look at them objectively? All that we can say now is that two different states are experienced. When you are experiencing one the other seems to be false. You might have been marketing in Calcutta in your dream, but you wake up to find yourself lying in your bed. When the knowledge of unity will dawn, you will see but One and nothing else; you will then understand that the earlier dualistic knowledge was false. But all that is a long way off. It won't do to aspire to read the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* before one has hardly begun to learn the alphabet. Religion is a matter of experience, and not of intellectual understanding. One must practice it in order to understand it. Such a position is corroborated by the sciences of chemistry, physics, geology, etc. It won't do to put together one bottle of oxygen and two of hydrogen and then cry, "Where is the water?" They have to be placed in a closed container and an electric current passed through them so they can combine into water. Then only you can see water, and you can understand that water is produced from a combination of hydrogen and oxygen. If you wish to have the unitive experience, you must have that kind of faith in religion, that kind of eagerness, diligence, and patience; and then only you will succeed. (15)

Disciple: I am living now by believing in something, but I have the Shastras for my authority. I do not accept any faith opposed to the Shastras.

Swami Vivekananda: What do you mean by the Shastras? If the Upanishads are the authority, why not the Bible or the Zendavesta equally so?

Disciple: Granted these scriptures are also good authority, they are not, however, as old as the Vedas. And nowhere, moreover, is the theory of the Atman better established than in the Vedas.

Swami Vivekananda: Supposing I admit that contention of yours, what right have you to maintain that truth can be found nowhere except the Vedas?

Disciple: Yes, truth may also exist in scriptures other than the Vedas, and I don't say anything to the contrary. But as for me, I choose to abide by the teachings of the Upanishads, for I have very great faith in them.

Swami Vivekananda: Quite welcome to that, but if somebody else has "very great faith" in any set of doctrines, surely you should allow him to abide by that. You will discover that, in the long run, both he and yourself will arrive at the same goal. (16)

Obey the scriptures until you are strong enough to do without them; then go beyond them. Books are not an end-all. Verification is the only proof of religious truth. Each must verify for him- or herself; and no teacher who says, "I have seen, but *you* cannot", is to be trusted - only that one who says, "You can see, too." All scriptures, all truths are Vedas in all times, in all countries, because these truths are to be seen, and anyone may discover them. (17)

4. All Schools of Hindu Thought Must Be Established on the Authority of the Genuine Upanishads

You must remember that what the Bible is to the Christians, what the Koran is to the Muslims, what the Tripitaka is to the Buddhist, what the Zend Avesta is to the Parsees, the Upanishads are to us [Vedantins]. (18)

The Upanishads are the Bible of India. They occupy the same place as does the New Testament. There are [more than] a hundred books comprising the Upanishads, some very small and some big, each a separate treatise. (19)

The Upanishads became the Bible of India. It was a vast literature, these Upanishads, and all the schools holding different opinions in India came to be established on the foundation of the Upanishads. (20)

It is better for us [Hindus] to remember that in the Upanishads is the primary authority; even the *Grihya* and *Shrauta* sutras [dharma-shastras] are subordinate to the authority of the Vedas. They are the words of the rishis, our forefathers, and you have to believe them if you want to become a Hindu. You may even believe the most peculiar ideas about the Godhead, but if you deny the authority of the Vedas, you are *nastika* (unorthodox). (21)

The essence of the knowledge of the Vedas was called by the name of Vedanta, which comprises the Upanishads; and all sects of India - dualists, qualified monists, monists, or the Shaivites, Vaishnavites, Shaktas, Sauras, Ganapatyas, each one that dares to come within the fold of Hinduism, must acknowledge the Upanishads of the Vedas. They can have their own interpretations and can interpret them in their own way, but they must obey the authority... That is why we want to use the word *Vedantist* instead of *Hindu*. All the philosophers of India who are orthodox have to acknowledge the authority of the Vedanta; and all our present-day religions, however crude some of them may appear to be, however inexplicable some of their purposes may seem, one who understands them and studies them can trace them back to the ideas of the Upanishads. So deeply have these Upanishads sunk into our race that those of you who are studying the symbology of the crudest religions of the Hindus will be astonished to find sometimes figurative expressions of the Upanishads - the Upanishads become symbolized after a time into figures, and so forth. Great spiritual and philosophical ideas in the Upanishads are with us today, converted into household worship in the form of symbols. Thus the various symbols used by us all come from the Vedanta, because in the Vedanta they are used as figures, and these ideas spread among the nation and permeated it throughout until they became part of everyday life as symbols. (22)

The Jnana Kanda of the Vedas comprises the Upanishads and is known by the name of Vedanta, the pinnacle of the Shrutis, as it is called.... The Vedanta is now the religion of the Hindus. If any sect in India wants to have its ideas established with a firm hold on the people it must base them on the authority of the Vedanta. They all have to do it, whether they are Dvaitists or Advaitists. Even the Vaishnavas have to go to the *Gopalatapini Upanishad* to prove the truth of their own theories. If a new sect does not find anything in the Shrutis in confirmation of its ideas, it will even go to the length of h a new Upanishad and making it pass current as one of the old original productions. There have been many such in the past. (23)

The Upanishads are many, and said to be one hundred and eight; but some declare them to be still larger in number. Some of them are evidently of much later date, as for instance, the *Allopanisad* in which Allah is praised and Muhammad is called the Rajasulla. I have been told that this was written during the reign of King Akbar to bring the Hindus and Muslims together, and sometimes they got hold of some word such as Allah, or Illa in the Samhita, and made an Upanishad on it. So in this *Allopanisad*, Muhammad is the Rajasulla, whatever that may mean. There are other sectarian Upanishads of the same species, which you find to be entirely modern; and it has been easy to write them, seeing that this language of the Samhita portion of the Vedas is so archaic, there is no grammar to it.... Given that, how easy it is to write any number of Upanishads, enough to make words look like old, archaic words, and you have no fear of grammar. Then you bring in Rajasulla or any other "sulla" you like. In that way, many Upanishads have been manufactured, and I am told it is being done even now. In some parts of India, I am perfectly certain, they are trying to manufacture such Upanishads among the different sects. But among the Upanishads are those which, on the face of them, bear the evidence of genuineness; and these have been taken up by the great commentators and commented upon, especially by Shankara, followed by Ramanuja and all the rest. (24)

c) The Vyasa Sutras: The Philosophy of the Vyasa Sutras Is Par Excellence That of the Upanishads

All schools of philosophy in India, although they claim to have been based on the Vedas, took different names for their systems. The last one, the system of Vyasa, took its stand upon the doctrines of the Vedas more than did the previous systems and made an attempt to harmonize the preceding philosophies, such as the Sankhya and the Nyaya, with the doctrines of the Vedanta. So it is especially called the Vedanta philosophy; and the Sutras or aphorisms of Vyasa are, in modern India, the basis of the Vedanta philosophy. (25)

Vyasa' s philosophy is *par excellence* that of the Upanishads. (26)

Following the Upanishads there come other philosophies of India, but every one of them failed to get that hold on India which the philosophy of Vyasa has got, although the philosophy of Vyasa is a development out of an older one, the Sankhya; and every philosophy and every system in India - I mean, throughout the world - owes much to Kapila [the founder of Sankhya], perhaps the greatest name in the history of India in psychological and philosophical lines.... The philosophy of Vyasa, the *Vyasa Sutras*, is firm-seated and has attained the permanence of that which it intended to present to humanity, the Brahman of the Vedantic side of philosophy. Reason was entirely subordinated to the Shrutis; and, as Shankara declares, Vyasa did not care

to reason at all. His idea in writing the Sutras was just to bring together, and with one thread to make a garland of the flowers of Vedantic texts. His Sutras are admitted so far as they are subordinate to the authority of the Upanishads, and no further.

And, as I have said, all the sects of India now hold these *Vyasa Sutras* to be the great authority, and every new sect in India starts with a fresh commentary on the *Vyasa Sutras* according to its light.... The *Vyasa Sutras* have got the place of authority, and no one can expect to found a sect in India until he or she can write a fresh commentary on them. (27)

If one be asked to point out the system of thought towards which as a center all the ancient and modern Indian thought have converged, if one wants to see the real backbone of Hinduism in all its various manifestations, the *Sutras of Vyasa* will unquestionably be pointed out as constituting all that.

Either one hears the Advaita keshari (lion of Vedanta) roaring in peals of thunder - the *asti, bhati, priya* (It exists, shines, and is beloved) - amid the heart-stopping solemnities of the Himalayan forests, mixing with the solemn cadence of the river of heaven; or listens to the cooing of the *piya, pitam* in the beautiful bowers of the grove of Vrinda; whether one mingles with the sedate meditations of the monasteries of Varanasi or the ecstatic dances of the followers of the Prophet of Nadia (Sri Chaitanya); whether one sits at the feet of the teacher of the Vishishtadvaita system with its Vadakale, Tenkale (two divisions of the Ramanuja sect) and all the other subdivisions; or listens with reverence to the acharyas of the Madhva school; whether one hears the martial *Wa guruki fateh* of the secular Sikhs or the sermons on the *Grantha Sahib* of the Udasis and Nirmalas; whether he salutes the sannyasin disciples of Kabir with *Sat sahib* and listens with joy to the sakhis (bhajans); whether he pores upon the wonderful lore of that reformer of Rajputana, Dadu, or the works of his royal disciple, Sundaradasa, down to the great Nischaladasa, the celebrated author of the *Vichara Sagara*, which book has more influence on India than any that has been written in any language within the last three centuries; if one even asks the Bhangi Mehtar of Northern India to sit down and give an account of the teachings of his Lalguru - one will find that all these various teachers and schools have as their basis that system whose authority is the Shruti, the Gita its divine commentary, the *Shariraka [Vyasa] Sutras* its organized system, and all the different sects in India, from the Paramahansa Parivrajakacharyas to the poor despised Mehtar disciples of Lalguru are different manifestations. (28)

d) The Bhagavadgita: The Gita Is the Gist of the Upanishads, Harmonizing Their Many Contradictory Parts

Next in authority is the celebrated Gita. The great glory of Shankaracharya was his preaching of the Gita. It is one of the greatest works that this great man did among the many noble works of his noble life - the preaching of the Gita and writing the most beautiful commentary upon it. And he has been followed by all the founders of the orthodox sects in India, each of whom has written a commentary on the Gita. (29)

The Gita is the gist of the Vedas. It is not our Bible, the Upanishads are our Bible. It is the gist of the Upanishads and harmonizes the many contradictory parts of the Upanishads. (30)

The Gita is a commentary on the Upanishads.... It takes the ideas of the Upanishads and, in some cases, the very words. They are strung together with the idea of bringing out in a compact, condensed and systematic form the whole subject the Upanishads deal with. (31)

If we study the Upanishads we notice, in wandering through the mazes of many irrelevant subjects, the sudden introduction of the discussion of a great truth, just as in the midst of a huge wilderness a traveler unexpectedly comes across here and there an exquisitely beautiful rose, with its leaves, thorn, roots, all entangled. Compared with that, the Gita is like these truths beautifully arranged together in their proper places - like a fine garland or a bouquet of the choicest flowers.... The reconciliation of the different paths of dharma and work without desire or attachment - these are the two special characteristics of the Gita. (32)

The great poem, the Gita, is held to be the crown jewel of all Indian literature. It is a kind of commentary on the Vedas. It shows us that our battle for spirituality must be fought out in this life; so we must not flee from it, but rather compel it to give us all that it holds. (33)

e) The Smritis, or Secondary Scriptures

1. The Vedas Delineate the Eternal Relations of Man, the Smritis Work Out the Details

There are two sorts of truth we find in our Shastras: one that is based upon the eternal nature of man - the one that deals with the eternal relation of God, soul, and nature; the other, with local circumstances, environments of the time, social institutions of the period, and so forth. The first class of truths is chiefly embodied in our Vedas, our scriptures, the second in the Smritis, the Puranas, etc. (34)

Two ideals of truth are in our scriptures: the one is what we call the eternal, and the other is not so authoritative, yet binding under particular circumstances, times, and places. The eternal relations which deal with the nature of the soul, and of God, and the relations between souls and God are embodied in what we call the Shrutis, the Vedas. The next set of truths is what we call the Smritis, as embodied in the words of Manu, Yajnavalkya, and other writers; and also in the Puranas, down to the Tantras. The second class of books and teachings is subordinate to the Shrutis - the Shrutis must prevail. This is the law. The idea is that the framework of the destiny of man has all been delineated in the Vedas and the details have been left to be worked out in the Smritis and Puranas. As for general direction, the Shrutis are enough; for spiritual life, nothing more can be said, nothing more can be known. All that is necessary has been known, all the advice that is necessary to lead the soul to perfection has been completed in the Shrutis; the details alone were left out, and these the Smritis have supplied from time to time. (35)

The Puranas and other religious scriptures are all denoted by the word *Smritis*. Their authority goes so far as they follow the Vedas and do not contradict them. (36)

Next to the Vedanta come the Smritis. These also are books written by sages, but the authority of the Smritis is subordinate to that of the Vedanta because they stand in the same relation with us as the scriptures of other religions with regard to them. We admit that

the Smritis have been written by particular sages; in that sense, they are the same as the scriptures of other religions, but these Smritis are not final authority. If there is anything in a Smriti which contradicts the Vedanta, the Smriti is to be rejected - its authority is gone. (37)

The Vedas, i.e. only those portions of them which agree with reason, are to be accepted as authority. Other Shastras, such as the Puranas, etc., are only to be accepted so far as they do not go against the Vedas. (38)

We must remember that for all periods the Vedas are the final goal and authority; and if the Puranas differ in any respect from the Vedas, that part of the Puranas is to be rejected without mercy. (39)

The Upanishads and nothing but the Upanishads are our scriptures. The Puranas, the Tantras, and all the other books - even the *Vyasa Sutras* - are of secondary, tertiary authority, but the primary are the Vedas. Manu and the Puranas, and all the other books are to be taken so far as they agree with the authority of the Upanishads; and when they disagree, they are to be rejected without mercy. (40)

The Smritis, Puranas, Tantras - all these are acceptable only so far as they agree with the Vedas, and wherever they are contradictory, they are to be rejected as unreliable. (41)

2. The Smritis, Speaking of Local Circumstances and Varying from Time to Time, Will Have an End

The Puranas, the modern representations of the ancient *narasamsi* (anecdote portions of the Vedas), supply the mythology [of the Hindu religion]; and the Tantras, the modern representation of the Brahmanas (the ritual and explanatory portion of the Vedas), supply the ritual. Thus the three Prasthanas, as authorities, are common to all the sects; but, as to the Puranas and Tantras, each sect has its own. (42)

These Smritis, we see again, have varied from time to time. We read that such and such a Smriti should have authority in the Satya Yuga, and such in the Treta Yuga, some in the Dvapara Yuga, and some in the Kali Yuga, and so on. As essential conditions changed, as various circumstances came to have their influence on the race, manners and customs had to be changed; and these Smritis, as mainly regulating

the manners and customs of the nations, had also to be changed from time to time. This is a point I ask you specially to remember. The principles that agree in the Vedanta are unchangeable. Why? Because they are all built upon the eternal principles that are in humanity and nature; they can never change. Ideas about the soul, going to heaven, and so on can never change; they were the same thousands of years ago, they are the same today, they will be the same millions of years hence. But those religious practices which are based entirely upon our social position and correlations must change with the changes of society. Such an order, therefore, would be good and true at a certain period and not at another. We find, accordingly, that a certain food is allowed at one time, and not at another, because the food was suitable for that time; but climate and other things changed, various other circumstances required to be

met, so the Smriti changed the food and other things. Thus it naturally follows that, if in modern times our society requires changes to be made, they must be met and sages will come and show us the way to meet them; but not one jot of the principles of our religion will be changed; they will remain intact. (43)

We find, then, that in all these Smritis the teachings are different. One Smriti says this is the custom and this should be the practice of this age. Another one says that this is the practice of this age, and so forth. This is the achara which should be the custom of the Satya Yuga and this is the achara which should be the custom of the Kali Yuga, and so forth. Now this is one of the most glorious doctrines that you have - that eternal truths, being based on the nature of humanity, will never change so long as humanity lives. They are for all times, omnipresent, universal virtues. But the Smritis speak generally of local circumstances, of duties arising from different environments, and they change in the course of time. This you have always to remember: that because a little social custom is going to be changed, you are not going to lose your religion, not at all. Remember these customs have already been changed. There was a time in this very India when, without eating beef, no brahmin could remain a brahmin; you read in the Vedas how, when a sannyasin, a king, or a great man came into a house, the best bullock was killed; how in time it was found that, as we are an agricultural race, killing the best bulls meant annihilation of the race. Therefore the practice was stopped, and a voice was raised against the killing of cows. Sometimes we find existing then what we now consider the most horrible customs. In course of time other laws had to be made. These in turn will have to go, and other Smritis will come. This is one fact we have to learn: that the Vedas being eternal, will be one and the same throughout all ages, but the Smritis will have an end. As time rolls on, more and more of the Smritis will go, sages will come and they will change and direct society into better channels, into duties and into paths which accord with the necessity of the age and without which it is impossible that society can live. (44)

3. The Puranas, Which Were Written to Popularize the Religion of the Vedas

Then there are the Puranas. *Puranam panchalakshanam* - which means the Puranas of five characteristics: that which treats of history, of cosmology, with various symbological illustrations of philosophical principles, and so forth. These were written to popularize the religion of the Vedas. The language in which the Vedas are written is very ancient; and even among scholars very few can trace the date of these books. The Puranas were written in the language of the people of that time, what we call modern Sanskrit. They were meant, not for scholars, but for the ordinary people; and ordinary people cannot understand philosophy. Such things were given to them in concrete form by means of the lives of saints and kings and great men and historical events that happened to the race, etc. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion. (45)

Herein lies the difference between the scriptures of the Christians and the Buddhists and ours: theirs are all Puranas, and not scriptures, because they describe the history of the deluge, and the history of kings and reigning families, and record the lives of great men, and so on. This is the work of the Puranas; and so far as they agree with the Vedas, they are good. So far as the

Bible and the scriptures of other nations agree with the Vedas, they are perfectly good; and when they do not agree, they are no more to be accepted. So with the Koran. There are many moral teachings in these, and so far as they agree with the Vedas, they have the authority of the Puranas, but no more. (46)

Question: What does orthodoxy mean with the Hindus?

Swami Vivekananda: In modern times it simply means obeying certain caste laws as to eating, drinking, and marriage. After that, the Hindu can believe in any system he or she likes. There never was an organized church in India, so there never was a body of people to formulate doctrines of orthodoxy. In a general way, we say that those who believe in the Vedas are orthodox; but in reality we find that many of the dualistic sects believe more in the Puranas than in the Vedas alone. (47)

Belgaum, October, 1892: Someone said to Swami Vivekananda in the course of a discussion in English about spiritual life, "Talks on religious matters should not be carried on in a foreign language, since it is prohibited in such and such a Purana." Swami Vivekananda replied, "It is good to talk of religious things, no matter what the language is." In support of this he quoted from the Vedas and added, "A judgment passed by a higher court cannot be set at naught by a lower court." (48)

4. The Tantras, Which Direct the Worship of Modern India

There are still other books, the Tantras. These are very much like the Puranas in some respects, and in some there is an attempt to revive the old sacrificial ideas of the Karma Kanda. (49)

The Tantras... represent the Vedic rituals in a modified form; and before anyone jumps to the most absurd conclusions about them, I will advise him to read the Tantras in conjunction with the Brahmanas, especially the Adhvaryu portion. And most of the mantras used in the Tantras will be found to be taken verbatim from their Brahmanas. As to their influence, apart from the shruta and smarta rituals, all the forms of the ritual in vogue from the Himalayas to the Comorin have been taken from the Tantras, and they direct the worship of the Shakta, the Shaiva or Vaishnava, and all the others alike.

Of course, I do not pretend that all the Hindus are thoroughly acquainted with these sources of their religion. Many, especially in lower Bengal, have not heard of the names of these sects and these great systems; but consciously or unconsciously, it is the plan laid down in the three Prasthanas that they are all working out. (50)

f) The Essence of All Our Sacred Books

I hope and wish... that you will reverently study the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavadgita, which are known as the Prasthanatraya (the three supreme sources of truth), as also the Itihasas (epics), the Puranas, and the Agamas (Tantras). You will not find the like of all these anywhere else in the world. Human beings alone, of all living beings, have a hunger in their

hearts to know the whence and whither, the whys and wherefores of things. There are four key words which you must remember, viz. *abhaya* (fearlessness), *ahimsa* (non-injury), *asanga* (non-attachment), and *ananda* (bliss). These words really sum up the essence of all our sacred books. Remember them. Their implication will become clear to you later on. (51)

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PART II: THE TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

Section 4: The Evolution of the Vedantic Teachings on God

Chapter 10: How the Evolution of the Teachings of the Vedas Developed the Idea of God

Chapter 11: The Atman

Chapter 12: The Last Word of the Vedas: Abstract Unity

PART II, SECTION 4: THE EVOLUTION OF THE VEDANTIC TEACHINGS ON GOD

Chapter 10: How the Evolution of the Teachings of the Vedas Developed the Idea of God

a) Studying the Vedas through the Eyeglass of Evolution

1. The Vedas Contain the Essence of All Religion

The religion of the Vedas is the religion of the Hindus and the foundation of all Oriental religions; that is, all other religions are offshoots of the Vedas; all Eastern systems of religion have the Vedas as authority. (1)

The Vedas are a series of books which, to our minds, contain the essence of all religion; but we do not think that they alone contain the truths. (2)

One point of difference between Hinduism and other religions is that in Hinduism we pass from truth to truth - from a lower truth to a higher truth - and never from error to truth. (3)

The Sruti takes the devotee gently by the hand and leads him or her from one stage to the other through all the stages that are necessary to travel to reach the Absolute; and as all other religions represent one or other of these stages in an unprogressive and crystallized form, all the other religions of the world are included in the nameless, limitless, eternal Vedic religion.

Work hundreds of lives out, search every corner of your mind for ages - and still you will not find one noble religious idea that is not already embedded in that infinite mine of spirituality [the eternal Vedic religion. (4)

All the religious thoughts that have come subsequent to the Vedas, in whatever part of the world, have been derived from the Vedas. (5)

Cross reference to:

b) We Find the Whole Process of the Growth of Religious Ideas in the Vedas

The Vedanta means the *end of the Vedas*, the third section, or Upanishads, containing the ripened ideas which we find more as germs in the earlier portion. The most ancient portion of the Vedas is the Samhita, which is in very archaic Sanskrit, only to be understood by the aid of a very old dictionary, the *Nirukta of Yaska*. (6)

[The Vedanta philosophy] is not philosophy in the sense that we speak of the philosophy of Kant or Hegel. It is not one book or the work of one person. Vedanta is the name of a series of books written at different times. Sometimes in one of these productions there will be fifty different things. Neither are they properly arranged; the thoughts, as it were, have been jotted down. Sometimes in the midst of other extraneous things we find some wonderful idea. But one fact is remarkable, that these ideas in the Upanishads would always be progressing. In that crude old language, the working of the mind of every one of the sages has been, as it were, painted just as it went; how the ideas were at first very crude; and they became finer and finer until they reach the goal of Vedanta, and this goal assumes a philosophical name. (7)

The Vedas were not spoken by any person, but the ideas were evolving slowly and slowly until they were embodied in book form, and then that book became the authority. Various religions are embodied in books; the power of books seems to be infinite. The Hindus have their Vedas, and will have to hold on to them for thousands of years more, but their ideas about them are to be changed and built anew on a solid foundation of rock. (8)

The Vedas should be studied through the eyeglass of evolution. They contain the whole history of the progress of religious consciousness, until religion has reached its perfection in unity. (9)

Our ancient philosophers knew what you call the theory of evolution; that growth is gradual, step by step, and the recognition of this led them to harmonize all the preceding systems. Thus, not one of the preceding ideas was rejected. The fault of the Buddhist faith was that it had neither the faculty nor the perception of this continual, expansive growth; and for this reason, it never even made an attempt to harmonize itself with the preceding steps towards the ideal. They were rejected as useless and harmful.

This tendency in religion is most harmful. Someone gets a new and better idea, and then he or she looks back on those he or she has given up and forthwith decides that they were mischievous and unnecessary. Such a person never thinks that, however crude they may appear from his or her present point of view, there were very useful, that they were necessary for him or her to reach his or her present state, and that every one of us has to grow in a similar fashion, living first on crude ideas, taking benefit from them. and then arriving at a higher standard.....

With blessing, and not with cursing, should be preserved all these various steps through which humanity has to pass. Therefore, all these dualistic systems have never been rejected or

thrown out, but have been kept intact in Vedanta; and the dualistic conception of an individual soul, limited yet complete in itself, finds its place in Vedanta. (10)

In the Vedas we find the whole process of the growth of religious ideas. This is because, when a higher truth was reached, the lower perception that led to it was preserved. This was done because the sages realized that, the world of creation being eternal, there would always be those who needed the first steps to knowledge; that the highest philosophy, while open to all, could never be grasped by all. In nearly every other religion, only the last or highest realization of truth has been preserved, with the natural consequence that the older ideas were lost, while the newer ones were understood only by the few and gradually came to have no meaning for the many. We see this result illustrated in the growing revolt against old traditions and authorities. Instead of accepting them, men and women of today boldly challenge them to give reasons for the claims, to make clear the grounds upon which they demand acceptance. Much in Christianity is the mere application of new names and meanings to old pagan beliefs and customs. If the old sources had been preserved and the reasons for the transitions fully explained, many things would have been clearer. The Vedas preserved the old ideas and this fact necessitated huge commentaries to explain them and why they were kept. It also led to many superstitions, through clinging to old forms after all sense of their meaning had been lost. In many ceremonials words are repeated which have survived from a now-forgotten language and to which no real meaning can now be attached. (11)

c) The Upanishads, Having Been Preserved Unmutilated, Allow Us to Trace the Historical Growth of Spiritual Ideas

The word *Upanisad* may mean *sittings* [or *sittings near a teacher*]. Those of you who may have studied some of the Upanishads can understand how they are condensed, shorthand sketches. After long discussions had been held they were taken down, possibly from memory. The difficulty is that you get very little of the background. Only the luminous points are mentioned there. The origin of ancient Sanskrit is 5,000 BC; the Upanishads are [at least] two thousand years before that. Nobody knows exactly how old they are. (12)

In the older Upanishads the language is very archaic, like that of the hymn portion of the Vedas, and one has to wade sometimes through quite a mass of unnecessary things to get at the essential doctrines. The ritualistic literature about which I told you, which forms the second division of the Vedas, has left a good deal of its mark on the *Chandogya Upanisad*, so that more than half of it is still ritualistic. There is, however, one great gain in studying the very old Upanishads. You trace, as it were, the historical growth of spiritual ideas. In the more recent Upanishads the spiritual ideas have been collected and brought into one place, as in the *Bhagavadgita*, for instance - which we may, perhaps, look upon as the last of the Upanishads - you do not find any inkling of these ritualistic ideas. The Gita is like a bouquet composed of the beautiful flowers of spiritual truths collected from the Upanishads. But in the Gita you cannot study the rise of the spiritual ideas, you cannot trace them to their source. To do that, as has been pointed out by many, you must study the Vedas. The great idea of holiness that has been attached to these books has preserved them, more than any other book in the world, from mutilation. In them, thoughts at their highest and at their lowest have all been preserved, the

essential and the non-essential, the most ennobling teachings and the simplest matters of detail stand side by side, for nobody has dared touch them.....

We all know that in the scriptures of every religion changes were made to suit the growing spirituality of later times; one word was changed here and another put in there, and so on. This, probably, has not been done with the Vedic literature; or, if ever done, it is most imperceptible. So we have this great advantage: we are able to study thoughts in their original significance, to note how they developed, how from materialistic ideas finer and finer spiritual ideas are evolved, until they attained their greatest height in Vedanta. Descriptions of some of the old manners and customs are also there, but they do not appear much in the Upanishads. The language used is peculiar, terse, and mnemonic.

The writers of these books simply jotted down these lines as helps to remember certain facts which they supposed were already well known. In a narrative, perhaps, which they are telling, they take it for granted that it is well known to everyone they are addressing. Thus a great difficulty arises; we scarcely know the real meaning of any one of these stories, because the traditions have nearly died out and the little that has remained of them has been very much exaggerated. Many new interpretations have been put upon them, so that when you find them in the Puranas they have already become lyrical poems. (13)

b) Vedanta Philosophy Began When the Ancient Aryans Found No Answers in the External World and Turned Back upon the Inside World

In the oldest parts of the Vedas the search was the same as in other books - the search was outside. (14)

The Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, are a vast mass of accumulation, some of them crude, until you come to where religion is taught, only the scriptural. Now, that was the portion of the Vedas which all [later] sects claimed to preach. Then, there are three steps in the ancient Vedas: first, work; second, worship, third, knowledge. When a man or woman purifies him or herself by work and worship, then God is within that man or woman. He or she has realized God is already there. He or she can only have seen God because the mind has become pure. Now, that mind can become purified through work and worship. That is all. Salvation is already there, but we don't know it. Therefore, work, worship and knowledge are the three steps. (15)

We find that the minds of the ancient Aryan thinkers began a new theme. They found out that in the external world no search would give an answer to their question [about the relationship of the external and internal world]. They might seek in the external world for ages, but there would be no answer to their questions. So they fell back upon this other method; according to this, they were taught that the desires of the senses, desires for ceremonials and externalities have caused a veil to come between themselves and the truth, and that this cannot be removed by any ceremonial. They had to fall back upon their own minds and analyze the mind to find the truth in themselves. The outside world failed and they turned back upon the inside world, and then it became the real philosophy of the Vedanta; and from here the Vedanta philosophy begins. It is the foundation-stone of Vedanta philosophy. As we go on, we find that all its inquiries are inside. From the very outset they seem to declare: look not for truth in any

religion; it is here in the human soul, the miracle of all miracles - in the human soul, the emporium of all knowledge, the mine of all existence - seek here. What is not here cannot be there. And they found out, step by step, that which is external is but a dull reflection at best of that which is inside. (16)

c) The Three Points on Which All Vedantists Agree

All Vedantists agree on three points: they believe in God, in the Vedas as revealed, and in cycles. (17)

On one point all Vedantists agree, and that is that they all believe in God. All these Vedantists also believe ... that the Vedas are an expression of the knowledge of God; and as God is eternal, His or Her knowledge is eternally with Him or Her, and so are the Vedas eternal. There is another common ground of belief: that of creation in cycles. (18)

The three essentials of Hinduism are belief in God, in the Vedas as revelation, in the doctrine of karma and transmigration. (19)

[In the] teachings of the Upanishads there are various texts. Some are perfectly dualistic, while others are monistic. But there are certain doctrines which are agreed to by all the different sects of India. First, there is the doctrine of samsara or reincarnation of the soul. Secondly, they all agree in their psychology... They all also agree in one other most vital point, which alone marks characteristically, most prominently, most vitally, the difference between the Indian and the Western mind, and it is this: that everything is in the soul..... The next point which all the sects in India believe in, is God. (20)

d) The Ancient Vedic Search for God

1. The Different Strata of the Search

No savage can be found who does not believe in some kind of a god. Modern science does not say whether it looks upon this as revelation or not. Love among savage nations is not very strong. They live in terror. To their superstitious imaginations is pictured some malignant spirit, before the thought of which they quake in fear and terror. Whatever [savages] like they think will please the evil spirit. What will pacify them they think will appease the wrath of the spirit. To this end they labor ever against their fellow savages... [Historical facts show] that savage humanity went from ancestor worship to the worship of elements and later, to gods, such as the God of Thunder and Storms. Then the religion of the world was polytheism. The beauty of the sunrise, the grandeur of the sunset, the mystifying appearance of the star-bedecked skies and the weirdness of thunder and lightning impressed primitive humanity with a force that it could not explain and suggested the idea of a higher and more powerful being controlling the infinities that flocked before its gaze...

Then came another period - the period of monotheism. All the gods disappeared and blended into one, the God of gods, the ruler of the universe. [Of God the Aryans said], "We live and move in God He or She is motion." Then there came another period known to metaphysics as the

"period of pantheism". This race rejected polytheism and monotheism and the idea that God was the universe, and said, "The Soul of my soul is the only true existence. My nature is my existence and will expand to me." (21)

In the Vedas we trace the endeavor of that ancient people to find God. In their search for God they came upon different strata; beginning with ancestor worship, they passed on the worship of Agni, the fire-god, Indra, the god of thunder, and of Varuna, the God of gods.... This anthropomorphic conception, however, did not satisfy the Hindus; it was too human for them who were seeking the Divine. Therefore they finally gave up searching for God in the outer world of sense and matter and turned their attention to the inner world. Is there an inner world? And what is it? It is Atman. It is the Self, it is the only thing an individual can be sure of. If he or she knows him or herself he or she can know the universe, and not otherwise. (22)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 7.25.1

2. The Worship of Ancestors and Spirits Is the Struggle to Transcend the Senses

[One] theory of spiritualism [is] that religion begins with the worship of ancestors. Ancestor worship was among the Egyptians, among the Babylonians, among many other races - the Hindus, the Christians. There is not one form of religion among which there has not been this ancestor worship in some form or other.

Before that they thought that this body has a double inside it and that when this body dies the double gets out and lives so long as this body exists. The double becomes very hungry or thirsty, wants food or drink and wants to enjoy the good things of this world. So [the double] comes to get food; and if he or she does not get it, he or she will injure even his or her own children. So long as the body is preserved the double will live. Naturally the first attempt, as we see, was to preserve the body, mummify the body, so that the body will live forever.

So with the Babylonians was this sort of spirit worship. Later on as the nations advanced, the cruel forms died out and better forms remained. Some place was given to that which is called heaven, and they placed food here so that it might reach the double there. Even now pious Hindus must, one day a year at least, place food for their ancestors. And the day they leave off [this habit] will be a sorry day for the ancestors. So you also find this ancestor worship to be one cause of religion. There are in modern times philosophers who advance the theory that this has been the root of all religions. (23)

Among the ancient Hindus... we find traces of... ancestor worship. (24)

[However], Professor Max Muller's opinion is that not the least trace of ancestral worship could be found in the *Rig Veda*. There we do not meet with the horrid sight of mummies staring stark and blank at us. There the gods are friendly to humanity; communion between the worshipper and worshipped is healthy. There is no moroseness, no want of simple joy, no lack of smiles or light in the eyes.... Dwelling on the Vedas, I even seem to hear the laughter of the gods. (25)

A very good position [can] be made out for those who hold the theory of ancestor worship as the beginning of religion.

On the other hand, there are scholars who, from the ancient Aryan literature show that religion originated in nature worship. Although in India we find proofs of ancestor worship everywhere, yet in the oldest record there is no trace of it whatsoever. In the *Rig Veda Samhita* the most ancient record of the Aryan race, we do not find any trace of it. Modern scholars think it is the worship of nature that they find there. The human mind seems to struggle to get a peep behind the scenes. The dawn, the evening, the hurricane, the stupendous and gigantic forces of nature, its beauties, these have exercised the human mind, and it aspires to go beyond, to understand something about them. In the struggle they endow these phenomena with personal attributes, giving them bodies and souls, sometimes beautiful, sometimes transcendent. Every attempt ended by these phenomena becoming abstractions, whether personalized or not. So also it is found with the ancient Greeks; their whole mythology is simply this abstracted nature worship. So also with the ancient Germans, the Scandinavians, and all the other Aryan races. Thus, on this side, too, a very strong case has been made out, that religion has its origin in the personification of the powers of nature.

These two views, though they seem to be contradictory, can be reconciled on a third basis which, to my mind, is the real germ of religion, and that I propose to call the struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses. Either human beings go to seek for the spirits of their ancestors, the spirits of the dead - that is, they want to get a glimpse of what there is after the body is dissolved; or they desire to understand the power working behind the stupendous phenomena of nature. Whichever of these is the case, one thing is certain - that they try to transcend the limitation of the senses. Human beings cannot remain satisfied with the senses; they want to go beyond them. (26)

All religions are more or less attempts to get beyond nature - the crudest or the most developed, expressed through mythology or symbology, stories of gods, angels or demons, or through stories of saints and seers, great men and women or prophets, or through the abstractions of philosophy - all have that one object, all are trying to get beyond these limitations. In one word, they are all struggling towards freedom. Human beings feel, consciously or unconsciously, that they are bound; they are not what they want to be. It was taught to them the very moment they began to look around. That very instant they learned that they were bound and they also found that there was something in them which wanted to fly beyond, where the body could not follow, but which was as yet chained down by this limitation. Even in the lowest of religious ideas, where departed ancestors and other spirits - mostly violent and cruel, lurking about the houses of their friends, fond of bloodshed and strong drink - are worshipped, even there we find that one common factor, that of freedom. People who want to worship the gods see in them, above all things, greater freedom than in themselves. If a door is closed, they think the gods can get through it, and that walls have no limitations for them. (27)

3. The Idea of Infinity Underlay the Aryans' Perception of the Growth of God

There have been two theories advanced in modern times with regard to the growth of religions. The one is the spirit theory, the other the tribal theory. The tribal theory is that humanity in

its savage state remains divided into many small tribes. Each tribe has a god of its own - or sometimes the same god divided into many forms, as the god of this city came to that city, and so on; Jehovah of this city and of such-and-such a mountain. When the tribes came together, one of them became strong....

[These philosophers] advance the theory that the root of all religions was the tribal assimilation of gods into one. (28)

In the oldest portion of the Vedas there is very little of spiritualism, if anything at all. These Vedic devas were not related to spiritualism - although later on they became so; and this idea of Someone behind them, of whom they were manifestations, is in the oldest parts. (29)

The popular idea that strikes one as making the mythologies of the Samhitas entirely different from other mythologies is that, along with every one of [the Vedic] gods is the idea of an infinity. This infinite is abstracted and sometimes described as Aditya. At other times it is affixed, as it were, to all the other gods....

The peculiar fact that the Vedic gods are taken up, as it were, one after the other, raised and sublimated till each has assumed the proportions of the infinite personal God of the universe - calls for an explanation. Professor Max Muller creates for it a new name, as he thinks it is peculiar to the Hindus; he calls it *henotheism*. We need not go far for the explanation. It is within the book. A few steps from the very place where we find these gods being raised and sublimated, we find the explanation also..... The Being perceived was one and the same; it was the perceiver who made the difference. It was the hymnist, the sage, the poet, who sang in different languages and different words, the praise of one and the same Being. (30)

There are various other hymns where the same idea comes in about how this all came, just as... when they were trying to find a governor of the universe, a personal God, they were taking up one deva after another, raising it up to that position; so now we shall find that in various hymns one or other idea is taken up and infinitely expanded and made responsible for everything in the universe. One particular idea is taken as the support in which everything rests and exists, and that support has become all this. So on with various ideas. They tried this method with prana, the life principle. They expanded the idea of the life principle until it became universal and infinite. It is the life principle that is supporting everything - not only the human body, but it is the light of the sun and moon, it is the power moving everything, the universal motive energy. (31)

We have seen how the idea of the devas came. At the same time we know that these devas were at first only powerful beings, nothing more. Most of you are horrified when reading the old scriptures, whether of the Greeks, the Hebrews, the Persians, or others, to find that the ancient gods sometimes did things which to us are very repugnant. But when we read these books we entirely forget that we are persons of the nineteenth century and these gods were beings existing thousands of years ago. We also forget that the people who worshipped these gods found nothing incongruous in their characters, found nothing to frighten them, because they were very much like themselves....

The great mistake is in recognizing the evolution of the worshippers, while we do not acknowledge the evolution of the Worshipped. He or She is not credited with the advance that his or her devotees have made. That is to say, you and I, as representing ideas, have grown. This may seem somewhat curious to you - that God can grow. God cannot. God is unchangeable. In the same sense, real human beings never grow. But humanity's ideas of God are constantly changing and expanding. We shall see later on how the real human being behind each one of these human manifestations is immovable, unchangeable, pure, and always perfect; and in the same way the idea that we form of God is a mere manifestation, our own creation. Behind that is the real God who never changes, the ever-pure, the immutable. But the manifestation is always changing, revealing the reality behind more and more. When it reveals more of the fact behind, it is called progression, when it hides more of the fact behind, it is called retrogression. Thus, as we grow, so the gods grow. From the ordinary point of view, just as we reveal ourselves as we evolve, so the gods reveal themselves. (32)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 164.46

e) The Personal God in Vedanta

1. Vedanta Begins Where the Idea of Monotheism First Appears

In the case of [the god] Varuna, there is another idea, just the germ of one idea which came but was immediately suppressed by the Aryan mind - and that was the idea of fear. In another place we read they are afraid, they have sinned and ask Varuna for pardon [*Atharva Veda Samhita*, 4.16 q.v.] These ideas were never allowed, for reasons you will come to understand later on, to grow on Indian soil, but the germs were there sprouting, the idea of fear and the idea of sin. This is the idea, as you all know, of what is called monotheism. This monotheism, you see, came to India at a very early period. (33)

Here Vedanta begins, where these monotheistic ideas first appear. (34)

In the Karma-Kanda portion of the Vedas we find the most wonderful ideas of religion inculcated, we find the most wonderful ideas about an overruling Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the universe presented before us in language sometimes the most soul-stirring. (35)

2. To the Vedantic Mind Monotheism Was Too Anthropomorphic and Did Not Explain the Visible World

Throughout the Samhitas, in the first and oldest part, this monotheistic idea prevails, but we shall find that it did not prove sufficient for the Aryans; they threw it aside, as it were, as a and matter and turned their attention to the inner world. (38)

The ancient monotheistic idea did not satisfy the Hindu mind. It did not go far enough, it did not explain the visible world; a ruler of the world does not explain the world - certainly not. A

ruler of the universe does not explain the universe; and much less an external ruler explains, one outside of it. He or She may be a moral guide, the greatest power in the universe, but that is no explanation of the universe. (39) *Cross reference to:* very primitive sort of idea and went further on, as we Hindus think. (36)

It was first asked who created the external world and how it came into being. Now the question is: what is that in human beings which makes them live and move, and what becomes of that when they die? The first philosophers studied the material substance and tried to reach the ultimate through that. At the best, they found a personal governor of the universe, a human being immensely magnified, but yet to all intents and purposes a human being. But that could not be the whole truth; at best it could only be a partial truth. We see this universe as human beings and our God is our human explanation of the universe.

Suppose a cow were philosophical and had religion, it would have a cow universe and a cow solution of the problem, and it would not be possible that it should see our God. Suppose cats became philosophers; they would see a cat universe and have a cat solution of the problem of the universe, and a cat ruling it. So we see from this that our explanation of the universe is not the whole of the solution (37)

The stages of growth lead up from a multiplicity of gods to monotheism. This anthropomorphic conception, however, did not satisfy the Hindus. It was too human for them who were seeking the divine. Therefore they finally gave up searching for God in the outer world of sense

Atharva Veda 4.16.2

3. The Personal God of Hinduism Is the Highest Principle of the Universe, in Whom Humanity Can Take Refuge

We shall see how the [ancient Aryan thinkers] took, as it were, this old idea of God, the governor of the universe, who is external to the universe, and first put Him or Her inside the universe....

The Aryan mind had so long been seeking an answer to the question, [where did the universe come from?] from outside. They questioned everything they could find - the sun, the moon, the stars - and they found all they could in this way. The whole of nature at best could teach them only of a personal being who is the Ruler of the universe; it could teach nothing further. In short, out of the external world we can only get the idea of an architect, that which is called the design theory. It is not a very logical argument, as we all know; there is something childish about it, yet it is the only little bit of anything we can know about God from the external world - that this world required a builder. But this is no explanation of the universe: the materials of the world are before Him or Her, and this God wanted all these materials. The worst objection is that He or She must be limited by the materials. The builder could not have made a house without the materials of which it is composed. Therefore, He or She was limited by the materials; He or She could only do what the materials enabled Him or Her to do. Therefore the God that the design theory gives is at best only an architect - and a limited architect - of the universe; He or She is bound and restricted by the materials. He or She is not independent at

all. That much they had found out already, and many other minds would have rested at that. In other countries the same thing happened; the human mind could not rest there; the thinking, grasping minds wanted to go further, but those who were backward got hold of them and did not allow them to grow. But, fortunately, these Hindu sages were not the people to be knocked on the head; they wanted to get a solution, and now we find that they were leaving the external for the internal. (40)

The Vedas are full of passages which prove the existence of a personal God. The rishis who, through long devotion to God, had a peep into the unknown and threw their challenge to the world. It is only presumptuous people who have not walked in the path described by the rishis and who have not followed their teachings, that can criticize and oppose them. No one has yet come forward who would dare to say that he or she has properly followed their directions and has not seen anything and these rishis are liars. There are people who have been under trial at various times and have felt that they have not been forsaken by God. The world is such that if faith in God does not offer us any consolation it is better to commit suicide. (41)

All the sects in India believe... in God. Of course, their ideas of God will be different. The dualists believe in a personal God, and a personal God only. I want you to understand this word *personal* a little more. This word *personal* does not mean that God has a body, sits on a throne somewhere and rules this world, but means *saguna*, with qualities. There are many descriptions of the personal God. This personal God as the ruler, the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the universe is believed in by all sects. (42)

Ishwara is to be known from the Vedanta; all Vedas point to Him (who is the Cause, the Creator, the Preserver and Destroyer). Ishwara is the unification of the trinity known as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, which stand at the head of the Hindu pantheon. [*Brahma-Sutras, Shankaracharya's commentary*] (43)

Disciple: Is there any such statement in the Upanishads that Ishwara is an all-powerful person? But people generally believe in such an Ishwara.

Swami Vivekananda: The highest principle, the Lord of all, cannot be a person. The jiva [individual soul] is an individual and the sum total of jivas is the Ishwara... But Brahman transcends both the individual and collective aspects, the jiva and the Ishwara. In Brahman there is no part; it is for the sake of easy comprehension that parts have been imagined in it. That part of Brahman in which there is the superimposition of creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe, has been spoken of as Ishwara in the scriptures, while the other, unchangeable portion, with reference to which there is no thought of duality, is indicated as Brahman... When through meditation and other practices name and form are dissolved, then only the transcendent Brahman remains. Then the separate reality of jivas and the universe is felt no longer. Then it is realized that one is the eternal, pure essence of Intelligence, or Brahman.....

Disciple: How then is it true that Ishwara is an almighty person?

Swami Vivekananda: Humans are human in so far as they are qualified by the limiting adjunct of mind. Through the mind they have to understand and grasp everything, and therefore whatever they think is limited by the mind. Hence it is the natural tendency of human beings to argue, from the analogy of their own personality, the personality of Ishwara or God. Human beings can only think of their ideal as a human being. When, buffeted by sorrows in this world of disease and death, they are driven to desperation and helplessness, then they seek refuge with someone, relying on whom they may feel safe. But where is that refuge to be found?... The means may be different in different cases. Those who have faith in a personal God have to undergo spiritual practices holding on to that idea. If there is sincerity, through that will come the awakening of the lion of Brahman within. (44)

Cross reference to:

Taitt. Up., 3.1.1

Shwe. Up., 2.5, 3.8

f) The Impersonal God of the Upanishads Is Immanent in the Whole Universe

What is the effect of accepting... an impersonal Being, an impersonal deity? What shall we gain? Will religion stand as a factor in human life, our consoler, helper? What becomes of the desire of the human heart to pray for help to some being? That will all remain. The personal God will remain, but on a better basis. It has been strengthened by the impersonal.... Without the impersonal, the personal cannot remain. If you mean to say there is a Being entirely separate from this universe, who has created this universe out of nothing just by His or Her will, , that cannot be proved. Such a state of things cannot be. But if we understand the idea of the impersonal, then the idea of the personal can remain there also. This universe, in its various forms, is but the various readings of the same impersonal. When we read it with the five senses, we call it the material world. If there be a Being with more senses than five, he or she will read it as something else. If one of us gets an electric sense, he or she will see the universe as something else again. There are various forms of that Oneness of which all these various ideas of worlds are but various readings, and the personal God is the highest reading of that impersonal that can be attained to by the human intellect. (45)

In our thought of God there is human limitation, personality; with Shakti [God as Mother] comes the idea of one universal Power.... The Upanishads did not develop this thought, for Vedanta does not care for the God idea. (46)

The God preached in the Vedas is the formless, infinite, impersonal. (47)

What is salvation? To live with God. Where? Anywhere. Here this moment. One moment in infinite time is quite as good as any other moment. This is the old doctrine of the Vedas. (48)

Just as in the West we find this prominent fact in the political development of Western races that they cannot bear absolute rule, that they are always trying to prevent any one person from ruling over them and are gradually advancing to higher and higher democratic ideas, higher and

higher ideas of physical liberty, so in Indian metaphysics exactly the same phenomenon appears in the development of spiritual life. The multiplicity of gods gave place to one God of the universe, and in the Upanishads there is a rebellion even against that one God. Not only was their idea of many governors of the universe ruling their destinies unbearable, but it was also intolerable that there should be one person ruling this universe. This is the first thing that strikes us. The idea grows and grows until it attains its climax. In almost all of the Upanishads we find the climax coming at the last, and that is the dethroning of the God of the universe. The personality of God vanishes, the impersonality comes. God is no more a person, no more a human being, however magnified and exaggerated, who rules this universe, but has become an embodied principle in every being, immanent in the whole universe. (49)

Unless there is unity at the universal heart, we cannot understand variety. Such is the conception of the Lord in the Upanishads. Sometimes it rises even higher, presenting to us an ideal before which at first we stand aghast - that we are in essence one with God. (50)

Cross reference to:

Brihad. Up., 1.4.10

2.3.6

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

7.15.1

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS (part 2)

By Sister Gayatriprana of The Vedanta Society of Southern California

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PART II, SECTION 4: THE EVOLUTION OF THE VEDANTIC TEACHINGS ON GOD

Chapter 11: The Atman

a) The Aryan Was Always Seeking Divinity inside His or Her Own Self

The Aryans first began with the soul. Their ideas of God were hazy, indistinguishable, not very clear; but, as their idea of the human soul began to

be clearer, their idea of God began to be clearer in the same proportion. So the inquiry in the Vedas was always through the soul. All the knowledge the Aryans got of God was through the human soul; and, as such, the peculiar stamp that has been left upon their whole cycle of philosophy is that introspective search after divinity. The Aryan was always seeking divinity inside his or her own self. It became, in course of time natural, characteristic. It is remarkable in their art and in their commonest dealings. Even at the present time, if we take a European picture of someone in a religious attitude, the painter always makes the subject point his or her eyes upwards, looking outside of nature for God, looking up into the skies. In India, on the other hand, the religious attitude is always represented by making the subject close his or her eyes. He or she is, as it were, looking inwards. (1)

The Vedas say that the whole world is a mixture of independence and dependence, of freedom and slavery, but through it all shines the Soul - independent, immortal, pure, perfect, holy. For if it is independent, it cannot perish, as death is but a change and depends upon conditions; if independent, it must be perfect, for imperfection is again but a condition, and therefore dependent. (2)

That humanity and God are one is the constant teaching of the Vedas, but few are able to penetrate behind the veil and reach the realization of this truth. (3)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 10.129.1

Brihad. Up., 1.4.10a

Ka. Up., 1.2.18 and 2.1.1

Mand. Up., 2

b) The Higher and Higher Ideas of the Soul Found by the Aryans

1. The First Conception of the Soul Was as an Independent, Bright Body

The earliest idea is that when someone dies, he or she is not annihilated. Something lives and goes on living even after the person is dead. Perhaps it would be better to compare the three most ancient nations - the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the ancient Hindus - and take this idea from all of them. With the Egyptians and Babylonians, we find a sort of soul-idea - that of a double. Inside this body, according to them, there is another body which is moving and working here; and when the outer body dies, the double gets out and lives on for a certain length of time; but the life of the double is limited by the preservation of the outer body. If the body which the double has left is injured in any part the double is sure to be injured in that part. That is why we find among the ancient Egyptians such solicitude to preserve the dead body by embalming, building pyramids, etc. We find both with the Babylonians and the ancient Egyptians that this double cannot live on through eternity; it can, at best, live on for a certain time only; that is, just so long as the body it has left can be preserved.

The next peculiarity is that there is an element of fear connected with this double. It is always unhappy and miserable; its state of existence is one of extreme pain. It is again and again coming back to those who are living, asking for food and drink and enjoyments that it can no more have. It is wanting to drink of the waters of the Nile, the fresh waters which it can no more drink. It wants to get back those foods it used to enjoy while in this life; and, when it finds it cannot get them, the double becomes fierce, sometimes threatening the living with death and disaster if it is not supplied with such food.

Coming to Aryan thought, we at once find a very wide departure. There is still the double idea there, but it has become a sort of spiritual body; and one great difference is that the life of this spiritual body - the soul, or whatever you may call it - is not limited by the body it has left. On the contrary, it has obtained freedom from this body; and hence the peculiar Aryan custom of burning the dead. They want to get rid of the body which the person has left, while the Egyptian wants to preserve it by burying, embalming, and building pyramids. Apart from the most primitive system of doing away with the dead, amongst the nations advanced to a certain extent, the method of doing away with the bodies of the dead is a great indication of their idea of the soul. Wherever we find the idea of a departed soul closely connected with the idea of the dead body, we always find the tendency to preserve the body, and we also find burying in some form or other. On the other hand, with those in whom the idea has developed

that the soul is a separate entity from the body and will not be hurt if the dead body is even destroyed, burning is always the process resorted to. Thus we find among all ancient Aryan races burning of the dead, although the Parsees changed it to exposing the body on a tower. But the very name of the tower - dakhma - means a burning-place, showing that in ancient times they also used to burn their bodies. The other peculiarity is that among the Aryans there was no element of fear with these doubles. They are not coming down to ask for food or help; and when denied that help, they do not become ferocious or try to destroy those that are living. They are rather joyful, are glad at getting free. The fire of the funeral pyre is the symbol of disintegration.....

Of these two ideas we see at once that they are of a similar nature, the one optimistic, and the other pessimistic, being the elementary. The one is the evolution of the other. It is quite possible that the Aryans themselves had, or may have had, in very ancient times, exactly the same idea as the Egyptians. In studying their most ancient records we find the possibility of this very idea. But it is quite a bright thing, something bright. When someone dies his or her soul goes to live with the fathers and lives there enjoying their happiness. These fathers receive it with great kindness; this is the most ancient idea in India of a soul. (4)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 9.13 and 10.6

2. Beyond the Bright Body of the Soul, the Idea of the Freedom of the Soul Arose

In olden times, in all the ancient scriptures, the power [which manifests itself through the body] was thought to be a bright substance having the form of this body, and which remained even after this body fell. Later on, however, we find a higher idea coming - that this bright body did not represent the force. Whatsoever has form must be the result of combinations of particles and requires something else behind it to move it. If this body requires something which is not the body to manipulate it, the bright body, by the same necessity, will also require something other than itself to manipulate it. So that something was called the Soul, the Atman in Sanskrit. It was the same Atman which through the bright body, as it were, worked on the gross body outside. The

bright body is considered as the receptacle of the mind and the Atman is beyond that. It is not the mind, even; it works the mind, and through the mind the body. You have an Atman, I have another; each one of us has a separate Atman and a separate fine body. (5)

Later on this idea becomes higher and higher. Then it was found out that what they called the soul before was not really the Soul. This bright body, fine body, however fine it might be, was a body, after all; and all bodies must be made up of materials, either gross or fine. Whatever had form or shape must be limited and could not be eternal. Change is inherent in every form. How could that which is changeful be eternal? So, behind this bright body, as it were, they found something which was the Soul of human beings. It was called the Atman, the Self. This Self-idea then began. It had also to undergo various changes. By some it was thought that this Self was eternal; that it was very minute, almost as minute as an atom; that it lived in a certain part of the body, and when someone died his or her Self went away, taking along with it the bright body. There were other people who denied the atomic nature of the soul on the same ground on which they had denied that this bright body was the soul. (6)

Here we find the germ out of which a true idea of the soul could come. Here it was: where the real person is not the body, but the soul; where all ideas of an inseparable connection between the real person and the body were utterly absent - that a noble idea of the freedom of the soul could arise. And it was when the Aryans penetrated even beyond the shining cloth of the body with which the departing soul was enveloped and found its real nature of a formless, individual, unit principle, that the question inevitably arose: whence? (7)

3. The Unchanging, Indivisible Soul Is the True Individuality behind All Phenomena

In the dualistic form of Vedic doctrines, the earlier forms, there was a clearly defined, particular and limited soul of every being. There have been a great many theories about this particular soul in every individual, but the main discussion was between the ancient Vedantists and the ancient Buddhists, the former believing in the individual soul as complete in itself, the latter denying in toto the existence of such an individual soul.... It is pretty much the same discussion you have in Europe as to substance and quality, one set holding that behind the qualities there is some such thing as substance in which the qualities

inhere, and the other denying the existence of such a substance as being unnecessary, for the qualities may live by themselves. The most ancient theory of the soul, of course, is based on the argument of self-identity - "I am, I am" - that the I of yesterday is the I of today, and the I of today will be the I of tomorrow; that, in spite of all the changes that are happening to the body, I yet believe that I am the same I. This seems to have been the central argument of those who believe in a limited and yet perfectly complete, individual soul.

On the other hand the ancient Buddhists denied the necessity of such an assumption. They brought forward the argument that all that we know, and all that we can possibly know, are simply these changes. The positing of an unchangeable and unchanging substance is simply superfluous, and even if there were any such unchangeable thing, we could never understand it, nor should we ever be able to cognize it in any sense of the word....

In India this great question did not find its solution in very ancient times, because we have seen that the assumption of a substance which is behind the qualities and which is not the qualities, can never be substantiated; nay, even the arguments from self-identity, from memory - that I am the I of yesterday because I remember it, and therefore I have been a continuous something - cannot be substantiated. The other quibble that is generally put forward is a mere delusion of words. For instance, someone may take a long series of sentences such as "I do", "I go", "I dream", "I sleep", "I move", and here you will find it claimed that the doing, going, dreaming, etc. have been changing, but what remained constant was that "I". As such, they conclude that the "I" is something which is constant and an individual in itself, but all these changes belong to the body. This, though apparently very convincing and clear, is based upon the mere play on words. The "I" in the going, doing, and dreaming may be separate in black and white, but no one can separate them in his or her mind.

When I eat I think of myself as eating - I am identified with eating. When I run, I and the running are not two separate things. Thus the argument from personal identity does not seem to be very strong. The other argument from memory is also weak. If the identity of my being is represented by my memory, many things which I have forgotten are lost from that identity. And we know that people under certain conditions forget their whole past. In many cases of lunacy someone will think of him or herself as made of glass, or as being an animal. If the existence of that person depend upon memory, he or she has

become glass; which, not being the case, we cannot make the identity of the Self depend upon such a flimsy substance as memory. Thus we see that the soul as a limited, yet complete and continuing identity cannot be established as separate from the qualities. We cannot establish a narrowed-down, limited existence to which is attached a bunch of qualities.

On the other hand, the argument of the ancient Buddhists seems to be stronger - that we do not know, and cannot know, anything that is beyond the bunch of qualities. According to them, the soul consists of a bundle of qualities called sensations and feelings. A mass of such is what is called the soul, and this mass is constantly changing.

The Advaitist theory of the soul reconciles both these positions. The position of the Advaitist is that we cannot think of the substance as separate from the qualities, we cannot think of change and non-change at the same time; it would be impossible. But the very thing which is the substance is the quality; substance and quality are not two things. It is the unchangeable that is appearing as the changeable. The unchangeable substance of the universe is not something separate from it. The noumenon is not something different from phenomena, but it is the very noumenon which has become the phenomena. There is a soul which is unchanging; and what we call feelings and perceptions - nay, even the body - are the very soul seen from another point of view. We have got into the habit of thinking that we have bodies and souls and so forth, but really speaking, there is only One. (8)

4. The Atman or Self of Humanity Is beyond Body, Mind and Even Consciousness As We Know It

[In India] they became insistent upon this idea of the soul. It became [synonymous with] the idea of God.... If the idea of the soul begins to expand [humanity must arrive at the conclusion that it is beyond name and form].... The Indian idea is that the soul is formless. Whatever is form must break sometime or other. There cannot be any form unless it is the result of force and matter; and all combinations must dissolve. If such is the case, [if] your soul is [made up of name and form, it disintegrates] and you die, and you are no more immortal. If it is double, it has form and it belongs to nature and obeys nature's laws of birth and death.... They find that this [soul] is not the mind.... neither a double. (9)

The old Aryans believed in a soul, never that people are the body. (10)

It is the belief of the Hindu that the soul is neither mind nor body. What is it which remains stable - which can say, "I am I"? Not the body, for it is always changing; and not the mind, which changes more rapidly than any body, which never has the same thoughts for even a few minutes. (11)

Here I stand; and if I shut my eyes and try to conceive of my existence: "I", "I", "I", what is the idea before me? The idea of a body. Am I, then, nothing but a combination of material substances? The Vedas declare, " No." I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I shall not die. Here am I in this body; it will fall, but I shall go on living. I had also a past. The soul was not created, for creation means a combination which means certain future dissolution . If then the soul was created, it must die. (12)

The Vedas teach that people are spirit living in a body. The body will die, but people will not. The spirit will go on living. The soul was not created from nothing, for creation means a combination and that means certain future dissolution. If then the soul was created, it must die. Therefore, it was not created. (13)

In India, if people believe that they are spirit, soul, and not a body, then they are said to have religion, and not till then. (14)

The body is here, beyond that is the mind, yet the mind is not Atman; it is the fine body, the sukshma sharira, made of fine particles, which goes from birth to death, and so on; but behind the mind is the Atman, the soul, the Self of humanity. It cannot be translated by the word soul (or mind), so we have to use the word Atman; or, as Western philosophers have designated it, by the word Self. Whatever word you use, you must keep it clear in your mind that the Atman is separate from the mind as well as from the body. (15)

The first proposition that the Hindu boy learns [is] that the mind is matter, only finer. The body is gross, and behind the body is what we call the sukshma sharira, the fine body or mind. This also is material, only finer; and it is not the Atman.

I will not translate this word to you in English because the idea does not exist in Europe; it is untranslatable. The modern attempt of German philosophers is to translate the word Atman by the word Self, and until that word is universally accepted, it is impossible to use it. So, call it Self or anything, it is our Atman. This Atman is the real person behind. It is the Atman that uses the material mind as its instrument, its antahkarana, as is the psychological term for the mind. And the mind, by means of a series of internal organs, works the visible organs of the body. (16)

All Hindus believe that people are not only a gross material body; not only that within this there is the finer body, the mind; but there is something yet greater - for the body changes, and so does the mind - something beyond, the Atman - I cannot translate the word to you, for any translation would be wrong - that there is something beyond even this fine body, which is the Atman of humanity, which has neither beginning nor end, which knows not what death is. (17)

Mind is a mixture of sensations and feelings or action and reaction; so it cannot be permanent. The mind has a fine body and through this it works on the gross body. Vedanta says that behind the mind is the real Self. It accepts the other two, but posits a third, the eternal, the ultimate, the last analysis, the unit, where there is no further compound. Birth is re-composition, death is decomposition, and the final analysis is where the Atman is found; there being no further division possible, the perdurable is reached. (18)

The Vedas teach that the Atman, or Self, is the one undivided Existence. It is beyond mind, memory or thought, or even consciousness as we know it. From it are all things. (19)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up. peace chant

Kena Up., 1.4d)

The Nature of the Atman

1. All Our Impressions and Ideas Are Unified in the Atman

In olden times questions were asked about this Atman, about its nature. What is this Atman, this soul of humanity, which is neither the body nor the mind? Great discussions followed. Speculations were made, various shades of philosophic inquiry came into existence; and I shall try to place before you some of the conclusions that have been reached about this Atman. (20)

[The Hindus] believe that there must be an identity which does not change - something which is to humanity as banks are to a river - banks which do not change and without whose immobility we would not be conscious of the constantly moving stream. Behind the body, behind the mind, there must be something, viz. the soul, which unifies human beings. Mind is merely the fine instrument through which the soul - the master - acts on the body. (21)

[The Vedantic philosophers] all have a common psychology. Whatever their philosophy may have been, their psychology is the same in India, the old Sankhya psychology. According to this, perception occurs by the transmission of vibrations which first come to the external sense-organs, from the external sense-organs to the mind, from the mind to the buddhi, from the buddhi to the intellect, or something which is a unit, which they call the Atman. Coming to modern physiology, we know that it has found centers for all the different sensations. First it finds the lower centers; then the higher grade of centers, and these two centers correspond exactly to the internal organs and the mind, but no one center has been found which controls all the other centers. So, physiology cannot tell what unifies all these centers. Where do the centers get united? The centers in the brain are all different, and there is no one center which controls all the other centers; therefore, as far as it goes, Indian psychology stands unchallenged upon this point. We must have this unification, something upon which the sensations will be reflected to form a complete whole. Until there is that something, I cannot have any idea of you, or a picture, or anything else. If we had not that unifying something we would only see, then after a while breathe, then hear, and so on; and when I heard someone talking I would not see him or her at all, because all the centers are different. (22)

According to the Sankhya psychology which was universally accepted [at the time of the Vedas], in perception - in the case of vision, for instance - there

are, first of all, the instruments of vision, the eyes. Behind the instruments - the eyes - is the organ of vision, or indriya - the optic nerve and its centers, which is not the external instrument, but without which the eyes will not see. More still is needed for perception. The mind or manas must come and attach itself to the organ. And besides this, the sensation must be carried to the intellect or buddhi, the determinative, reactive state of the mind. When the reaction comes from the buddhi, along with it flashes the external world and egoism. Here, then, is the will; but everything is not complete. Just as every picture, being composed of successive impulses of light, must be united on something stationary to form a whole, so all the ideas in the mind must be gathered and projected on something that is stationary (relatively to the body and mind) - that is, on what is called the Soul, the Purusha, or Atman. (23)

Cross reference to:

Gita 2.18

2. The Atman - The Real Person - Is One and Infinite, the Omnipresent Spirit

The Vedas teach that the soul is infinite and in no way affected by the death of the body. (24)

The Vedanta philosophy teaches that humanity is not bound by the five senses. They only know the present, and neither the future nor the past; but as the present signifies both past and future, and all three are only demarcations of time, the present also would be unknown if it were not for something above the senses, something independent of time, which unifies the past and the future and in the present.

But what is independent? Not the body, for it depends on outward conditions; nor our mind, because the thoughts of which it is composed are caused. It is our soul. (25)

Time begins with mind; space is also in the mind. Causation cannot stand without time. Without the idea of succession there cannot be any idea of causation. Time, space, and causation, therefore, are in the mind, and as this Atman is beyond the mind and formless, it must be beyond time, beyond space, and beyond causation. Now, if it is beyond time, space and causation, it must be

infinite. Then comes the highest speculation in our philosophy. The infinite cannot be two. If the soul be infinite, there can be only one Soul, and all ideas of various souls - you having one soul, and I having another, and so forth - are not real. The real Person, therefore, is one and infinite, the omnipresent Spirit. And the apparent person is only a limitation of the real Person. In that sense the mythologies are true that the apparent person, however great he or she may be, is only a dim reflection of the real Person who is beyond. The real Person, the Spirit beyond cause and effect, not bound by space and time must, therefore, be free. He or she was never bound, and could not be bound. The apparent person, the reflection, is limited by time, space, and causation and is, therefore, bound. Or, in the language of some of our philosophers, he or she appears to be bound, but really is not. This is the reality of our souls, this omnipresence, this spiritual nature, this infinity. Every soul is infinite; therefore there is no question of birth and death. (26)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 6.2.1

3. Infinite Power Is Latent in the Atman of Individual Beings; Differences Are Only in Manifestation

Let us remember for a moment that, whereas in every other religion and in every other country, the power of the soul is entirely ignored - the soul is thought of as almost powerless and weak and inert - we in India consider the soul to be eternal and hold that it will remain perfect through all eternity. We should always bear in mind the teaching of the Upanishads. (27)

There is no inspiration; but, properly speaking, expiration. All powers and all purity and all greatness - everything - is in the soul. (28)

All sects in India are at one in this respect: that infinite power is latent in the jivatman (individualized soul); from the ant to the perfect human being there is the same Atman in all, the differences being only in manifestation. (29)

Innumerable have been the manifestations of power of the Spirit in the realm of matter, of the force of the Infinite in the domain of the finite; but the infinite Spirit itself is self-existent, eternal, and unchangeable. (30)

Cross reference to:

Ait. Up., 3.1.3

f) The World Will Be Revolutionized Only by the Great Thought of the Atman

[The Aryans] took the old idea of God, the governor of the universe, who is external to the universe, and first put Him or Her inside the universe. [To the Aryans, God] is not a God outside, but inside; and they took Him or Her from there into their own hearts. Here He or She is, in the heart of humanity, the Soul of our souls, the Reality in us. (31)

The character of the Hindu religion [as found in the Vedas]: to find God we must search our own heart. (32)

The God of Vedanta is not a monarch sitting on a throne, entirely apart. There are those who like their God that way - a God to be feared and propitiated. They burn candles and crawl in the dust before Him. They want a king to rule over them - they believe in a king in heaven to rule over them all. The king is gone - from the USA, at least. Where is the king of heaven now? Just where the earthly king is. In the USA, the king has entered every one of you. You are all kings in this country. You are all the gods. One God is not sufficient. You are all Gods, says the Vedanta. (33)

The idea of the glory of the soul you get alone in Vedanta, and there alone. It has ideas of love and worship and other things which we have in other religions, and more besides; but this idea of the soul is the life-giving thought, the most wonderful. There and there alone is the great thought that is going to revolutionize the world and reconcile the knowledge of the material world with religion. (34)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.10

Taitt. Up., 2.7.1

Shve. Up., 4.3

Cha. Up., 3.14.1

6.8.7

Mund. Up., 3.1.1-2

Mand. Up., 2

Gita 2.24

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PART II, SECTION 4: THE EVOLUTION OF THE VEDANTIC TEACHINGS ON GOD

Chapter 12: The Last Word of the Vedas: Abstract Unity, the One Soul Unifying the Manifestations of the Universe

a) The God of Vedanta Is Both Personal and Absolute

The writers of the Upanishads knew full well how the old ideas of God were not reconcilable with the advanced ethical ideas of the time; they knew full well that what the atheists were preaching contained a good deal of truth, nay great nuggets of truth; but, at the same time, they understood that those who wished to sever the thread that bound the beads, who wanted to build a new society in the air, would entirely fail.

We never build anew, we simply change places; we cannot have anything new, we only change the position of things. The seed grows into the tree, patiently and gently; we must direct our energies towards the truth and fulfill the truth that exists, not try to make new truths. Thus, instead of denouncing the old ideas of god as unfit for modern times, the ancient sages began to seek out the reality that was in them. The result was the Vedanta philosophy; and, out of the old deities, out of the monotheistic God, the ruler of the universe, they found yet higher and higher ideas in what is called the impersonal Absolute, they found oneness throughout the universe. (1)

God is everywhere preached in our [Hindu] religion. The Vedas teach God - both personal and impersonal. God is everywhere preached in the Gita. Hinduism is nothing without God. The Vedas are nothing without God. (2)

Our God is both personal and absolute. The absolute is "male" and the personal is "female". (3)

Abstract unity is the foundation of jnana-yoga. This is called Advaitism (without dualism or dvaitism) This is the cornerstone of the Vedanta philosophy, the alpha and omega. (4)

Monism, or absolute oneness is the very soul of Vedanta. (5)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up., 16

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

b) The Indian Mind Has Always Been Directed to the Realization of Absolute Unity

With the Hindus you will find one national idea - spirituality. In no other religion, in no other sacred books of the world will you find so much energy spent in defining the idea of God. They tried to define the ideal of soul so that no earthly touch might mar it. The Spirit must be divine; and Spirit understood as Spirit must not be made into a human being. The same idea of unity, of the realization of God, the omnipresent, is preached throughout. (6)

The one theme of the Vedanta philosophy is the search after unity. The Hindu mind does not care for the particular; it is always after the general, nay, the universal. (7)

The Eastern mind could not rest satisfied until it had found that goal, which is the end sought by all humanity - namely, unity. (8)

The philosophers of India do not stop at particulars; they cast a hurried glance at particulars and immediately start to find the generalized forms which will include all particulars. The search after the universal is the one search of Indian philosophy and religion. The jnani aims at the wholeness of things, at that one absolute and generalized Being, knowing which one knows everything. The bhakta wishes to realize that one generalized and abstract Person, in loving whom one loves the whole universe. The yogi wishes to have possession of that

one generalized form of Power, by controlling which one controls this whole universe. The Indian mind, throughout its history, has been directed to this kind of singular search after the universal in everything - in science, in psychology, in love, in philosophy. (9)

The real nature of the jiva (individual soul) is Brahman, [the Absolute]. When the veil of name and form vanishes through meditation, etc., then that idea is simply realized. This is the substance of pure Advaita. The Vedas, the Vedanta, and all other scriptures only explain this idea in different ways. (10)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.10 a

2.3.6

Cha. Up., 3.14.1

Mund. Up., 1 1.3

Mand. Up., 2

c) Material Manifestations Are Limited Versions of Brahman, to Which They Are All Subject

The Vedas are the only scriptures which teach the real absolute God, of which all other ideas of God are but minimized and limited visions. (11)

What makes this creation? God. What do I mean by the use of the English word God? Certainly not the word as ordinarily used in English - a good deal of difference. There is no other suitable word in English. I would rather confine myself to the Sanskrit word Brahman. It is the general cause of all these manifestations. What is this Brahman? It is eternal, eternally pure, eternally awake, the almighty, the all-knowing, the all-merciful, the omnipresent, the formless, the partless. It "creates" this universe. (12)

All that has name and form is subject to all that has none. This is the eternal truth the Shrutis preach. (13)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up., 16

Gita 2.24

d) The Desirability of Spiritual, Rather Than Material Monism

1. Absolute Oneness Is the Only System For People Who Want to Be Rational and Religious at the Same Time

Here are two parallel lines of existence - one of the mind, the other of matter. If matter and its transformations answer for all that we have, there is no necessity for supposing the existence of a soul. But it cannot be proved that thought has been evolved out of matter; and if a philosophical monism is inevitable, spiritual monism is certainly logical and no less desirable than a materialistic monism. (14)

In spite of people's curious notions about Advaitism, people's fright about Advaitism, it is the salvation of the world, because therein alone is to be found the reason of things. Dualism and other isms are very good as a means of worship, very satisfying to the mind; and maybe they have helped the mind onward; but if someone wants to be rational and religious at the same time, Advaita is the one system in the world for him or her. (15)

Ceremonials and symbols etc., have no place in our religion, which is the doctrine of the Upanishads, pure and simple. Many people think the ceremonials etc. help them in realizing religion. I have no objection.

Religion is that which does not depend upon books or teachers or prophets or saviors, and that which does not make us dependent in this or in any other lives upon others. In this sense the Advaitism of the Upanishads is the only religion. But savior, books, prophets, ceremonials etc. have their place. They may help many, as Kali worship helps me in my secular work. They are welcome. (16)

2. The Basis of Ethics Is Unity, Love

The Hindus say we must not do this or that because the Vedas say so, but the Christian is not going to obey the authority of the Vedas. The Christian says you must do this and not do that because the Bible says so. That will not be binding on those who do not believe in the Bible. But we must have a theory which is large enough to take in all these various grounds. (17)

The idea of oneness has had its advocates throughout all times. From the days of the Upanishads, the Buddhas, Christs and all the great preachers of religion down to our present day, in the new political aspirations and in the claims of the oppressed and downtrodden, and of all those who find themselves bereft of privileges - comes out the one assertion of this unity and sameness....

Applied to metaphysics, this question also assumes another form. The Buddhist declares that we need not look for anything which brings unity in the midst of these phenomena; we ought to be satisfied with this phenomenal world. This variety is the essence of life, however miserable and weak it may seem to be; we can have nothing more. The Vedantist declares that unity is the only thing that exists; variety is but phenomenal, ephemeral and apparent. "Look not to variety", says the Vedantist, "go back to unity." "Avoid unity; it is a delusion", says the Buddhist, "go to variety." The same differences of opinion in religion and metaphysics have come down to our own day for, in fact, the sum-total of the principles of knowledge is very small. Metaphysics and metaphysical knowledge, religion and religious knowledge, reached their culmination five thousand years ago, and we are merely reiterating the same truths in different languages, only enriching them sometimes by the accession of fresh illuminations. So this is the fight, even today. One side wants us to keep to the phenomenal, to all this variation, and point out, with great show of argument, that variation has to remain, for when that stops everything is gone. What we mean by life has been caused by variation. The other side, at the same time, valiantly points to unity.

Coming to ethics, we find a tremendous departure. It is, perhaps, the only science which makes a bold departure from this fight. For ethics is unity; its basis is love. It will not look at this variation. The one aim of ethics is this unity, this sameness. The highest ethical codes that humankind has discovered up to the present time know no variation; they have no time to stop to look into it; their one end is to make for that sameness. The Indian mind being more

analytical - I mean, the Vedantic mind - found this unity as a result of its analyses and wanted to base everything upon this one idea of unity. (18)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up., 5-6

Taitt. Up., 2.7.1

Ka. Up., 2.3.14-15

Cha. Up., 6.2.1

7.25

Mand. Up., 2

Npt. Up., 1.6

3. It Is More Logical to Explain the Universe by the One Force of Love, to Be Worshipped in Every Form, Which Is Its Temple

This idea of oneness is the great lesson India has to give; and, mark you, when this is understood, it changes the whole aspect of things, because you look at the world through other eyes than you have been doing before. And this world is no more a battlefield where each soul is born to struggle with every soul and the strongest gets the victory and the weakest goes to death. It becomes a playground where the Lord is playing like a child, and we are His or Her playmates, His or Her fellow-workers. This is only a play, however terrible, hideous, and dangerous it may appear. We have mistaken its aspect. When we have known the nature of the Soul, hope comes to the weakest, to the most miserable sinner. (19)

Thus the motive power of the whole universe, in whatever way it manifests itself, is that wonderful thing, unselfishness, renunciation, love, the real, the only living force in existence. Therefore the Vedantist insists upon that

oneness. We insist upon that explanation because we cannot admit the causes of the universe. If we simply hold that by limitation the same beautiful, wonderful love appears to be evil or vile, we find the whole universe explained by the one force of love. If not, two causes of the universe have to be taken for granted, one good and the other evil, one love and the other hatred. Which is the more logical? Certainly, the one force theory. (20)

The individual's life is in the life of the whole, the individual's happiness is in the happiness of the whole; apart from the whole, the individual's existence is inconceivable - this is an eternal truth and is the bedrock on which the universe is built. To move slowly towards the infinite Whole, bearing a constant feeling of intense sympathy and sameness with it, being happy with its happiness and being distressed by its affliction, is the individual's sole duty. Not only is it his or her duty, but in its transgression is his or her death, while compliance with this great truth leads to life immortal. (21)

Worship everything as God - every form is God's temple. All else is delusion. Always look within, never without. Such is the God Vedanta preaches, and such is Its worship. Naturally, there is no sect, nor creed, no caste, in Vedanta. (22)

Cross reference to:

Taitt. Up., 2.7.1

Gita 13.13

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PART II, SECTION 5: THE EVOLUTION OF VEDANTIC TEACHINGS ON
CAUSATION AND TRANSMIGRATION

Chapter 13: The Production of the Universe from Abstract Unity

a) Answers to the Question: Out of What Has All This Been Produced?

1. Vedanta in General Takes the Position That the Universe Is Projected by God out of That Which Already Existed

The Indian religions take a peculiar start... [for] ...at the first step in the Vedanta this question is asked: If this universe is existent, it must have come out of something, because it is very easy to see that nothing comes out of nothing, anywhere. All work that is done by human hands requires materials. If a house is built, the material was existing before; if any implements are made, the materials were existing before. So the effect is produced. Naturally, therefore, the first idea that this world was created out of nothing was rejected, and some material out of which this world was created was wanted. The whole history of religion, in fact, is this search after this material. (1)

The word creation in English has no equivalent in Sanskrit, because there is no sect in India which believes in creation as it is regarded in the West, as something coming out of nothing. It seems that at one time there were a few who had some such idea, but they were very quickly silenced. At the present time I do not know of any sect that believes this. What we mean by creation is projection of that which already existed. (2)

Out of what has all this been produced? Apart from the question of the efficient cause, or God; apart from the question that God created the universe, the great question of all questions is: Out of what did He or She create it? All the philosophies are turning, as it were, on this question. (3)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 3.14.1

6.2.2

2. The Dualists Believe That God Is Eternally Separate from Nature

[The dualist] solution is that nature, God, and the soul are eternal existences, as if three lines are running parallel eternally, of which nature and soul comprise what they call the dependent, and God the independent reality. Every soul, like every particle of matter, is perfectly dependent on the will of God.... [They say] that humans are beings who have first a gross body which dissolves very quickly, then a fine body which remains through eons, and then a jiva. This jiva, according to the Vedanta philosophy, is eternal, just as God is eternal. Nature is also eternal, but changefully eternal. The material of nature - prana and akasha - is eternal, but it is changing into different forms eternally. But the jiva is not manufactured of either akasha or prana; it is immaterial and, therefore, will remain for ever. It is not the result of any combination of prana and akasha; and whatever is not the result of combination will never be destroyed, because destruction is going back to causes. The gross body is a compound of akasha and prana and, therefore, will be decomposed. The fine body will also be decomposed after a long time, but the jiva is simple and will never be destroyed. It was never born, for the same reason. Nothing simple can be born. The same argument applies. That which is a compound only can be born. The whole of nature, comprising millions and millions of souls, is under the will of God. (4)

In dualism the universe is conceived of as a large machine set going by God. (5)

The dualists believe that God, who is the creator of the universe and its ruler, is eternally separate from nature, eternally separate from the human soul. God is eternal, nature is eternal, so are all souls. Nature and souls become manifested and change, but God remains the same....

He or She cannot create without materials, and nature is the material out of which He or She creates the whole universe. He or She creates the universe out of indiscrete or undifferentiated nature. (6)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 4.4.22

3. The Qualified Monists Believe That God Interpenetrates Nature

The real Vedanta philosophy begins with those known as the qualified non-dualists. They make the statement that the effect is never different from the

cause; the effect is but the cause reproduced in another form. If the universe is the effect and God is the cause, it must be God Him or Herself - it cannot be anything but that. They start with the assertion that God is both the efficient and the material cause of the universe; that He or She Him or Herself is the creator and is also the material out of which the whole of nature is projected.... The whole universe, according to this sect, is God Him or Herself. He or She is the material of the universe.... The God of the qualified non-dualists is also a personal God, the repository of an infinite number of blessed qualities, only He or She is interpenetrating everything in the universe. (7)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 3.14.1

Mund. Up., 1.1.2

1.1.7

2.1.1

4. The Highest Point of Vedanta Is Shankara's Idea of Maya

Vedanta and modern science both posit a self-evolving cause. In itself are all the causes. Take, for example, a potter shaping a pot. The potter is the primal cause, the clay the material cause, and the wheel the instrumental cause; but the Atman is all three. Atman is cause and manifestation too. The Vedantist says the universe is not real, it is only apparent. Nature is God seen through nescience. The pantheists say God has become nature or this world; the Advaitists affirm that God is appearing as this world, but It is not this world. (8)

The one sect of Advaitists that you see in modern India is composed of the followers of Shankara. According to Shankara, God is both the material and the efficient cause through maya, but not in reality. God has not become this universe; but the universe is not, and God is. This is one of the highest points to understand of Advaita Vedanta, the idea of maya. (9)

The work of the Upanishads seems to have ended at the point [of merging the two advancing lines of impersonal God and the impersonal Person]; the next was taken up by the philosophers. The framework was given them by the Upanishads, and they had to fill in the details. So many questions would naturally arise. Taking for granted that there is but one impersonal Principle which is manifesting Itself in all these manifold forms, how it is that the One becomes the many? It is another way of putting the same old question, which in its crude form comes into the human heart as the inquiry into the cause of evil, and so forth. Why does evil exist in the world and what is its cause? But the same question has now become refined, abstracted. No more is it asked from the platform of the senses why we are unhappy, but from the platform of philosophy. How is it that this one Principle becomes manifold? And the answer,... the best answer that India produced is the theory of maya which says that It really has not become manifold, that It really has not lost any of its real nature. Manifoldness is only apparent. Humans are only apparently persons, but in reality they are the impersonal Being. God is a person only apparently, but really It is the impersonal Being. (10)

The theory of maya is as old as the Rig Samhita. (11)

The idea of maya which forms, as it were, one of the basic doctrines of the Advaita Vedanta is, in its germs, found even in the Samhitas, and in reality all the ideas which are developed in the Upanishads are found already in the Samhitas in some form or other. Most of you are by this time familiar with the idea of maya and know that it is sometimes erroneously explained as illusion, so that when the universe is said to be maya, that also has to be explained as being illusion. The translation of the word is neither happy nor correct. Maya is not a theory; it is simply a statement of facts about the universe as it exists; and to understand maya we must go back to the Samhitas and begin with the conception in the germ. (12)

The word maya is used, though incorrectly, to denote illusion or delusion, or some such thing. But the theory of maya forms one of the pillars upon which the Vedanta rests; it is, therefore, necessary that it should be properly understood. I ask a little patience of you, for there is a great danger of its being misunderstood. The oldest idea of maya that we find in Vedic literature is the sense of delusion; but then [at that time] the real theory had not been reached. We find such passages as: "Indra, through his maya assumed the form

of Guru." [Brih. Up., 2.5.19] Here it is true that the word maya means something like magic, and we find various other passages always taking the same meaning. The word maya then dropped out of sight altogether. But in the meantime the idea was developing. Later the question was raised: " Why can't we know this secret of the universe?' And the answer given was very significant: "Because we talk in vain and because we are satisfied with the things of the senses, and because we are running after desires; therefore, we cover the reality with a mist." Here the word maya is not used at all, but we get the idea that the cause of our ignorance is a kind of mist that has come between us and the Truth. Much later on, in one of the latest Upanishads, we find the word maya reappearing, but this time a transformation has taken place in it, and a mass of new meaning has attached itself to the word. Theories had been propounded and repeated, other had been taken up, until at last the idea of maya became fixed. We read in the Svetashwatara Upanisad, "Know nature to be maya, and the ruler of this maya is the Lord himself." [4.10] (13)

The Svetashwatara Upanisad contains the word maya which developed out of prakriti. I hold that Upanisad to be at least older than Buddhism. (14)

Coming to our philosophers, we find that this word maya has been manipulated in various fashions, until we come to the great Shankaracharya. The theory of maya was manipulated a little by the Buddhists, too, but in the hands of the Buddhists it became very much like what we call idealism, and that is the meaning that is now generally given to the word maya. When the Hindu says that the world is maya, at once people get the idea that the world is an illusion. This interpretation has some basis, as coming through the Buddhist philosophers, because there was one section of philosophers who did not believe in an external world at all. But the maya of the Vedanta, in its last developed form, is neither idealism nor realism, nor is it a theory. It is a simple statement of facts - what we are and what we see around us.(15)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 1.164.46

Cha. Up., 3.14.1

6.2.3

b) Overcoming Our Limitations in Understanding Maya

1. The Intellect Cannot Answer the Riddle of How the Infinite Became the Finite

The one question that is most difficult to grasp in understanding the Advaita philosophy, and the one question that will be asked again and again, and that will always remain is: how has the Infinite, the Absolute, become the finite? I will now take up this question and, in order to illustrate it, I will use a figure: Here is the Absolute (a), and this is the universe (b). The Absolute has become the universe. By this is not only meant the material world, but the mental world, the spiritual world - heavens and earths and, in fact, everything that exists. Mind is the name of a change, and body the name of another change, and so on; and all these changes compose our universe. This Absolute (a) has become the universe (b) by coming through time, space and causation (c). This is the central idea of Advaita. Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen; and when It is seen on the lower side, It appears as the universe. Now, we at once gather from this that in the Absolute there is neither time, space, nor causation. The idea of time cannot be there, seeing that there is no mind, no thought. The idea of space cannot be there, seeing that there is no external change. What you call motion and causation cannot exist where there is only One. We have to understand this, and impress it upon our mind, that what we call causation begins after, if we may be permitted to say so, the degeneration of the Absolute into the phenomenal, and not before; and that our will, our desire, and all these things always come after that.

A stone falls and we ask why. This question is possible only on the supposition that nothing happens without a cause. I request you to make this very clear in your minds, for whenever we ask why anything happens, we are taking for granted that everything that happens must have a why; that is to say, it must have been preceded by something else which acted as the cause. This precedence and succession are what we call the law of causation. It means that everything in the universe is by turns a cause and an effect. It is the cause of

certain things which come after it and is itself the effect of something else which has preceded it. This is called the law of causation and is a necessary condition of all our thinking. We believe that every particle in the universe, wherever it be, is in relation to every other particle. There has been much discussion as to how this idea arose. In Europe there have been intuitive philosophers who believed that it was constitutional in humanity, others have believe it came from experience; but the question has never been settled. We shall see later on what Vedanta has to say about it. But first we have to understand that the very asking of the question why presupposes that everything around us has been preceded by certain other things and will be succeeded by certain other things. The other belief involved in this question is that nothing in the universe is independent, that everything is acted upon by something outside itself. Interdependence is the law of the whole universe.... Coming from subtleties of logic to the logic of our common plane, to commonsense, we can see this from another side, when we seek to know how the Absolute has become the relative. Supposing we know the answer, would the Absolute remain the Absolute? It would have become the relative. (16)

The Vedantist... has proved beyond all doubt that the mind is limited, that it cannot go beyond certain limits - beyond time, space and causation. As no one can jump out of his or her own self, so no one can go beyond the limits that have been put on him or her by the laws of time and space. Every attempt to solve the laws of causation, time and space would be futile, because the very attempt would have to be made by taking for granted the existence of these three. What does the statement of the existence of the world mean, then? "This world has no existence" - what is meant by that? It means it has no absolute existence. It exists only in relation to my mind, to your mind, and to the mind of everyone else. We see this world with the five senses, but if we had another sense, we would see in it something more. If we had another sense, it would appear as something still different. It has, therefore, no real existence; it has no unchangeable, immovable, infinite existence. Nor can it be called non-existence, seeing that it exists, and we have to work in and through it. It is a mixture of existence and non-existence. (17)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up. peace chant

2. The Surest Way of Arriving at Facts Is through Change in the Subjective

Here is another thing to learn. How do you know that nature is finite? You can only know this through metaphysics. Nature is that Infinite under limitations. Therefore it is finite. So there must come a time when we shall have conquered all environments. And how are we to conquer them? We cannot possibly conquer all the objective environments. We cannot. The little fish want to fly from its enemies in the water. How does it do so? By evolving wings and becoming a bird. The fish did not change the air or the water; the change was in itself. Change is always subjective. All through evolution you find that the conquest of nature comes by change in the subject. Apply this to religion and morality, and you will find that the conquest of evil comes by the change in the subjective alone. That is how the Advaita system gets its whole force - on the subjective side of humanity. To talk of evil and misery is nonsense, because they do not exist outside. If I am immune against all anger I never feel angry. If I am proof against all hatred I never feel hatred.

This is, therefore, the process by which to achieve that conquest - through the subjective, by perfecting the subjective. (18)

[There are] various levels and kinds of spiritual consciousness and of the superimposition or projection (adhyasa) of these inner states of being upon external nature creating, as it were, the universes experienced at different stages of spiritual awareness. It is thus that various truths have been revealed to saints and seers in accordance with their own various levels of consciousness and points of view - all of them equally valid, none of them revelations of absolute Truth, of which there can be no description and no revealer. (19)

A proper psychology is essential to the understanding of religion. To reach Truth by reason alone is impossible, because imperfect reason cannot study its own fundamental basis. Therefore the only way to study the mind is to get at facts, and then intellect will arrange them and deduce the principles. The intellect has to build the house, but it cannot do so without bricks and it cannot make the bricks. Jnana-yoga is the surest way of arriving at facts. (20)

3. The Struggle to Find Oneness Ends in Finding the God Within

One basic idea of the Vedanta [is] that everything which has name and form is transient. This earth is transient because it has name and form, and so must the heavens be transient, because there also name and form remain. A heaven which is eternal will be contradictory in terms, because everything that has name and form must begin in time, exist in time, and end in time. These are settled doctrines of the Vedanta, and as such, the heavens are given up. (21)

In reality there is One, but in maya it is appearing as many. In maya there is this variation. Yet even in maya there is always the tendency to get back to the One, as expressed in all ethics and all morality of every nation, because it is the constitutional necessity of the soul. It is finding its oneness; and this struggle to find this oneness is what we call ethics and morality. Therefore, we must always practice them.

Q: Is not the greater part of ethics taken up with the relation between individuals?

A: That is all it is. The Absolute does not come within maya.

Q: You say the individual is the Absolute; I was going to ask you whether the individual has knowledge.

A: The state of manifestation is individuality, and the light in that state is what we call knowledge. To use, therefore, this term knowledge for the light of the Absolute is not precise, as the Absolute state transcends relative knowledge.

Q: Does it include it?

A: Yes, in this sense: just as a piece of gold can be changed into all sorts of coins, so with this. The state can be broken up into all sorts of knowledge. It is the state of superconsciousness and includes both consciousness and unconsciousness. The person who attains that state has what we call knowledge. When someone wants to realize that consciousness of knowledge, he or she has to go a step lower. Knowledge is a lower state; it is only in maya that we can have knowledge. (22)

Beyond this maya the Vedantic philosophers find something which is not bound by maya; and if we can get there, we shall not be bound by maya. This idea, in some form or other, is the common property of all religions. But, with the Vedanta, it is only the beginning of religion, and not the end. The idea of a personal God, the ruler and creator of this universe or, as He or She has been styled, the ruler of maya or nature, is not the end of these Vedantic ideas; it is only the beginning. The idea grows and grows until the Vedantist finds that what he or she thought was standing outside is him or herself and is in reality within. He or She is the One who is free, but who through limitation thought he or she was bound. (23)

c) Different Viewpoints Depend Upon the Power of Perception

These are the two subjects for study for humanity, external and internal nature; and though at first these seem to be contradictory, yet external nature must, to the ordinary person, be entirely composed of internal nature, the world of thought. The majority of philosophies in every country, especially in the West, have started with the assumption that these two, matter and mind, are contradictory existences; but in the long run we shall find that they converge towards each other and in the end unite and form an infinite whole. So it is not that by this analysis I mean a higher or lower standpoint with regard to the subject. I do not mean that those who want to search after truth through external nature are wrong, nor that those who want to search after truth through internal nature are higher. These are the two modes of procedure. Both of them must live; both of them must be studied; and in the end we shall find that they meet. We shall see that neither is the body antagonistic to the mind, nor the mind to the body; although we find many persons who think that this body is nothing. In olden times every country was full of people who thought this body was a disease, a sin, or something of that kind. Later on, however, we see how, as it was taught in the Vedas, this body melts into mind and the mind into the body. (24)

In the ideas of the cosmos we find the ancient thinkers going higher and higher - from the fine elements they go to finer and more embracing elements, and from these particulars they come to one omnipresent ether; and from even that they go to an all-embracing force or prana; and through all this runs the principle that one is not separate from the others. It is the very ether that

exists in the higher forms of prana, or the higher form of prana concretes, so to say, and becomes ether; and that ether becomes grosser, and so on. (25)

Clear comprehension, inward realization, is no small matter.... When the mind proceeds to self-absorption in Brahman it passes through all these stages one by one to reach the absolute (nirvikalpa) state at last. In the process of entering into samadhi, first the universe appears as one mass of ideas; then the whole thing loses itself in a profound Om. Then even that melts away, even that seems to be between being and non-being. That is the experience of the eternal nada. And then the mind becomes lost in the reality of Brahman, and then it is done! All is peace....

Great men and women, like avatars, in coming back from samadhi to the realm of "I" and "mine" first experience the unmanifest nada, which by degrees grows distinct and appears as Om; and then from Omkara, the subtle form of the universe as a mass of ideas becomes experienced and, at last, the material universe comes into perception. (26)

The perfect one knows that this world is maya. Life is called samsara - it is the result of the conflicting forces acting upon us. Materialism says, "The voice of freedom is a delusion." Vedanta says, "The voice that tells of bondage is but a dream." Vedanta says, "We are free and not free at the same time." That means that we are never free on the earthly plane, but ever free on the spiritual side. (27)

Devotion to ceremonials, satisfaction in the senses, and forming various theories have drawn a veil between ourselves and the truth. This is another great landmark [in Vedic thought which] developed later on into that wonderful theory of maya of the Vedantists; this veil is the real explanation of the Vedanta, how the Truth was there all the time, it was only this veil that had covered it. (28)

The realist sees the phenomenon only, and the idealist looks to the noumenon. For the idealist, the truly genuine idealist, who has truly arrived at the power of perception, wherever he or she can get away from all idea of change, for him or her the changeful universe has vanished, and he or she has the right to say that it is all delusion, there is no change. The realist, at the same time, looks at

the changeful. For him or her the unchangeable has vanished, and he or she has a right to say that this is all real. (29)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 1.164.46

Brih. Up., 1.4.10

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

7.15.1

Npt. Up., 1.6

d) The Aryan Perception of the Process of Creation

1. Creation Is Without Beginning or End

The Vedas assert that the universe is infinite in space and eternal in duration. It never had a beginning, and it will never have an end. (30)

The Hindus received their religion through the revelation of the Vedas which teach that creation is without beginning or end. (31)

The ancient sages did not believe in a creation [out of nothing]. A creation implies producing something out of nothing. That is impossible. There was no beginning of creation as there was no beginning of time. God and creation are as two lines without end, without beginning, and parallel. Our theory of creation is, "It is, it was, and is to be." (32)

[The spiritual laws comprising the Vedas] may be said to be without end as laws, but they must have had a beginning. The Vedas teach us that creation is without beginning and without end. Science is said to have proved that the sum total of cosmic energy is always the same. Then, if there was a time when nothing existed, where was all this manifested energy? Some say it was in a potential form of God. In that case, God is sometimes potential and sometimes kinetic, which would make Him or Her mutable. Everything mutable is a compound, and

everything compound must undergo that change which is called destruction. So God would die, which is absurd. So there never was a time when there was no creation. (33)

Creation is without beginning - this is the doctrine of the Vedas. So long as there is a God, there is creation as well. (34)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 6.2.2

Gita 3.24

2. God Creates the World through the Eternal Ideas of the Vedas

Knowledge exists, people only discover it. The Vedas are the eternal knowledge through which God created the world. (35)

The commentator Sayanacharya says, somewhere in his works, "[God] created the whole universe out of the knowledge of the Vedas." (36)

The Creator Him or Herself is creating, preserving and destroying the universe with the help of... [Vedic] truths. (37)

Veda is of the nature of shabda or of idea. It is but the sum-total of ideas. Shabda, according to the old Vedic meaning of the term, is the subtle idea which reveals itself by taking the gross form later on. So, owing to the dissolution of creation, the subtle seeds of future creation become involved in the Vedas... In other words, all created objects began to take concrete shape out of the shabdas or ideas in the Veda. For in shabda, or idea, all gross objects have their subtle forms. Creation has proceeded in the same way in all previous cycles or kalpas. (38)

In the universe Brahma or Hiranyagarbha or the cosmic Mahat first manifested Himself as name, and then as form, i.e. as this universe. All this expressed sensible universe is the form behind which stands the eternal inexpressible sphota, the manifesting as logos or word. This eternal sphota, the essential, eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord

creates the universe; nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the sphota, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete, sensible universe. This sphota has one word as its only possible symbol and this is the Om. And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this Om, and the eternal sphota are inseparable; and, therefore, it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal Om, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created. (39)

Disciple: But, sir, how, in the absence of an actual concrete object can the shabda or idea be applied, and for what? And how can the names, too, be given at all?

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, that is what on first thought seems to be the difficulty. But, just think of this: supposing this jug breaks into pieces; does the idea of the jug become null and void? No, because the jug is the gross effect, of which the idea jug is the subtle state, or shabda state of the jug. In the same way, the shabda-state of every object is its subtle state; and the things we see, hear, touch or perceive in any manner are the gross manifestations of entities in the subtle or shabda state, just as we may speak of the effect and its cause. Even when the whole creation is annihilated, the shabda, as the consciousness of the universe or the subtle reality of all concrete things, exists in Brahman as the cause. At the point of creative manifestation, this sum total of causal entities vibrates into activity, as it were; and, as being the sonant, material substance of it all, the eternal, primal sound of Om continues to come out of itself. And then from the causal totality comes out first the subtle image or shabda-form of each particular thing and then its gross manifestation. Now, that causal shabda, or word-consciousness, is Brahman, and it is the Veda. This is the purport of Sayana. Do you now understand?

Disciple: No, sir, I can't clearly comprehend it.

Swami Vivekananda: Well, you understand, I suppose, that even if all the jugs in the universe were to be destroyed, the idea or shabda, jug would still exist. So, if the universe be destroyed - I mean, if all the things making up the universe were to be smashed to atoms - why should not the ideas, or shabdas representing all of them in consciousness, be still existing? And why cannot a second creation be supposed to come out of them in time?

Disciple: But, sir, if one cries out, "Jug! Jug!" that does not cause any jug to be produced!

Swami Vivekananda: No, nothing is produced if you or I cry out like that; but a jug must be revealed if the idea of it rises in Brahman, which is perfect in its creative determination. When we see even those established in the practice of religion (sadhakas) bring about by will-power things otherwise impossible of happening, what to speak of Brahman, with perfect creativeness of will? At the point of creation Brahman becomes manifest as shabda and then assumes the form or nada or Om. At the next stage, the particular shabdas or ideas that variously existed in previous cycles, such as bhuh, bhuvah, swah, cow, human being, etc., begin to come out of the Om. As soon as these appear in Brahman endowed with perfect will, the corresponding concrete things also appear, and gradually the diversified universe becomes manifest. (40)

Cross reference to:

Ka. Up., 1.2.15-16

3. The Projection of the Universe Proceeds from the Finer to the Grosser

In the Samhita, old and ancient as it is... we meet with the ...idea of force..... All the forces, whether you call them gravitation or attraction or repulsion, whether expressing themselves as heat or electricity or magnetism, are nothing but the variations of... unit energy. Whether they express themselves as thought reflected from the antahkarana, the inner organs of humanity, or as actions from an external organ, the unit from which they spring is what is called prana. Again, what is prana? Prana is spandana or vibration. (41)

The akasha, acted upon by repeated blows of prana, produces vayu or vibrations. This vayu vibrates; and the vibrations growing more and more rapid, result in friction, giving rise to heat, tejas. Then this heat ends in liquefaction, apah. Then that liquid becomes solid. We had ether [akasha] and motion [prana]; then came heat, then it became liquefied and then it condensed into gross matter. (42)

We see that the whole thing has been resolved into two, but there is not yet a final unity. There is the unity of force, prana; and there is the unity of matter, called akasha. (43)

This body is made of particles which we call matter, and it is dull and insentient. So is what the Vedantists call the fine body. The fine body, according to them, is a material, but transparent body, made of very fine particles, so fine that no microscope can see them. What is the use of that? It is the receptacle of the fine forces. Just as this gross body is the receptacle of the gross forces, so the fine body is the receptacle of the fine forces which we call thought in its various modifications. First is the body, which is gross matter with gross force. Force cannot exist without matter. It requires some matter to exist; so the gross forces work in the body, and those very forces become finer; the very force which is working in a gross form works in a fine form and becomes thought. There is no distinction between them; simply, one is the gross and the other the fine manifestation of the same thing. Neither is there any distinction between this fine body and the gross body. The fine body is also material, only very fine matter; and, just as this gross body is the instrument that works the gross forces, so the fine body is the instrument that works the fine forces.

From where do all these forces come? According to Vedanta philosophy, there are two things in nature, one of which they call akasha, which is the substance, infinitely fine; and the other they call prana, which is the force. Whatever you see or feel or hear, such as air, earth, or anything - is material, the product of akasha. It goes on and becomes finer and finer, or grosser and grosser, changing under the action of prana. Like akasha, prana is omnipresent and interpenetrating everything. Akasha is like water, and everything else in the universe is like blocks of ice made out of that water and floating in the water; and prana is the power that changes this akasha into all these various forms. The gross body is the instrument made out of akasha for the manifestation of prana in gross forms such as muscular motion, or walking, sitting, talking, and so forth. That fine body is also made out of akasha, a very fine form of akasha, for the manifestation of the same prana in the finer form of thought. So, first there is this gross body. Beyond that is this fine body, and beyond that there is the jiva, the real Person. Just as the nails can be pared off many times and yet are still part of our bodies, not different, so is our gross body related to the fine. It is not that human beings have a fine and also a gross body; it is one body only; the part which endures longer is the fine body and that which

dissolves sooner is the gross. Just as I can cut this nail any number of times, so, millions of times I can shed this gross body, but the fine body will remain. (44)

Something cannot be made out of nothing. Nor can something be made to go back to nothing. It may become finer and finer and then again grosser and grosser. The raindrop is drawn from the ocean in the form of vapor and drifts away through the air to the mountains; there it changes back again into water and flows back through hundreds of miles down to the mother ocean. The seed produces the tree. The tree dies, leaving only the seed. Again it comes up as another tree, which again ends in the seed, and so on. Look at a bird, how from the egg it springs, becomes a beautiful bird, lives its life and then dies, leaving only other eggs containing germs of future birds. So with the animals, so with human beings. Everything begins, as it were, from certain seeds, certain rudiments, certain fine forms, and becomes grosser and grosser as it develops; and then again it goes back to that fine form and subsides. The whole universe is going on in this way. There comes a time when the whole universe melts down and becomes finer and at last disappears entirely, as it were; but remains as superfine matter. We know through modern science and astronomy that this earth is cooling down and in course of time it will become very cold; and then it will break to pieces and become finer and finer until it becomes ether once more. Yet the particles will all remain to form the material out of which another earth will be projected. Again that will disappear and another will come out. So this universe will go back to its causes; and again its materials will come together and take form, like the wave that goes down, rises again, and takes shape. The acts of going back to causes and coming out again are called in Sanskrit *sankocha* and *vikasha*, which mean shrinking and expanding. To use the more accepted words of modern science, they are involved and evolved. You hear about evolution, how all forms grow from lower ones, slowly growing up and up. This is very true; but each evolution presupposes an involution. We know that the sum total of energy that is displayed in the universe is the same at all times and that matter is indestructible. By no means can you take away one particle of matter. You cannot take away a foot-pound of energy or add one. The sum total is always the same. Only the manifestation varies, being involved and evolved. So, this cycle is the evolution out of the involution of the previous cycle, and this cycle will again be involved, getting finer and finer; and out of that will come the next cycle. The whole universe is going on in this fashion. (45)

[God's] knowledge comes out at the beginning of a cycle and manifests itself; and when the cycle ends, it goes down into minute form. When the cycle is projected again, that knowledge is projected again with it. (46)

Rig Veda, 10.129

Brih. Up., 2.4.10

Ka. Up., 2.3.2

4. Creation in Cycles Is a Common Ground of Belief among Vedantists

I think [all Vedantists] are able to agree upon [this point]: we believe in nature being without beginning and without end, only at psychological periods this gross material of the outer universe goes back to its finer state, thus to remain for a certain period, again to be projected outside to manifest all this infinite panorama we call nature. This wavelike motion was going on even before time began, through eternity, and will remain for an infinite period of time. (47)

Creation in cycles is a common ground of belief among the Vedantists. The whole of creation appears and disappears; it is projected and becomes grosser and grosser; and at the end of an incalculable period of time, it becomes finer and finer and dissolves and subsides, and then comes another period of rest. Again it begins to appear and goes through the same process. They postulate the existence of a material which they call akasha, which is something like the ether of the scientists, and a power which they call prana. About this prana they declare that by its vibration the universe is produced. When a cycle ends all this manifestation of nature becomes finer and finer and dissolves into that akasha, which cannot be seen or felt, yet out of which everything is manufactured. All the forces that we see in nature, such as gravitation, attraction or repulsion, or as thought, feeling and nervous motion - all these various forces resolve into that prana and the vibration of the prana ceases. In that state it remains until the beginning of the next cycle. Prana then begins to vibrate; and that vibration acts upon the akasha and all these forms are thrown out in regular succession. (48)

When this cycle ends, all that we call solid will melt away into the next form, the next finer or the liquid form; that will melt into the gaseous and that state

into finer and more uniform heat vibrations, and all will melt back into the original akasha; and what we now call attraction, repulsion and motion, will slowly resolve into the original prana. Then this prana is said to sleep for a period, again to emerge and to throw out all those forms; and when this period ends, the whole thing will subside again. Thus this process of creation is going down and coming up, oscillating backwards and forwards. In the language of modern science, it is becoming static during one period and during another it is becoming dynamic. At one time it becomes potential and at the next period it become active. This alteration has gone on through eternity. (49)

At the beginning of a cycle, akasha is motionless, unmanifested. Then prana begins to act more and more, creating grosser and grosser forms out of akasha - plants, animals, people, stars, and so on. After an incalculable time, this evolution ceases and involution begins; everything begins, everything being resolved back through finer and finer forms into the original akasha and prana, when a new cycle follows. Now, there is something beyond akasha and prana. Both can be resolved into a third thing called Mahat - the cosmic mind. This cosmic mind does not create akasha and prana, but changes itself into them. (50)

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PART II, SECTION 5: THE EVOLUTION OF VEDANTIC TEACHINGS ON CAUSATION AND CREATION

Chapter 14: The Law of Causation and Transmigration

a) Subject to the Great Law of Spiritual Evolution, the Human Spirit Finally Attains Release

Another [Aryan] idea is that when the body dies the soul [which] is immortal remains beatified. The very oldest Aryan literature - whether German or Greek - has this idea of a soul. The idea of the soul has come from the Hindus. (1)

The Vedas teach that the soul of humanity is immortal. The body is subject to the law of growth and decay; what grows must of necessity decay. But the indwelling Spirit is related to the infinite and eternal life; it never had a beginning and it will never have an end. One of the chief distinctions between the Vedic and the Christian religion is that the Christian religion teaches that each human soul had its beginning at its birth into this world; whereas the Vedic religion asserts that the spirit of humanity is an emanation of the eternal Being and had no more a beginning than God Him or Herself. Innumerable have been and will be its manifestations in its passage from one personality to another,

subject to the great law of spiritual evolution, until it reaches perfection, where there is no more change. (2)

That race which spent the best part of its energies in the inquiry into the nature of humanity as thinking beings - the Indo-Aryan - soon found out that beyond this body, beyond even the shining body which their forefathers longed for, is the real person, the principle, the individual which clothes itself with this body and throws it off when it is worn out. Was such a principle created? If creation means something coming out of nothing, their answer was a decisive "no". This soul is without birth and without death; it is not a compound or combination, but an independent individual; and as such it cannot be created nor destroyed. It is only traveling through various states.

Naturally, the question arises: where was it all this time? The Hindu philosophers say, "It was passing through different bodies in the physical sense or, really and metaphysically speaking, passing through different mental planes."
(3)

There are certain doctrines [of the Upanishads] which are agreed to by all the sects in India. First, there is the doctrine of samsara or reincarnation of the soul.... This jiva or Atman - jivatman as it is called by various sects - is eternal, without beginning and... it is going from birth to birth until gets a final release.
(4)

You must keep it clear in your mind that the Atman is separate from the mind as well as from the body, and that this Atman goes through birth and death, accompanied by the mind - the sukshma sharira - and when the time comes that it has attained to all knowledge and manifested itself to perfection, then this going from birth to death ceases for it. Then it is at liberty either to keep that mind, the sukshma sharira, or to let it go forever and remain independent and free throughout all eternity. The goal of the soul is freedom; that is the one peculiarity of our religion [Vedanta]. (5)

b) The Development of the Aryan Theory of Causation

1. The Rsis Perceived the Impermanence of Heaven

When the ancient Aryans became dissatisfied with the world around them they naturally thought that after death they would go to some place where there would be all happiness without any misery; these places they multiplied and called swargas - the word may be translated as heavens - where there would be joy forever, the body would become perfect and also the mind, and there they would live with their forefathers. (6)

The oldest idea which we get in the Samhita portion of the Vedas is only about heaven where they had bright bodies and lived with the fathers. (7)

Various heavens are spoken of the Brahmana portions of the Vedas, but the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads gives up the idea of going to heaven. Happiness is not in this heaven or in that heaven. Places do not signify anything. (8)

In the Upanishads we see a tremendous departure made. It is there declared that these heavens in which humans live with the ancestors cannot be permanent, seeing that everything which has name and form must die. If there are heavens with forms, these heavens must vanish in course of time; they may last millions of years, but there must come a time when they will have to go. With this idea came another, that these souls must come back to earth, and that heavens are places where they enjoy the results of their good works, and after these effects are finished they come back into the earth-life again. (9)

In the Upanishads there is the doctrine of karma, [which] is the law of causation applied to conduct. According to this doctrine, we must work forever and the only way to get rid of pain is to do good works and thus to enjoy the good effects; and after living a life of good works, die and go to heaven and live forever in happiness. Even in heaven we could not be free from karma, only it would be good karma, not bad. (10)

One thing is clear from this - that humankind had a perception of the philosophy of causation even at an early time. Later on we shall see how our philosophers bring that out in the language of philosophy and logic; but here it is almost in language of children. One thing that you may remark in reading these books is that it is all internal perception. (11)

[The] Aryan heavens and hells were all temporary, because no effect can outlast its cause and no cause is eternal; therefore all effects must come to an end. (12)

(In the Upanishads) heavens and earth are all thrown off in order to come to Light. (13)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda 9.113

Mund. Up., 1.2.,5 and 7

Mand. Up, 2

2. As Heaven Is Finite, Even for the Gods, Humanity Must Attain Liberation Here on This Earth

As soon as philosophy came people found that [the idea of a heaven of enjoyment only] was impossible and absurd. The very idea of an infinite in place would be a contradiction in terms, as a place must begin and continue in time. Therefore they had to give up that idea. They found out that the gods who lived in these heavens had once been human beings on earth, who through their good works became gods; and the godhoods, as they call them, were different states, different positions; none of the gods spoken of in the Vedas are permanent individuals.

For instance, Indra and Varuna are not the names of certain persons, but the names of positions as governors, and so on. The Indra who had lived before is not the Indra of the present day; he has passed away, and another man from earth has filled his place. So with all the other gods. There are certain positions which are filled successively by human souls who have raised themselves to the conditions of gods, and yet even they die. In the old Rig Veda we find the word immortality used with regard to these gods, but later on it is dropped entirely, for they found that immortality which is beyond time and space cannot be spoken of with regard to any physical form, however subtle it may be. (14)

Heavens are only other states of existence with added senses and heightened powers.

All higher bodies are also subject to disintegration as is the physical. Death comes to all forms of bodies in this and other lives. Devas are also mortal and can only give enjoyment.

Behind all devas there is the unit Being - God, as behind this body there is something higher that feels and sees. (15)

[Vedanta] also has heavens and hells, but these are not infinite, for in the very nature of things they cannot be. If there were any heavens they would be only repetitions of this world of ours on a bigger scale, with a little more happiness and a little more enjoyment, but that is all the worse for the soul. There are many of these heavens. Persons who do good works here with the thought of reward, when they die, are born again as gods in one of these heavens, as Indra and others. These gods are the names of a certain state. They also had been men and by good works have become gods; and these different names that you read of, such as Indra and so on, are not the names of the same person. There will be thousands of Indras. Nahusha was a great king and when he died he became Indra. (16)

Brahma is the name of a high position among the devas to which every one can aspire by virtue of meritorious deeds. (17)

[The gods] mean certain states, certain offices. For instance, Indra, the king of gods, means a certain office. Some soul which was very high has gone to fill that post in this cycle; and after this cycle he will be born again as man and come down to this earth, and the man who is very good in this cycle will go and fill that post in the next cycle. So with all these gods; they are certain offices which have been filled alternately by millions and millions of souls who, after filling those offices, came down and became men. Those who do good works in this world and help others, but with an eye to reward, hoping to reach heaven or to get praise from their fellow humans must, when they die, reap the benefit of those good works - they become these gods. (18)

The devas are like your angels, only some of them from time to time become wicked and find that the daughters of humans are good. Our deities are

celebrated for this sort of thing. What can you expect of them? They are simply hospital-makers here [on earth] and have no more knowledge than other people. They do some good work with the result that they become devas. They do their good work for fame or name or some reward, and they get this reward, dreaming that they are in heaven and doing all these things. Then there are demons who have done evil in this life. But our books say that these dreams will not last very long, and then they will either come back and take the old dream again as human beings, or still worse. Therefore, according to these books, it behooves every sensible, right-thinking person, once for all, to brush aside all such foolish ideas as heavens and hells. (19)

[Godhood] is a position; one soul become high and takes Indra's position, and remains in it only a certain time; then he dies and is born again as a human being. But the human body is the highest of all. Some of the gods may try to go higher and give up all ideas of enjoyment in heavens; but, as in this world wealth and position and enjoyment delude the vast majority, so do most of the gods become deluded also; and, after working out their good karmas, they fall down and become human beings again. This earth, therefore, is the karma-bhumi; it is this earth from which we attain to liberation. So even these heavens are not worth attaining to. (20)

Cross reference to:

Ka. Up., 2.1.10

Mund. Up., 1.2.10

c) The Dualist Scheme of the Transmigration of Souls

1. The Results of Action Condition the Life of Humanity

What comes after death? All the Vedantic philosophers admit that this jiva is by its own nature pure. But ignorance covers up its real nature, they say. As by evil deeds it has covered itself with ignorance, so by good deeds it become conscious of its own nature again. Just as it is eternal, so its nature is pure. The nature of every being is pure. (21)

Both the dualists and the qualified dualists admit that the soul is by its nature pure, but through its own deeds it becomes impure. The qualified monists express it more beautifully than the dualists by saying that the soul's purity and perfection become contracted and again become manifest, and what we are trying to do is to re-manifest the intelligence, the purity, the power which is natural to the soul. Souls have a multitude of qualities, but not that of almightiness or all-knowingness. Every wicked deed contracts the nature of the soul and every good deed expands it; and these souls are all parts of God. (22)

According to [the popular idea of dualism] we have a body, of course, and behind the body there is what they call the fine body. This fine body is also made of matter, only very fine. It is the receptacle of all our karma, of all our actions and impressions, which are ready to spring up into visible forms. Every thought that we think, every deed that we do, after a certain time becomes fine, goes into seed form, so to speak, and lives in the fine body in a potential form; and after a time it emerges again and bears its results. These results condition the life of humanity. Thus it molds its own life. Humans are not bound by any other laws excepting those they make for themselves. Our thoughts, our words and deeds are the threads of the net which we throw around ourselves, for good or for evil. Once we set in motion a certain power we have to take the full consequences of it. This is the law of karma. (23)

Cross reference to:

Mai. Up., 6.34

Cha. Up., 5.10, 1-2

6.8.6

2. The Evolving Human Soul Sojourns in Low as Well as High Forms

The dualist claims that the soul after death passes on to the solar sphere, thence to the lunar sphere, then to the electric sphere. Thence he is accompanied by a purusha to Brahmaloaka. (Thence, says the Advaitist, he goes to nirvana) (24)

People [in the USA] think it too horrible that a human being could come up from an animal. Why, what will be the end of these millions of animals? Are they nothing? If we have a soul, so have they; and if they have none, neither have we. It is absurd to say that humanity alone has a soul and animals have none. I have seen people worse than animals.

The human soul has sojourned in lower and higher forms, migrating from one to another, according to the samsaras or impressions, but it is only in the highest form as a human being that it attains to freedom. The human form is higher than even the angel form, and of all forms it is the highest; humanity is the highest being in creation because it attains to freedom. (25)

The householder has five objects for worship. One of them is learning and teaching. Another is worship of dumb creatures. It is hard for Americans to understand the last worship and it is difficult for Europeans to appreciate the sentiment. Other nations kill animals wholesale and kill one another; they exist in a sea of blood. A European said that the reason why in India animals are not killed is because it was supposed that they contained the spirits of ancestors. This reason was worthy of a savage nation who are not many steps from the brute. The fact is that the statement was made by a set of atheists in India who thus carped at the Vedic idea of non-killing and transmigration of souls. (26)

d) The Non-Dualist Contemplates the Projection of Various Spheres of Existence from the One

Now, on the Advaitic side, it is held that the soul neither comes nor goes, and that all these spheres or layers of the universe are only so many varying products of akasha and prana. That is to say, the lowest or most condensed is the solar sphere, consisting of the visible universe in which prana appears as physical force and akasha as sensible matter. The next is called the lunar sphere, which surrounds the solar sphere. This is not the moon at all, but the habitation of the gods; that is to say, prana appears in it as psychic forces and akasha as tanmatras or fine particles. Beyond this is the electric sphere, that is to say, a condition in which the prana is almost inseparable from akasha, and you can hardly tell whether electricity is force or matter. Next is Brahmaloaka, where there is neither prana nor akasha, but both are merged in the mindstuff, the primal energy. And here - there being neither prana nor akasha - the jiva

contemplates the whole universe as samashti or the sum total of mahat or mind. This appears as a purusha, an abstract universal soul, yet not the Absolute, for still there is multiplicity. From this the jiva finds at last that Unity which is the end. Advaitism says that these are the visions which rise in succession before the jiva, who itself neither comes nor goes, and that in the same way this vision has been projected. The projection (srishti) and dissolution must take place in the same order, only one means going backward and the other coming out. (27)

The Vedantist says that human beings are neither born nor dies, nor goes to heaven, and that reincarnation is really a myth with regard to the soul. The example is given of [the pages of a] book being turned over. It is the book that evolves, not the human being. Every soul is omnipresent, so where can it come or go? These births and death are changes in nature which we are mistaking for changes in us.

Reincarnation is the evolution of nature and the manifestation of the God within. (28)

The Atman never goes nor comes, is never born and never dies. It is nature moving before the Atman, and the reflection of this motion is on the Atman; and the Atman ignorantly thinks it is moving, and not nature. When the Atman thinks that, it is in bondage; but when it comes to find that it never moves, that it is omnipresent, then freedom comes. This Atman in bondage is called jiva. Thus you see that when it is said that the Atman comes and goes, it is said only for facility of understanding, just as for convenience in studying astronomy you are asked to suppose that the sun moves around the earth, though such is not the case. So the jiva, the soul, comes to higher or lower states. This is the well-known law of reincarnation; and this law binds all creation. (29)

You must always remember that the one central idea of Vedanta... is oneness. There are no two in anything - no two lives, nor even two different kinds of lives for the two worlds. You will find the Vedas speaking of heavens and things like that at first; but later on, when they come to the highest ideals of their philosophy, they brush away all these things. There is but one life, one world, one existence. Everything is that One; the difference is in degree, not in kind. The difference between our lives is not in kind. The Vedanta entirely denies such ideas as that animals are separate from humans, and that they were made and created by God to be used for our food. (30)

The... idea of unity, of the realization of God, the omnipresent, is preached throughout the [Hindu religion]. [The Hindus] think it is all nonsense to say that God lives in heaven, and all that. It is a mere, human, anthropomorphic idea. All the heaven that ever existed is now and here. One moment in infinite time is quite as good as any other. If you believe in a God, you can see Him or Her even now. (31)

e) Vedanta Seeks the Unity beyond Good and Evil ,Reward and Punishment

1. The Idea of Satan Was Rejected by Indian Thinkers Who Did not Want to Throw the Blame on Someone Else

The idea that souls come back is already [in the Upanishads]. Those persons who do good work with the idea of a result get it, but the result is not permanent. There we get the idea of causation very beautifully put forward, that the effect is only commensurate with the cause. As the cause is, so the effect will be. The cause being finite, the effect must be finite. If the cause is eternal, the effect can be eternal; but all these causes - doing good work, and all other things - are only finite causes and as such cannot produce infinite result.

We come now to the other side of the question: as there cannot be an eternal heaven, on the same grounds there cannot be an eternal hell. Suppose I am a very wicked person, doing evil every minute of my life. Still, my whole life here, compared with my eternal life is nothing. If there be an eternal punishment, it will mean that there is an infinite effect produced by a finite cause, which cannot be. If I do good all my life, I cannot have an infinite heaven; it would be the same mistake. (32)

I may tell you that the idea of hell does not occur in the Vedas anywhere. It comes with the Puranas much later. (33)

Om tat sat is the only thing beyond maya; but God exists eternally. As long as the Niagara Falls exist, the rainbow will exist; but the water continually flows away. The falls are the universe; and the rainbow is personal God; and both are eternal. While the universe exist, God must exist. God creates the universe, and the universe creates God; and both are eternal. Maya is neither existence nor non-existence. Both the Niagara Falls and the rainbow are eternally

changeable... Brahman seen through maya. Persians and Christians split maya into two and call the good half God and the bad half the devil. Vedanta takes maya as a whole and recognizes a unity behind it - Brahman. (34)

In the religion of Persia there was the idea of Satan, but in India, no conception of Satan. (35)

The devil is recognized in the Vedas as the Lord of Anger.... But while Satan is the Hamlet of the Bible, in the Hindu scriptures the Lord of Anger never divides creation. He always represents defilement, never duality. (36)

Satan... did not have much of a chance [in India]. Why? Because they were very bold in religion. They were not babies. Have you seen that characteristic of children? They are always trying to throw the blame on someone else. Baby minds [are] trying, when they make a mistake, to throw the blame upon someone [else]. On the one hand we say, "Give me this, give me that." On the other hand we say, "I did not do this; the devil tempted me. The devil did it." That is the history of mankind, weak mankind. (37)

Devil worship is not a part of the Hindu religion. (38)

In India we see this Satan in the most ancient part of the Vedas. He just (appears) and immediately disappears.... In the Vedas the bad god got a blow and disappeared. He is gone, and the Persians took him. We are trying to make him leave the world altogether. Taking the Persian idea, we are going to make a decent gentleman of him, give him a new body. There was the end of the Satan idea in India. (39)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 10.125

2. The Impersonal Idea of the Upanishads Removed the Monotheistic Idea of Fear and Sin

Zoroaster was a reformer of some old religion. Even Ormuzd and Ahriman, with him, were not supreme; they were only manifestations of the Supreme. That older religion must have been Vedantic. (40)

[Humanity began to progress spiritually] when it kicked the devil out. It stood up and took the responsibility of the misery of the world upon its own shoulders. But whenever people looked [at the] past and the future and [at the] law of causation, they knelt down and said, "Lord, save us, [Thou] who art our creator, our father, and dearest friend." That is poetry, but not very good poetry, I think. Why not? It is the painting of the Infinite, [no doubt]... [but] it is the infinite of the senses, of the muscles. (41)

In the case of [the Vedic god] Varuna there is... the germ of one idea... which was quickly suppressed by the Aryan mind, and that was the idea of fear.... We read that they are afraid they have sinned and ask Varuna for pardon. These ideas were never allowed... to grow on Indian soul, but the germs were there, sprouting; the idea of fear, and the idea of sin. This is the idea, as you all know, of what is called monotheism. (42)

The worst punishment, according to the Vedas, is coming back to earth, having another chance in the world. From the very first we see that the idea is taking an impersonal turn. The ideas of punishment and reward are very material, and they are only consonant with the idea of a human God who loves one and hates another, just as we do. Punishment and reward are only admissible with the existence of such a God. They had such a God in the Samhita, and there we find the idea of fear entering; but as soon as we come to the Upanishads the idea of fear vanished and the impersonal idea takes its place. It is naturally the hardest thing for people to understand, this impersonal idea, for they are always clinging on to the person. (43)

3. The Advancing Consciousness of the Aryans Found That God Presides over Both Good and Evil, Which Are Not Separate Existences

In all the religions of the world the one question they propose to discuss is this: why is there disharmony in the universe? Why is there evil in the universe? We do not find this question in the very inception of primitive religious ideas because the world did not appear incongruous to primitive people. Circumstances were not inharmonious for them; there was no clash of opinions; to them there was no antagonism of good and evil. There was merely a feeling in their own heart of something that said yea and something that said nay. Primitive people were people of impulse. They did what occurred to them and tried to bring out

through their muscles whatever thought came into their minds, and they never stopped to judge and seldom tried to check their impulses. So with the gods; they were also creatures of impulse. Indra comes and shatters the forces of the demons. Jehovah is pleased with one person and displeased with another, for what reason no one knows or asks. The habit of inquiry had not then arisen, and whatever they did was regarded as right. There was no idea of good and evil. The devas did many wicked things in our sense of the word; again and again Indra and other gods committed very wicked deeds; but to the worshippers of Indra the ideas of wickedness and evil did not occur, so they did not question them.

With the advance of ethical ideas came the fight. There arose a certain sense in human beings, called in different languages and nations by different names. Call it the voice of God, or the result of past education, or whatever else you like; but the effect was this that it had a checking power on the impulses of humanity. There is one impulse in our minds which says do. Behind it rises another voice which says, do not. There is one set of ideas in our minds which is always struggling to get outside through the channels of the senses; and behind that, although it may be thin and weak, there is an infinitely small voice which says, "Do not go outside." The two beautiful Sanskrit words for these phenomena are pravritti and nivritti, circling forward and circling inward. It is the circling forward which usually governs our actions. Religion begins with this circling inwards. Real religion begins with this do not. Spirituality begins with this do not. When the do not is not there, religion has not begun. And this do not came, causing people's ideas to grow, despite the fighting gods which they had worshipped.

A little love awoke in the hearts of humankind. It was very small indeed, and even now it is not much greater.... When tribal ideas began to grow there came a little love, some slight idea of duty towards each other, a little social organization. Then, naturally, the idea came: how can we live together without bearing and forbearing? How can people live with others without having at some time or other to check their impulses, to restrain themselves, to forbear from doing things which their minds would prompt them to do? It is impossible. Thus comes the idea of restraint. The whole social fabric is based upon that idea of restraint; and we all know that the man or woman who has not learned the great lesson of bearing and forbearing leads a most miserable life.

Now, when these ideas of religion came, a glimpse of something higher, more ethical, dawned upon the intellect of humankind. The old gods were found to be incongruous - these boisterous, fighting, drinking, beef-eating gods of the ancients - whose delight was in the smell of burning flesh and libations of strong liquor. Sometimes Indra drank so much that he fell upon the ground and talked unintelligibly. These gods could no longer be tolerated. The notion had arisen of inquiring into motives, and the gods had to come in for their share of inquiry. Reason for such-and-such actions was demanded and the reason was wanting. Therefore people gave up these gods; or rather, they developed higher ideas concerning them. They took a survey, as it were, of all the actions and qualities of the gods and discarded those which they could not harmonize, and kept those which they could understand, and combined them, labeling them with one name: deva-deva, the God of gods. The god to be worshipped was no more a simple symbol of power; something more was required than that. He or She was an ethical god, He or She loved humankind, and did good to humankind. But the idea of god still remained. They increased his or her ethical significance and also increased his or her power. He or She became the most ethical being in the universe as well as almost almighty....

We perceive at once that the idea of some Being who is eternally loving us - eternally unselfish and almighty, ruling this universe, could not satisfy. "Where is the just, merciful God?" asked the philosopher. Does He or She not see millions and millions of his or her children perish, in the forms of human beings and animals, for who can live one moment here without killing others? Can you draw a breath without destroying thousands of lives? You live, because millions die. Every moment of your life, every breath that you breathe, is death to thousands, every moment that you make is death to millions. Every morsel that you eat is death to millions. Why should they die? There is an old sophism that they are very low existences. Supposing they are - which is questionable, for who knows whether the ant is greater than the human being or the human than the ant - who can prove one way or the other? Apart from that question, even taking it for granted that these are very low beings, still why should they die? If they are low, they have more reason to live. Why not? Because they live more in the senses, they feel pleasure and pain a thousand-fold more than you or I can do. Which of us eats dinner with the same gusto as a dog or a wolf? None, because our energies are not in the senses; they are in the intellect, in the Spirit. But in animals, their whole soul is in the senses and they become mad and enjoy things which we human beings never dream of; and pain is commensurate

with the pleasure. Pleasure and pain are meted out in equal measure. If the pleasure felt by animals is so much keener than that felt by human beings, it follows that the animals' sense of pain is as keen, if not keener, than human beings'. So the fact is that the pain and misery human beings feel in dying is intensified a thousand-fold in animals, and yet we kill them without troubling ourselves about their misery. This is maya. And if we suppose that there is a personal God like a human being, who made everything, these so-called explanations and theories which try to prove that out of evil comes good are not sufficient. Let twenty thousand good things come, but why should they come from evil? On that principle, I might cut the throats of others because I want the full pleasure of my five senses. That is no reason. Why should good come through evil? The question remains to be answered. The philosophy of India was compelled to admit this. (44)

The riddle remains: who presides over this evil? Many are hoping against hope that all is good and that we do not understand. We are clutching at a straw, burying our heads in the sand. Yet we all follow morality and the gist of morality is sacrifice - not I, but thou. Yet, how it clashes with the great, good God of the universe! He or She is so selfish, the most vengeful person that we know, with plagues, famine, war!...

Manu Deva of the Vedas was transformed in Persia into Ahriman. So the mythological explanation of the question was dead; but the question remained and there was not reply, no solution....

Later books began to realize this new idea: evil exists and there is no shirking the fact. The universe is a fact; it is a huge composite of good and evil. Whoever rules must rule over good and evil. If that power makes us live, the same makes us die. Laughter and tears are kin, and there are more tears than laughter in this world. Who made flowers, who made the Himalayas? - a very good God. Who made my sins and weaknesses? - Karma, Satan, self. The result is a lame, one-legged universe, and naturally the God of the universe, a one-legged God. (45)

Vedanta does not take the position that this world is only a miserable one. That would be untrue. At the same time, it is a mistake to say that this world is full of happiness and blessings. So, it is useless to tell children that this world is all good, all flowers, all milk and honey. That is what we have all dreamt. At the

same time it is erroneous to think that because one person has suffered more than another, that all is evil. It is this duality, this play of good and evil that makes our world of experiences. At the same time Vedanta says, "Do not think that good and evil are two, are two separate existences, for they are one and the same thing appearing in different degrees and in different guises and producing differences of feeling in the same mind." So, the first thought of Vedanta is the finding of unity in the external; the one Existence manifesting Itself, however different It may appear in manifestation. (46)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 10.125

Ka. Up., 2.1.10

4) We Must Give Up Self-Deception and Face the Whole of God

The old idea of the fatherhood of God is connected with the sweet notion of God presiding over happiness. We want to deny facts. Evil is non-existent, zero. The I is evil. And the I exists only too much. Am I a zero? Every day I try to find myself so and fail.

All these are attempts to fly evil. But we have to face it. Face the whole! Am I under contract to offer partial love to God only in happiness and good, not in misery and evil?

The lamp of the light by which one forges a name and another writes a check for a thousand dollars for famine, shines on both, knows no difference. Light knows no evil; you and I make evil.

This idea must have a new name. It is called Mother, because in a literal sense it began long ago with a feminine writer elevated to a goddess. (47)

Why is evil? Why is [the world] a filthy, dirty hole? We have made it. Nobody is to blame. We put our hands in the fire. The Lord bless us, [people get] just what they deserve. Only, God is merciful. If we pray to God, God helps us, He or She gives Him or Herself to us. That is the idea of [the ancient Indian philosophers]. (48)

If one says that the Lord is causing everything to be done, and willfully persists in wrongdoing, it only brings ruin on him or her. That is the origin of self-deception. Don't you feel an elation after you have done a good deed? You then give yourself the credit of doing something good - you can't help it, it is very human. But how absurd to take the credit of doing the good act on oneself and lay the blame for the evil act on the Lord! It is a most dangerous idea - the effect of ill-digested Gita and Vedanta. Never hold that view. (49)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 10.125

f) Human Beings,, the Maker of Mistakes, Can Attain Liberty through Conscious Effort

1. Evil Is Limitation of the Unlimited, for Which the Cause Is in Ourselves

Let us now pass on to things which do not possibly belong to dualism. I cannot stay longer with the dualists, I am afraid. My idea is to show that the highest ideal of morality and unselfishness go hand in hand with the highest metaphysical conception, and that you need not lower your conception to get ethics and morality but, on the contrary, to reach a real basis of morality and ethics you must have the highest philosophical and scientific conceptions. Human knowledge is not antagonistic to human well-being. On the contrary, it is knowledge alone that will save us in every department of life - in knowledge and worship. The more we know the better for us. The Vedantist says the cause of all that is apparently evil is the limitation of the unlimited. The love which gets limited into little channels and seems to be evil eventually comes out at the other end and manifests itself as God. The Vedanta also says that the cause of all this apparent evil is in ourselves. Do not blame any supernatural being; neither be hopeless and despondent, nor think we are in a place from which we can never escape unless someone comes and lends us a helping hand. That cannot be, says the Vedanta. We are like silkworms; we make the thread out of our own substance and spin the cocoon, and in course of time are imprisoned inside. But this is not for ever. In that cocoon we shall develop spiritual realization, and like the butterfly, come out free. This network of karma we have woven around ourselves; and in our ignorance we feel as if we are bound and weep and wail for

help. But help does not come from without; it comes from within ourselves. Cry to all the gods in the universe. I cried for years, and in the end I found I was helped. But help came from within. And I had to undo what I had done by mistake. That is the only way. I had to cut through the net which I had thrown around myself, and the power to do this is within. Of this I am certain: that not one aspiration in my life, well-guided or ill-guided, has been in vain; but that I am the resultant of all my past, both good and evil. I have committed many mistakes in my life; but, mark you, I am sure of this - that without every one of those mistakes I should not be what I am today, and so am quite satisfied to have made them. I do not mean that you are to go home and willfully commit mistakes; do not misunderstand me in that way. But do not mope because of the mistakes you have committed; know that in the end all will come out straight. It cannot be otherwise, because goodness is our nature, purity is our nature, and that nature can never be destroyed. Our essential nature always remains the same. (50)

Q: How can you reconcile your optimistic views with the existence of evil, with the universal prevalence of sorrow and pain?

Swami Vivekananda: I can only answer the question if the existence of evil be first proved; but this the Vedantic religion does not admit. Eternal pain unmixed with pleasure would be a positive evil; but temporal pain and sorrow, if they have contributed an element of tenderness and nobility tending towards eternal bliss, are not evils: on the contrary, they may be supreme good. We cannot assert that anything is evil until we have traced its sequence into the realm of eternity. (51)

Nowhere in the Vedanta is it said that human beings are born sinners. To say so it a great libel on human nature. (52)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up., 7

Taitt. Up., 2.7

2) The Vindication of the Glory and Liberty of the Human Soul Lies in Placing the Burden of Responsibility on Our Own Independent Actions

[A principle which not] only all Hindus, but all Buddhists and Jains agree upon is: we all agree that life is eternal. It is not that it has sprung out of nothing, for that cannot be. Such a life would not be worth having. Everything that has a beginning in time must end in time. If life began but yesterday, it must end tomorrow, and annihilation is the result. Life must have been existing. It does not now require much acumen to see that all the sciences of modern times have been coming round to our help, illustrating from the material world the principles embodied in our scriptures. You know it already that each one of us is the effect of an infinite past; the child is ushered into the world, not as something flashing from the hands of nature as poets delight so much to depict, but he or she has the burden of an infinite past; for good or evil he or she comes to work out his or her own past deeds. That makes the differentiation. This is the law of karma. (53)

The premises from which inference is drawn of a previous existence, and that too on the plane of conscious action, as adduced by the Hindu philosophers are chiefly these:

First, how to explain the world of inequalities? Here is one child born in the province of a just and merciful God, with every circumstance conducing to his or her becoming a good and useful member of the human race; and perhaps at the same instant and in the same city another child is born under circumstances, every one of which is against his or her becoming good. We see children born to suffer, perhaps all their lives, and that owing to no fault of theirs. Why should it be? What is the cause? Of whose ignorance is it the result? If not the child's, why should it suffer for its parents' actions?

It is much better to confess ignorance than to try to evade the question by the allurements of future enjoyments in proportion to the evil here, or by posing "mysteries". Not only does undeserved suffering forced upon us by any agent is immoral - not to say unjust - but even the future-making-up theory has no legs to stand upon.

How many of the miserably born struggle towards a higher life, and how many more succumb to the circumstances they are placed under? Should those who grow worse and more wicked by being forced to be born under evil circumstances be rewarded in the future for the wickedness of their lives? In

that case, the more wicked someone is here, the better will be his or her desserts hereafter.

There is no other way to vindicate the glory and the liberty of the human soul and to reconcile the inequalities and the horrors of this world than by placing the whole burden on the legitimate cause - our own independent actions, or karma. Not only so, but every theory of the creation of the soul from nothing inevitably leads to fatalism and preordination; and, instead of a merciful Father or Mother, places before us a hideous, cruel, and ever-angry God to worship. And so far as the power of religion for good or evil is concerned, this theory of a created soul, leading to its corollaries of fatalism and predestination, is responsible for the horrible idea prevailing among some Christians and Muslims that the heathens are lawful victims of their swords, and all the horrors that have followed and are following it still.

But an argument which the philosophers of the Nyaya school have advanced in favor of reincarnation and which to us seems conclusive is this: our experiences cannot be annihilated. Our actions (karma), though apparently disappearing, remain still unperceived (adrishta) and reappear again in their effect as tendencies (pravrittis). Even little babies come with certain tendencies - fear of death, for example.

Now, if a tendency is the result of repeated actions, the tendencies with which we are born must be explained on that ground, too. Evidently we could not have got them in this life; therefore we must seek for their genesis in the past. Now, it is also evident that some of our tendencies are the effects of the self-conscious efforts peculiar to human beings; and if it is true that we are born with such tendencies, it rigorously follows that their causes were conscious efforts in the past - that is, we must have been on the same mental plane which we call the human plane, before this present life. (54)

Every religion has it that humanity's present and future are modified by the past and that the present is but the effect of the past. How is it, then, that every child is born with an experience that cannot be accounted for by hereditary transmission? How is it that one is born of good parents, receives a good education and becomes a good person, while another comes from besotted parents and ends on the gallows? How do you explain this inequality without implicating God? Why should a merciful Father set His child in such conditions

which must bring forth misery? It is no explanation to say God will make amends later on - God has no blood-money. Then, too, what becomes of my liberty, if this be my first birth? Coming into this world without the experience of a former life, my independence would be gone, for my path would be marked out by the experience of others. If I cannot be the maker of my own fortune, then I am not free. I take upon myself the blame for the misery of this existence and say I unmake the evil I have done in another existence. This, then, is our philosophy of the migration of the soul. We come into this life with the experience of another [life], and the fortune or misfortune of this existence is the result of our acts in a former existence, always becoming better, till at last perfection is reached. (55)

The human race is in a process of development; all have not reached the same altitude. Therefore, some are nobler and purer in their earthly lives than others. Everyone has the opportunity, within the limits of the sphere of his or her present development, of making him or herself better. We cannot unmake ourselves; we cannot destroy or impair the vital force within us, but we have the freedom to give it different directions. (56)

Each one of us is the maker of his or her own fate. This law at once knocks on the head all doctrines of predestination and fate and gives us the only means of reconciliation between God and humanity. We, we, and none else, are responsible for what we suffer. We are the effects, and we are the causes. We are free, therefore. If I am unhappy, it has been of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be happy, if I will. If I am impure, that is also of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be pure, if I will. The human will stands beyond all circumstances. Before it - the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in humanity - all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of karma. (57)

3. This Is the Great Hope: I Can Undo What I Have Done by Manifesting My Innate, Eternal Freedom

Your Shastras declare: despair not. For you are the same, whatever you do, and you cannot change your nature. Nature itself cannot destroy nature. Your nature is pure. It may be hidden for millions of eons, but at last it will conquer and come out. Therefore the Advaita brings hope to everyone, and not despair. Its teaching is not through fear; it teaches, not of devils who are always on the

watch to snatch you if you miss your footing - it has nothing to do with devils - but says that you have taken your fate into your own hands. Your own karma has manufactured for you this body, and nobody did it for you. The omnipresent Lord has been hidden through ignorance and the responsibility is on yourself. You have not to think that you were brought into the world without your choice and left in this most horrible place; but to know that you have yourself manufactured your body bit by bit, just as you are doing at this very moment. You yourself eat; nobody eats for you. You assimilate what you eat; no-one does it for you. You make blood and muscles and body out of food; nobody does it for you. So you have done all the time. One link in the chain explains the infinite chain. If it is true that for one moment you manufacture your body, it is true for every moment that has been or will come. And all the responsibility for good and evil is on you. This is the great hope: what I have done, that I can undo. And at the same time our religion does not take away from mankind the mercy of the Lord. That is always there. On the contrary, He or She stands beside this tremendous current of good and evil. He or She, the bondless, the ever-merciful, is always ready to help us to the other shore, for His or Her mercy is great; and it always comes to the pure in heart. (58)

We find, then, that this world is neither optimistic nor pessimistic; it is a mixture of both and, as we go on, we shall find that the whole blame is taken away from nature and put upon our own shoulders. At the same time the Vedanta shows the way out, not by denial of evil, because it analyzes boldly the fact as it is and does not seek to conceal anything. It is not hopeless, it is not agnostic. It finds out a remedy, but it wants to place that remedy on adamant foundations. (59)

The Egyptians and the Semites cling to the theory of sin, while the Aryans, such as the Indians and Greeks, quickly lost it. In India, righteousness and sin become vidya and avidya [knowledge and ignorance], both to be transcended. (60)

The fundamental principle is that there is eternal freedom for everyone. Every one must come to it. We have to struggle, impelled by our desire to be free. Every other desire but that to be free is illusive. Every good action, the Vedantist says, is a manifestation of that freedom. (61)

It is children who say that there is no morality in Vedanta. Yes, they are right; Vedanta is above morality. (62)

We had better remember here that, throughout the Vedanta philosophy, there is no such thing as good and bad; they are not two different things. The same thing is good or bad, and the difference is only in degree. The very thing I call pleasurable today, tomorrow, under better circumstances I may call pain. The fire that warms us can also consume us; it is not the fault of the fire. Thus, the Soul being pure and perfect, people who do evil are giving the lie to themselves; they do not know the nature of themselves. (63)

Cross reference:

Ka. Up., 1.2.10

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

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PART II, SECTION 6: THE SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

Chapter 15: Spiritual Freedom through Realization and Renunciation

a) The Goal of the Soul Is Freedom from the Bondage of Matter

1. In Vedanta Freedom Means Spiritual Independence

The Vedas teach that the soul is divine, only held in the bondage of matter; perfection will be reached when this bond will burst; and the word they use for it is, therefore, mukti - freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfections, freedom from death and misery. (1)

The Hindu says that political and social independence are well and good, but the real thing is spiritual independence, mukti. This is our national purpose, whether you take the Vaidika, the Jain, or the Buddhist, the Advaita, the Vishishtadvaita, or the Dvaita - there, they are all of one mind. (2)

According to our philosophers, freedom is the goal. Knowledge cannot be the goal, because knowledge is a compound. It is a compound of power and freedom, and it is freedom alone that is desirable. That is what humanity struggles after. Simply the possession of power would not be knowledge. For instance, a scientist can send an electric shock to a distance of some miles; but nature can send it to an unlimited distance. Why do we not build statues to nature, then? It is not law that we want, but an ability to break law. We want to be outlaws. If you are bound by laws, you would be a lump of clay. Whether you are beyond law or not is not the question; but the thought that we are beyond law - upon that is based the whole history of humanity. For instance, a someone lives in the forest and never has had any education or knowledge. He or she sees a stone falling down - a natural phenomenon happening - and he or she thinks it is freedom. He or she thinks it has a soul; and the central idea in that is freedom. But as soon as he or she knows that it must fall, he or she calls it nature - dead, mechanical action. I may or may not go into the street. In that is my glory as a human being. If I am sure that I must go there, I give myself up and become a machine. Nature with its infinite power is only a machine; freedom alone constitutes sentient life.

The Vedanta says that the idea of the person in the forest is the right one; his or her glimpse was right, but the explanation is wrong. He or she holds to nature as freedom and not as governed by law. Only after all this human experience we will come back to think the same, but in a more philosophical sense. For

instance, I want to go out into the street. I get the impulse of my will, and then I stop; and in the time that intervenes between the will and going into the street, I am working uniformly. Uniformity of action is what we call law. This uniformity of my action, I find, is broken into very short periods, and so I do not call my actions under law. I work through freedom. I walk for five minutes; but before those five minutes of walking, which are uniform, there was the action of the will, which gave the impulse to walk. Therefore human beings say they are free, because all their actions can be cut up into small periods; and, although there is sameness in the small periods, beyond the period there is not the same sameness. In this perception of non-uniformity is the idea of freedom. In nature we see only very large periods of uniformity, but the beginning and the end must be free impulses. The impulse of freedom was given just at the beginning, and that has rolled on; but this, compared with our periods, is much longer. We find by analysis on philosophic grounds that we are not free. But there will remain this factor, this consciousness that I am free. What we have to explain is how it comes. We will find that we have these two impulses in us. Our reason tells us that all our actions are caused, and at the same time, with every impulse we are asserting our freedom. The solution of the Vedanta is that there is freedom inside - that the soul is really free - but that the soul's actions are percolating through body and mind, which are not free. (3)

The ideal of the Indian race is freedom of the soul. This world is nothing. It is a vision, a dream. This life is one of many millions like it. The whole of this nature is maya, is phantasm, a pest-house of phantasms. This is the philosophy. (4)

The goal of the soul among all the different sects in India seems to be the same: there is one idea with all, and that is liberation. Humanity is infinite; and this limitation in which it exists now is not its nature. All these combinations and re-combinations and manifestations that we see round us are not the aim or the goal, but merely the way and in passing. These combinations such as earths and suns and moons and stars, right and wrong, good and bad, our laughter and our tears, our joys and sorrows, are to enable us to gain experience through which the soul manifests its perfect nature and throws off limitation. No more, then, is it bound by laws, either of internal or external nature. It has gone beyond all law, beyond all limitations, beyond all nature. Nature has come under the control of the soul, not the soul under the control of nature, as it thinks it is now. That is the one goal that the soul has; and all the succeeding steps through which it is manifesting, all the successive experiences through which it

is passing in order to attain to that goal - freedom - are represented as its births. The soul is, as it were, taking up a lower body and trying to express itself through that. It finds that to be insufficient, throws it aside, and a higher one is taken up. Through that it struggles to express itself. That also is found to be insufficient, is rejected, and a higher one comes; so on and on until a body is found through which the soul manifests its highest aspirations. Then the soul becomes free. (5)

2. The Idea of Absolute Freedom, Though Present in Every Religion, Is Most Prominent in Vedanta

What is... worth having? Mukti, freedom. Even in the highest of heavens, says our scriptures, you are a slave; what matters it if you are a king for twenty thousand years? So long as you have a body, so long as you are a slave to happiness, so long as time works on you, space works on you, you are a slave. The idea, therefore, is to be free of external and internal nature. Nature must fall at your feet and you must trample on it and be free and glorious by going beyond. No more is there life; therefore no more is there death. No more enjoyment; therefore no more misery. It is bliss unspeakable, indestructible, beyond everything. What we call happiness and good here are but particles of that eternal Bliss. And all this eternal Bliss is our goal. (6)

Blessedness, eternal peace, arising from perfect freedom, is the highest concept of religion underlying all the ideas of God in Vedanta - absolutely free Existence, not bound by anything, no change, no nature, nothing that can produce a change in It. This same freedom is in you and in me and is the only real freedom. (7)

The Vedantin thinker boldly says that the enjoyments in this life, even the most degraded joys, are but manifestations of that one divine Bliss, the essence of the soul.

This idea seems to be the most prominent in Vedanta and, as I have said, it appears that every religion holds it. I have yet to know the religion which does not. It is the one universal idea working through all religions. Take the Bible, for instance. You find there the allegorical statement that the first man Adam was pure, and that his purity was obliterated by his evil deeds afterwards. It is clear from this allegory that they thought that the nature of the primitive

human being was perfect. The impurities that we see, the weaknesses that we feel, are but superimpositions on that nature, and the subsequent history of the Christian religions shows that they also believe in the possibility, nay the certainty, of regaining that old state. This is the whole history of the Bible, Old and New Testaments together. So with the Muslims: they also believed in Adam and in the purity of Adam, and through Muhammad the way was opened up to regain that lost state. So with the Buddhists: they believe in the state called nirvana which is beyond this relative world. It is exactly the same as the Brahman of the Vedantists, and the whole system of the Buddhists is founded upon the idea of regaining that lost state of nirvana. In every system we find this doctrine present, that you cannot get anything which is not yours already. You are indebted to nobody in this universe. You claim your own birthright, as has been most poetically expressed by a great Vedantin philosopher in the title of one of his works - "The Attainment of Our Own Empire" [Swarajasiddhi of]. That empire is ours; we have lost it and we have to regain it. The mayavadin, however, says this losing of the empire was a hallucination; you never lost it. This is the only difference. (8)

All the various manifestations of religion, in whatever shape and form they have come to mankind, have this one, common, central basis:... the preaching of freedom, the way out of this world. They never came to reconcile the world and religion, but to cut the Gordian knot, to establish religion in its own ideal, and not to compromise with the world. That is what every religion preaches, and the duty of Vedanta is to harmonize all those aspirations, to make manifest the common ground between all the religions of the world, the highest as well as the lowest. What we call the most arrant superstition and the highest philosophy really have a common aim in that they both try to show the way out of the same difficulty; and in most cases this way is through the help of someone who is not bound by the laws of nature; in one word, someone who is free. In spite of all the difficulties and differences of opinion about the nature of the one free Agent, whether... a personal God, or a sentient being like human beings, whether masculine, feminine, or neuter - and the discussions have been endless - the fundamental idea is the same. In spite of the almost hopeless contradictions of the different systems, we find the golden thread of unity running through them all, and in this philosophy, this golden thread has been traced, revealed little by little to our view; and the first step to this revelation is the common ground that all are advancing towards freedom. (9)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up.,16b

Brih. Up., 2.3.6

b) The Practicality of the Vedantic Path to Freedom

1. Liberated Souls Are Found Only Where There Is the Vedantic Idea of Spiritual, Not Material, Freedom

Materialism says the voice of freedom is a delusion. Idealism says, the voice that tells of bondage is delusion. Vedanta says you are free and not free at the same time - never free on the earthly plane, but ever free on the spiritual. (10)

With [the Hindus] the prominent idea is mukti; with the Westerners it is dharma. What we desire is mukti; what they want is dharma. Here the word dharma is used in the sense of the mimamsakas. What is dharma? Dharma is that which makes human beings seek for happiness in this world or the next. Dharma is established on work; dharma is impelling humanity day and night to run after and work for happiness.

What is mukti? That which teaches that even the happiness of this life is slavery, and the same is the happiness of the life to come, because neither this world nor the next is beyond the laws of nature; only, the slavery of this world is to that of the next as an iron chain is to a golden one. Again, happiness, wherever it may be, being within the laws of nature, is subject to death and will not last ad infinitum. Therefore human beings must aspire to become mukta, they must go beyond the bondage of the body; slavery will not do. This moksha-path is in India only and nowhere else. Hence is true the oft-repeated saying that mukta souls are only in India and in no other country. But it is equally true that in future they will be in other countries as well; that is well and good, and a thing of great pleasure to us. (11)

The first principle [of Vedanta] is that all that is necessary for the perfection of humanity and for attaining unto freedom is there in the Vedas. You cannot find anything new. You cannot go beyond a perfect unity, which is the goal of all

knowledge; this has been already reached there, and it is impossible to go beyond unity. (12)

Go through all the Upanishads, and even in the Samhitas - nowhere will you find the limited ideas of moksha which every other religion has. (13)

Cross reference to:

Gita 12.13

2. Vedanta Dehypnotizes Us from the Law of Habit by Its Conception of Virtue as a Means to Freedom

We are lions in sheep's clothing of habit, we are hypnotized into weakness by our surroundings. And the province of Vedanta is self-dehypnotization. The goal to be reached is freedom. I disagree with the idea that freedom is obedience to the laws of nature. I do not understand what that means. According to the history of human progress, it is disobedience to nature that has constituted that progress. It may be said that the conquest of lower laws was through the higher; but even there the conquering mind was still seeking freedom; as soon as it found the struggle was through law, it wished to conquer that also. So the ideal is always freedom. The trees never disobeyed the law. I never saw a cow steal. An oyster never told a lie. Yet these are not greater than human beings.

Obedience to the law, in the last issue, would make of us simply matter - either in society, or in politics, or religion. This life is a tremendous assertion of freedom; excess of laws means death. No nation possesses so many laws as the Hindus; and the result is national death. But the Hindus had one peculiar idea - they never made any doctrines or dogmas in religion, and the latter has had the greatest growth. Therein we are practical - where the West is impractical - in our religion. (14)

The old Hindu conception of Law [was] as the King of kings who never slept, showing that the Hindus had the true notion of it in the Vedas, while other nations only knew it as regulations. (15)

Doing good to others is virtue (dharma); injuring others is sin. Strength and manliness are virtue; weakness and cowardice are sin. Independence is virtue;

dependence is sin. Loving others is virtue; hating others is sin. Faith in God and in one's own self is virtue; doubt is sin. Knowledge of oneness is virtue; seeing diversity is sin. The different scriptures only show the means of attaining virtue. (16)

3. Beyond All Other Methods, the Vedas Teach That We Are Free Already

Soul has no caste, and to think that it has is a delusion; so are life and death, and any motion or quality. The Atman never changes, never goes nor comes. It is the witness of all its own manifestations, but we take It for the manifestation, an eternal illusion, without beginning or end, ever going on. The Vedas, however, have to come down to our level, for if they told us the highest truth in the highest way, we could not understand it. (17)

Although all the religious systems agree... that we had a [spiritual] empire and that we have lost it, they give us varied advice as to how to regain it. One says that you must perform certain ceremonies, pay certain sums of money to certain idols, eat certain sorts of food, live a peculiar fashion to regain that empire. Another says that, if you weep and prostrate yourselves and ask pardon of some Being beyond nature, you will regain that empire. Again, another says that if you love such a Being with all your heart, you will regain that empire. All this varied advice is in the Upanishads. As I go on, you will find it so. But the last and greatest is that you need not weep at all. You need not go through all these ceremonies and need not take any notice of how to regain your empire, because you never lost it. Why should you go to seek for what you never lost? You are pure already and you are free already. If you think you are free, free you are this moment; and if you think that you are bound, bound you will be. This is a very bold statement... and I shall have to speak to you very boldly. It may frighten you now, but when you think it over and realize it in your own life, then you will come to know that what I say is true. For, supposing that freedom is not your nature, by no manner of means can you become free. Supposing you were free and in some way you lost that freedom; that shows that you were not free to begin with. Had you been free, what could have made you lose it? The independent can never be made dependent; if it is really dependent, its independence was a hallucination.

Of the two sides, then, which will you take? If you say that the soul was by its own nature pure and free, it naturally follows that there was nothing in this

universe which could make it bound or limited. But if there was anything in nature which could bind the soul, it naturally follows that it was not free, and your statement that it was free is a delusion. So, if it is possible for us to attain to freedom, the conclusion is inevitable that the soul is by its nature free. It cannot be otherwise. Freedom means independence of anything outside, and that means that nothing outside of itself could work upon it as a cause. The soul is causeless; and from this follow all the great ideas that we have. You cannot establish the immortality of the soul unless you grant that it is by nature free; or, in other words, that it cannot be acted upon by anything outside. For death is an effect produced by some outside cause. I drink poison and I die, thus showing that my body can be acted upon by something outside that is called poison. But if it be true that the soul is free, it naturally follows that nothing can affect it, and it can never die. (18)

The Upanishads are the one scripture in the world, of all others, that does not talk of salvation, but of freedom. Be free from the bonds of nature, be free from weakness! And it shows to you that you have this freedom already in you. That is another peculiarity of their teachings. (19)

Cross reference to:

Mund. Up., 2.2.8

c) Freedom Is Attained by Realizing the Truth

1. Vedanta Alone Says That Religion Is a Superconscious State That Is To Be Realized

As we find that somehow or other, by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea, so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, a mosque, a cross. The Hindus have associated the idea of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms, but with this difference: that while some people devote their whole lives to their idol of a church and never rise higher (because with them religion means an intellectual assent to certain doctrines and doing good to their fellows), the whole religion of the Hindu is centered on realization. (20)

The only way to get beyond this veil of maya is to realize what Truth is; and the Upanishads indicate what is meant by realizing the Truth. (21)

Religion in India means realization and nothing short of that. "Believe in doctrines and you are a sage" can never be taught to us, for we do not believe in that. You are what you make yourselves. You are, by the grace of God and your own exertions, what you are. Mere believing in certain theories and doctrines will not help you much. The mighty word that came from the sky of spirituality in India was anubhuti, realization; and ours are the only books which declare again and again, "The Lord is to be seen." Bold, brave words, indeed; but true to their very core. Every sound, every vibration is true. Religion is to be realized, not only heard; it is not in learning some doctrine like a parrot. Neither is it mere intellectual assent - that is nothing; but it must come into us. (22)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 2.4.5b

Cha. Up., 4.9.2

Mund. Up., 3.2.9

2. There Is No Salvation for Human Beings Until, Here and Now, They Work Their Way Up from Theories and Realizes Their Own Soul

Hinduism has this advantage: its secret is that doctrines and dogmas do not mean anything; what you are is what matters. If you talk all the best philosophies the world ever produced, [but] if you are a fool in your behavior, they do not count; and if in your behavior you are good, you have more chances. That being so, the Vedantist can wait for everybody. (23)

Vedanta declares that religion is here and now, because the question of this life and that life, of life and death, this world and that world, is merely one of superstition and prejudice. There is no break in time beyond what we make. What difference is there between ten and twelve o'clock, beyond what we make by certain changes in nature? Time flows on the same. So what is meant by this life or that life? It is only a question of time, and what is lost in time may be made up by speed in work. So, says Vedanta, religion is to be realized now. And

for you to become religious means that you will start without any religion, work your way up and realize things, see things for yourself; and when you have done that then, and then alone, you have religion. Before that you are no better than atheists, or worse, because the atheist is sincere - or she stands up and says, "I do not know about these things" - while those others do not know but go about the world saying, "We are very religious people." What religion they have no one knows, because they have swallowed some grandmother's story and priests have asked them to believe these things; if they do not, then let them take care. That is how it is going on. (24)

Vedanta teaches that nirvana can be attained here and now, that we do not have to wait for death to reach it. Nirvana is the realization of the Self; and after having once, if only for an instant, known this, never again can one be deluded by the mirage of personality. Having eyes, we must see the apparent; but all the time we know it for what it is, we have found out its true nature. It is the "screen" that hides the Self, which is unchanging. The screen opens and we find the Self behind it - all change is in the screen. In the saint the screen is thin and the Reality can almost shine through; but in the sinner, it is thick and we are apt to lose sight of the truth that the Atman is there, as well as behind the saint. (25)

As soon as human beings perceive the glory of the Vedanta, all abracadabras fall off of themselves.

(26)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 7.18.1

2. Working Towards the Goal of Realization

i) Religion Is a Practical Science, the Opening of the Book of the Heart

If you ask me how [all of] this can be practical, my answer is: it has been practical first and philosophical next. You can see that first these things have been perceived and realized, and then written. This world spoke to the early thinkers. Birds spoke to them, animals spoke to them, the sun and the moon

spoke to them; and little by little they realized things and got into the heart of nature.

Not by cogitation, not by the force of logic, not by picking the brains of others and making a big book, as is the fashion in modern times; not even as I do, by taking up one of their writings and making a long lecture, but by patient investigation and discovery they found out the truth. Its essential method was practice, and so it must be, always. Religion is ever a practical science and there never was, nor will be any theological religion. It is practice first and knowledge afterwards. (27)

Hinduism indicates one duty, only one, for the human soul. It is to seek to realize the permanent amidst the evanescent. No one presumes to point any one way in which this may be done. Marriage or non-marriage, good or evil, learning or ignorance - any of these is justified if it leads to the goal. (28)

Get rid of the fundamental superstition that we are obliged to act through the body. We are not. Go into your own room and get the Upanishads out of your own Self. You are the greatest book that ever was or ever will be, the infinite depository of all that is. Until the inner teacher opens, all outside teaching is in vain. It must lead to the opening of the book of the heart to have any value. (29)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 10.125.5

Ka. Up., 1.2.23

Cha. Up., 4.4.1-5

Mund. Up., 1.1.5

ii) Scriptures Only Help to Take Away the Veil Which Hides Truth from Our Eyes

Realization of religion is the only way. Each one of us will have to discover. Of what use are these books, then, these bibles of the world? They are of great

use, just as maps are of a country. I have seen maps of England all my life before I came here, and they were great helps to me in forming some conception of England. Yet, when I arrived in this country, what a difference between the maps and the country itself! So is the difference between realization and the scriptures. These books are only maps, the experiences of past men and women, as a motive power to us to dare to make the same experiences and discover the same way, if not better.

This is the first principle of Vedanta - that realization is religion, and he or she who realizes is the religious person; and he or she who does not is no better than someone who says, "I do not know." - if not worse, because the other says, "I do not know" and is sincere. In this realization again, we shall be helped very much by these books, for every science has its own particular method of investigation. (30)

The Vedas cannot show you Brahman, for you are That already; they can only help to take away the veil that hides the Truth from our eyes. The first veil to vanish is ignorance; and when that is gone, sin goes; next desire ceases, selfishness ends, and all misery disappears. (31)

Can you explain Brahman, which transcends time and space, by means of questions and answers? Hence the Shastras and mantras and other such things are only relatively and not absolutely true. Nescience has verily no essence to call its own; how then can you understand it? When Brahman manifests itself, there will be no more room for such questions. (32)

When you have seen God, this is no longer a matter of speculation. There is no more Mr. So-and-So.... No more books or Vedas, or controversy or preachers, or anything. (33)

That is religion: no humbug of the world. No shilly-shallying, tall-talk, conjecture - I presume, I believe, I think. How I would like to go out of this piece of painted humbug they call the beautiful world... beyond, beyond - which can only be felt, never expressed! That is religion.... There is a God. There all the saints, prophets and incarnations meet. Beyond the babel of Bibles and Vedas, creeds and crafts, dupes and doctrines, where all is light, all love - where the miasma of this earth can never reach. (34)

iii) Old Association of Ideas and Blind Beliefs Must Give Way to Superconscious Experience of the Principle Underlying Personality

The one central idea throughout all the Upanishads is that of realization. A great many questions will arise from time to time, and especially to the modern person. There will be the question of utility, there will be various other questions, but in all we shall find that we are prompted by our past associations. It is association of ideas that has such tremendous power over our minds. To those who from childhood have always heard of a personal God and the personality of the mind, these ideas will, of course, appear very stern and harsh; but if they listen to them and think over them, they will become part of their lives and will no longer frighten them. The great question that generally arises is the utility of philosophy. To that there can be only one answer: if on the utilitarian ground it is good for people to seek pleasure, why should not those whose pleasure is in religious speculation seek for that? Because sense-enjoyments please many, they seek for them; but there may be others whom they do not please, who want higher enjoyment. (35)

Vedanta is necessary because neither reasoning nor books can show us God. He or She is only to be realized by superconscious perception, and Vedanta teaches us how to attain that. You must get beyond the personal God (Ishwara) and reach the absolute Brahman. God is the perception of every being; He or She is all there is to be perceived. That which says I is Brahman, but although we, day and night, perceive It, we do not know that we are perceiving It. As soon as we become aware of this truth, all misery goes; so we must get knowledge of the truth. Reach unity; no more duality will come. But knowledge does not come by [ceremonial] sacrifice, but by seeking worshipping, knowing the Atman. (36)

iv) Purification of the Mind in Order to Attain Knowledge of the Absolute and Love of God

The Vedantic and philosophers of the other Indian schools hold that knowledge is not to be acquired from without. It is the innate nature of the human soul and the essential birthright of every one. The human soul is the repository of infinite wisdom; what external agency can illuminate it? (37)

By the power of meditation we have got to control, step by step, all these [external] things. We have seen philosophically that all these differentiations -

Spirit, matter, mind, etc. - [have no real existence].... Whatever exists is one. There cannot be many. That is what is meant by science and knowledge. Ignorance sees manifold. Knowledge realizes one.... Reducing the many into one is science.... The whole of the universe has been demonstrated into one. The whole universe is one. The one runs through all this seeming variety. (38)

Repeating the Vedas and other mantras [purifies] the sattwa material in the body. (39)

How did the ancient One come down to earth? There is but one answer to that in our scriptures: ignorance is the cause of all this bondage. It is through ignorance that we have become bound; knowledge will cure it by taking us to the other side. How will that knowledge come? Through love, bhakti; by the worship of God, by loving all beings as the temples of God. He or She resides within them. Thus, with that intense love will come knowledge, and ignorance will disappear, the bonds will break, and the soul will be free. (40)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up. peace chant

Brih. Up., 1.2.6

2.4.14

Taitt. Up., 2.6.11

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

Mund. Up., 1.1.8-9

2.2.8-9

d) Renunciation Is the Real Beginning of Religion

1. Renunciation Is the Very Soul of Vedanta

The Absolute and the Infinite can become the universe only by limitation. Everything must be limited that comes through the senses, or through the mind, or through the intellect; and for the limited to be unlimited is simply absurd, and never can be. The Vedanta, on the other hand, says that it is true that the Absolute, or the Infinite, is trying to express itself in the finite, but there will come a time when it will find that it is impossible, and it will then have to beat a retreat; and this beating a retreat means renunciation, which is the real beginning of religion. Nowadays it is very hard even to talk about renunciation. It was said of me in America that I was a man who came out of a land that had been dead and buried for five thousand years and talked about renunciation. So says, perhaps, the English philosopher. Yet it is true that this is the only path to religion. Renounce and give up.... There comes a time when the mind awakes from this long and dreary dream - the child gives up its play and wants to go back to its mother. It finds the truth of the statement, "Desire is never satisfied by the enjoyment of desires; it only increases the more, as fire when butter is poured upon it." [Mahabharata 2.6.3 - Yayatigatha] This is true of all sense-enjoyments, of all intellectual enjoyments, and of all enjoyments of which the human mind is capable. They are nothing, they are within maya, within this network beyond which we cannot go. We may run therein through infinite time and find no end; and whenever we struggle to get a little enjoyment, a mass of misery falls upon us. How awful is this! And when I think of it, I cannot but consider that this theory of maya, this statement that it is all maya, is the best and only explanation. (41)

The alpha and omega of Vedanta philosophy is to "give up the world" - giving up the unreal and taking the Real. (42)

Disciple: Sir, even the Upanishads, etc., do not clearly teach renunciation and sannyasa.

Swami Vivekananda: You are talking like a madman! Renunciation is the very soul of the Upanishads. Illumination born of discriminative reflection is the ultimate aim of Upanishadic knowledge. (43)

[The ancient Indian philosophers] thought... this filthy world is not fit for the attention of humanity. There is nothing in the universe that is [permanent - neither good nor evil]. (44)

The Vedanta system begins with tremendous pessimism and ends with real optimism. We deny the sense-optimism but assert the real optimism of the supersensuous. That real happiness is not in the senses, but above the senses; and it is in every one. The sort of optimism we see in the world is what will lead to ruin through the senses.

Abnegation has the greatest importance in our philosophy. Negation implies affirmation of the real Self. The Vedanta is pessimistic in so far as it negatives the world of the senses, but it is optimistic in its assertion of the real world. (45)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 7.2.3

Kaiv. Up., 2

2. The Struggle to Go Beyond the Phenomenal Makes Us the Fittest to Survive

Two great problems are being decided by the nations of the world. India has taken up one side and the rest of the world has taken up the other. And the problem is this: who is to survive? What makes one nation survive and the others die? Should love or hatred survive, should enjoyment survive, or renunciation; should matter survive or the Spirit, in the struggle of life? We think as our ancestors did, away back in prehistoric ages. Where even tradition cannot pierce the gloom of the past, there our glorious ancestors have taken up their side of the problem and have thrown the challenge to the world. Our solution is renunciation - giving up - fearlessness, and love; these are the fittest to survive. Giving up the senses makes a nation survive. As a proof of this, here is history today telling us of mushroom nations rising and falling almost every century - starting up from nothingness, making vicious play for a few days, and then melting away. This big, gigantic race which had to grapple with some of the greatest problems of misfortunes, dangers and vicissitudes such as never fell upon the heads of any other nation of the world, survives because it has taken the side of renunciation; for, without renunciation, can there be religion? Europe is trying to solve the other side of the problem as to how much human beings can have, how much more power someone can possess by hook or by crook, by some means or other. Competition - cruel, cold, and heartless - is the

law of Europe. Our law is caste - the breaking of competition, checking its forces, mitigating its cruelties, smoothing the passage of the human soul through this mystery of life. (46)

In [India] are, still, religion and spirituality, the fountains of which will have to overflow and flood the world to bring in new life and new vitality to the Western and other nations, which are now almost borne down, half-killed and degraded by political ambitions and social scheming. From out of many voices, consonant and dissentient, from out of the medley of sounds filling the Indian atmosphere, rises up supreme, striking and full, one note - and that is renunciation. Give up! That is the watchword of the Indian religions. The present life is of five minutes. Beyond is the Infinite, beyond this world of delusion; let us seek that. The continent is illumined with brave and gigantic minds and intelligences which even think of this so-called infinite universe as only a mud-puddle; beyond and still beyond they go. Time, even infinite time, is to them but non-existence. Beyond and beyond time they go. Space is nothing to them; beyond that they want to go, and this going beyond the phenomenal is the very soul of religion. (47)

Cross reference to Kaivalya Upanisad, 2.

3. Transcending the Senses

I. Lust and Possession Are Devoid of Substance

That humanity can transcend the limits of the senses is the emphatic testimony of all past ages. The Upanishads told 5,000 years ago that the realization of God could never be had through the senses. So far, modern agnosticism agrees, but the Vedas go further than the negative side and assert in the plainest terms that humanity can and does transcend this sense-bound, frozen universe. It can, as it were, find a hole in the ice through which it can pass and reach the whole ocean of life. Only by so transcending the world of sense can it reach its true Self and realize what it really is. (48)

The voice of the ancient sages proclaim to us, "If you desire to attain God you will have to renounce kama-kanchana (lust and possession). Samsara is unreal, hollow, void of substance. Unless you give it up, you can never reach God, try however you may." (49)

[The Hindu] goal of life is moksha; how can that ever be attained without brahmacharya or absolute continence? Hence it is imposed upon our boys and youth as an indispensable condition during their studentship. The purpose of life in the West is bhoga or enjoyment; hence much attention to brahmacharya is not so indispensably necessary with them as it is with us. (50)

ii) Heaven and Hell Are Not Permanent

In India the idea of the goal is this: there are heavens, there are hells, there are earths; but they are not permanent. If I am sent to hell it is not permanent. The same struggle goes on and on wherever I am. How to get beyond all this struggle is the problem. If I go to heaven, perhaps there will be a little bit of rest. If I get punished for my misdeeds, that cannot last [for ever, either].... The Indian ideal is not to go to heaven. Get out of this earth, get out of hell, and get out of heaven! What is the goal? It is freedom. You must all be free. The glory of the soul is covered up. It has to be uncovered again. (51)

The object of the search of the Hindu is how to get rid of this birth and death, how not to go to heaven, but how one can stop going to heaven. (52)

iii) Giving Up Our Individuality Centered in the Body and Living a Life of Bliss Infinite

The Vedanta says there must come a time when we shall look back and laugh at the ideals which make us afraid of giving up our individuality. Each one of us wants to keep this body for an indefinite time, thinking we shall be very happy; but there will come a time when we shall laugh at this idea. Now, if such be the truth, we are in a state of hopeless contradiction - neither existence nor non-existence, neither misery nor happiness, but a mixture of them. What, then, is the use of Vedanta and all other philosophies and religions? And, above all, what is the use of doing good work? This is a question that comes to mind. If it is true that you cannot do good without doing evil and whenever you try to create happiness there will always be misery, people will ask you, "What is the use of doing good?" The answer is, in the first place, we must work to lessen misery, for that is the only way to make ourselves happy. Every one of us finds it out sooner or later in our lives. The bright ones find it out a little earlier, and the dull ones a little later. The dull ones pay very dearly for the discovery and the

bright ones less dearly. In the second place, we must do our part, because it is the only way of getting out of this life of contradiction. Both the forces of good and evil will keep the universe alive for us, until we awake from our dreams and give up this building of mud pies. That lesson we shall have to learn, and it will take a long, long time to learn it. (53)

The pig body is hard to give up; we are sorry to lose the enjoyment of our one little pig body! Vedanta does not say, "Give it up"; it says, "Transcend it." No need of asceticism - better would be the enjoyment of two bodies, better three, living in more bodies than one! When I can enjoy through the whole universe, the whole universe is my body. (54)

The whole object of the [Vedanta] system is by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God; and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect [Matt.5.48] constitutes the religion of the Hindus.

And what becomes of someone when he or she attains perfection? He or she lives a life of bliss infinite. He or she enjoys infinite and perfect bliss, having obtained the only thing in which human beings ought to have pleasure, namely God, and enjoys bliss with God. (55)

Cross reference to:

Mund. Up., 3.1.5

Gita 13.13

Brih. Up., 2.5.1

Cha. Up., .3.14.1

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PART II, SECTION 6: THE SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF THE VEDAS AND VEDANTA

Chapter 16: The Evolution of Divine Humanity through Fearlessness, Strength, Faith and Love

a) Fearlessness and Strength

1. The Only Religion That Ought to Be Taught Is the Religions of Fearlessness

If you read the Vedas you will find this word always repeated - fearlessness; fear nothing. Fear is a sign of weakness. People must go about their duties without taking notice of the sneers and ridicule of the world. (1)

What makes people stand up and work? Strength. Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. If there is one word that you find coming like a bombshell from the Upanishads, bursting like a bombshell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness. And the only religion that ought to be taught is the realization of fearlessness. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, and fear that breeds evil. (2)

Very few indeed are there who can understand and appreciate, far less live and move in the grandeur of the full blaze of light of the Vedanta, because the first step for the pure Vedantist is to be abhii, fearless. Weakness has got to go before someone dares to become a Vedantist - and we know how difficult that is. Even those who have given up all connection with the world and have very few bondages to make them cowards, feel in the heart of their hearts how weak they are at moments, at times how soft they become, how cowed down; much more is it so with people who have so many bondages and have to remain as slaves to so many hundred and thousand things, inside and outside of themselves - nay, every moment of whose life is dragged-down slavery. (3)

So I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea of strength. The quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta and all, lies in that one word. Buddha's teaching was non-resistance or non-injury. But I think this is a better way of teaching the same thing. For behind that non-injury lay a dreadful weakness. It is weakness that conceived the idea of resistance. I do not think of punishing or escaping from a drop of sea-spray. It is nothing to me. Yet to the mosquito it would be serious. Now I would make all injury like that. Strength and fearlessness. (4)

Cross reference to:

Taitt. Up., 2.8

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

Gita, 2.24

2. Bringing Religion and Freedom within Your Easy Reach

This forms the one great question asked by Vedanta: why are people so afraid? The answer is that they have made themselves helpless and dependent upon others. We are so lazy we do not want to do anything for ourselves. We want a personal God, a savior or prophet to do everything for us. Very rich people never walk; they always go in a carriage; but in the course of years, they wake up one day paralyzed all over. Then they begins to feel that the way they had lived was not good, after all. No one can walk for me. Ever time one did, it was to my injury. If everything is done for a someone by another, he or she will lose the use of his or her own limbs. Anything we do ourselves, that is the only thing we do. Anything that is done for us by another never can be ours. You cannot learn spiritual truths from my lectures. If you have learned anything, I was only the spark that brought it out, made it flash. That is all the prophets and teachers can do. All this running after help is foolishness. (5)

Stand upon your own feet. You have the power within you!... Strength! Strength!... I preach nothing but strength. That is why I preach the Upanishads. (6)

We have a place for struggle in Vedanta, but not for fear. All fears will vanish when you begin to assert your own nature. If you think you are bound, bound you will remain. If you think you are free, free you will be. (7)

The quintessence of the Vedanta philosophy, as also the keynote of the Upanishads consists in this: fearlessness! fearlessness! Be fearless, away with all weakness. If you can do this, then alone you are a true human being indeed. Whom to fear? What to fear? The Atman that shines through you is the same Atman dwelling in all. If you cannot perceive the identity of the Atman in all individuals, if you cannot sympathize with the afflictions of all, if you cannot

remove the sufferings of others, if your heart does not well out in love for one and all, and you are unable to serve others to the best of your ability - how do you reckon yourself a human being? You are no better than a beast. Is it not an absurdity on your part to talk of religion? So, first try to be a human being in the true sense of the term: strong, virile, self-relying. You will then see that religion and liberation will be within your easy reach. (8)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 7.25

Brih. Up., 1.4.2

2.4.14

Is Up. Peace Chant

Mund. Up., 3.2.4

b) Faith and Love

1. The Indian Ideal of Love Can Be Traced to the Upanishads

Faith in one's own Self... is the basis of Vedanta. (9)

The Upanishads deal elaborately with shraddha (faith) in many places but hardly mention bhakti. (10)

Sometimes it has been urged without any ground whatsoever that there is no ideal of bhakti in the Upanishads. Those that have been students of the Upanishads know that that is not true at all. There is enough bhakti in every Upanishad if only you will seek for it; but many of these ideas which are found so fully developed in later times in the Puranas and other Smritis are only in the germ in the Upanishads. The sketch, the skeleton, as it were, is there. It was filled in in some of the Puranas. But there is not one full-grown Indian ideal that cannot be traced back to the same source - the Upanishads. Certain ludicrous attempts have been made by persons without much Upanishadic scholarship to trace bhakti to some foreign source; but, as you know, these have all been

proved to be failures, and all that you want of bhakti is there, even in the Samhitas, not to speak of the Upanishads. It is there, worship and love and all the rest of it; only the ideals of bhakti are becoming higher and higher. In the Samhita portions, now and then you find traces of a religion of fear and tribulation; in the Samhitas now and then you find a worshipper quaking before a Varuna or some other god. Now and then you will find that they are very much tortured by the idea of sin, but the Upanishads have no place for the delineation of these things. There is no religion of fear in the Upanishads; it is one of Love and Knowledge. (11)

As we listen to the heart-stirring poetry of the marvelous lines [of the Upanishads] we are taken, as it were, off from the world of the senses, off even from the world of intellect, and brought to that world which can never be comprehended, and yet which is always with us. There is behind even the sublimity [of the Upanishads] another ideal, following as its shadow, one more acceptable to mankind, one more of daily use, one that has to enter into every part of human life, which assumes proportion and volume later on and is stated in full and in determined language in the Puranas, and that is the ideal of bhakti. (12)

Cross reference to:

Ka. Up., 2.2.15

2. The Aryans Approached God with Faith Devoid of Fear, Which Later Developed into Full- Grown Love

Q: Some of our philosophers in Germany have thought that the whole doctrine of bhakti (love of the divine) in India was very likely the result of occidental influence.

Swami Vivekananda: I do not take any stock in that. The assumption is ephemeral. The bhakti of India is not like Western bhakti. The central idea of ours is that there is no thought of fear. It is always, love God. There is no worship through fear, but always through love, from beginning to end. In the second place, the assumption is quite unnecessary. Bhakti is spoken of in the oldest of the Upanishads, which is much older than the Christian Bible. The

terms of bhakti are even in the Samhita (the Vedic hymns). The word bhakti is not a Western word. It was suggested by the word shraddha (faith). (13)

In the Semitic type of religion there was tribulation and fear; it was thought that if someone saw God, he or she would die. But, according to the Rig Veda, when someone saw God face to face, then began his or her real life.

(14)

One supreme Being, supreme by being infinitely more powerful than the rest, is the common conception in the two great sources of all religions, the Aryan and the Semitic races. But here the Aryans take a new start, a grand deviation. Their God was not only a supreme Being, but He was the dyaus pitar, the Father in Heaven. This is the beginning of love. The Semitic God was only a thunderer, only the terrible One, the mighty Lord of Hosts. To all these the Aryan added a new idea, that of a Father. And the divergence becomes more and more obvious all through further progress, which in fact stopped at this place in the Semitic branch of the human race. The God of the Semitic is not to be seen - nay, it is death to see Him; the God of the Aryan cannot only be seen, but He or She is the goal of being; the one aim of life is to see Him or Her. The Semitic obeys his or her King of kings for fear of punishment and keeps His commandments. The Aryan loves his or her Father; and further on adds Mother and Friend. And, "Love me, love my dog", they say; so each one of His or Her creatures should be loved, because they are His or Her's. To the Semitic, this life is an outpost where we are posted to test our fidelity; to the Aryan, this life is on the way to the goal. To the Semitic, if we do our duty well, we shall have an ever-joyful home in heaven. To the Aryan, this home is God Him or Herself. To the Semitic; to the Aryan race, serving God is a means to an end, namely the pay, which is joy and enjoyment. To the Aryan, enjoyment, misery - everything - is a means and the end is God. The Semitic worships God to go to heaven, the Aryan rejects heaven to go to God. In short, this is the main difference. The aim and end of the Aryan life is to see God, to see the face of the Beloved, because without Him or Her we cannot live. (15)

The one great [Vedantic] ideal of oneness had developed and become shaped into universal love. We ought to study [how the ideas grow up from very low ideals] in order to avoid dangers. The world cannot find time to work [the idea] up from the lowest steps. But what is the use of our standing on higher steps if

we cannot give the truth to others coming afterwards? Therefore, it is better to study it in all its workings; and first, it is absolutely necessary to clear the intellectual portion; although we know that intellectuality is almost nothing; for it is the heart that is of the most importance. (16)

That the Atman is the one object to be loved is known from Shruti, Smriti, and direct perception.(17)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.8

Taitt. Up., 2.8

Brih. Up., 2.4.5

c) The Vedas Taught a Method of Love Which Gave Freedom to Worship in Various Forms

1. Freedom of the Ideal

[The path of knowledge] belonged properly to the Aryas and therefore was so strict in the selection of adhikaris (qualified aspirants); and the (path of devotion) coming from the South, or non-Aryan sources, had no such distinction. (18)

Bhakti is divided into vaidhi and raganuga bhakti. Vaidhi bhakti is implicit belief in and obedience to the Vedas. (19)

There are as many different conducts taught in the Vedas as there are differences in human nature. What is taught to an adult cannot be taught to a child. (20)

The Vedas contain not only the means of obtaining bhakti, but also the means for obtaining any earthly good or evil. Take whatever you want. (21)

Except for the five devatas who are to be worshipped in every auspicious karma as enjoined in our Shastras, all the other devatas are merely the names of

certain states held by them. But again, these five devatas are nothing but the different names of the one God only. (22)

Unless a person chooses [a religion] for him or herself, the very spirit of Hinduism is destroyed. The essence of our faith consists simply in... freedom of the ishta [chosen ideal]. (23)

It has been recognized in the most ancient times that there are various forms of worshipping God. It is also recognized that different natures require different methods. Your method of coming to God may not be my method; possibly it might hurt me. Such an idea as that there is but one way for everybody is injurious, meaningless, and entirely to be avoided. Woe unto the world when everyone is of the same religious opinion and takes to the same path. Then all religions and all thought will be destroyed. Variety is the very soul of life. When it dies out entirely, creation will die. When this variation in thought is kept up, we must exist; and we need not quarrel because of that variety. Your way is very good for you, but not for me. My way is good for me, but not for you. My way is called in Sanskrit my ishta. Mind you, we have no quarrel with any religion in the world. We each have our ishta. But when we see people coming and saying, "This is the only way" and trying to force it on us in India, we have a word to say: we laugh at them. For such people who want to destroy their brothers and sisters because they seem to follow a different path towards God - for them to talk of love is absurd. Their love does not count for much. How can they preach love who cannot bear another person to follow a path different from their own? If that is love, what is hatred? We have no quarrel with any religion in the world, whether it teaches people to worship Christ, Buddha or Muhammad, or any other prophet. "Welcome, my brother, my sister", the Hindu says; "I am going to help you; but you must allow me to follow my way, too. That is my ishta. Your way is very good, no doubt; but it may be dangerous for me. My own experience tells me what food is good for me, and no army of doctors can tell me that. So I know from my own experience what path is the best for me." That is the goal, the ishta; and, therefore, we say that if a temple or a symbol or an image helps you to realize the divinity within, you are welcome to it. Have two hundred images if you like. If certain forms and formularies help you to realize the divine, God speed you; have, by all means, whatever forms and whatever temples and whatever ceremonies you want to bring you nearer to God; but do not quarrel about them; the moment you

quarrel, you are not going Godwards; you are going backward towards the brutes. (24)

The more sides you can develop, the more souls you have and you can see the universe through all souls - through the bhakta (devotee), and the jnani (philosopher). Determine your own nature and stick to it. Nishtha (devotion to the ideal) is the only method for the beginner; but with devotion and sincerity it will lead to all. Churches, doctrines, forms are the hedges to protect the tender plant; but they must later be broken down so that the plant may become a tree. So the various religions, Bibles, Vedas, dogmas - all are must tubs for the little plants; but it must get out of the tub. (25)

Cross reference to:

Mund. Up., 2.2.1

2. Worship of the True Guru and Repetition of Om

Worshipping of the guru is the first duty inculcated in the Vedas. (26)

Those alone, say the Shastras, are the real gurus who have studied the Vedas and Vedanta, who are knowers of Brahman and who are able to lead others beyond to fearlessness [Vivekacudamani, 33]; when such are at hand, get yourself initiated. (27)

Japa is repeating the holy Name; through this the devotee rises to the Infinite. This boat of [ritual] sacrifice and ceremonies is very frail; we need more than that to know Brahman, which alone is freedom. Liberty is nothing more than destruction of ignorance, and that can only go when we know Brahman. It is not necessary to go through all these ceremonials to reach the meaning of Vedanta. Repeating Om is enough. (28)

Around this word Om are centered all the different religious ideas in India; all the various ideas of the Vedas have gathered themselves around this word Om. What has that to do with America and England, or any other country? Simply this, that the word has been retained at every stage of religious growth in India, and it has been manipulated to mean all the various ideas about God. Monists, dualists, mono-dualists, separatists, and even atheists look up to this

Om. Om has become the one symbol for the religious aspiration of the vast majority of human beings. Take, for instance, the English word *God*. It covers only a limited function; and if you go beyond it, you have to add adjectives to make it personal, or impersonal, or absolute *God*. So with the words for *God* in every other language; their signification is very small. This word *Om*, however, has around it all the various significances. As such, it should be accepted by everyone. (29)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 2.4.5

Brih. Up. 4.3.33

Ka. Up., 1.2.7

Ka. Up., 1.2.15

3. The Greatest Gurus Are the Incarnations of God

From the very earliest times our sages have been feeling conscious of the fact that the vast majority of humankind require a personality. They must have a personal *God* in some form or another. The very Buddha who declared against the existence of a personal *God* had not died fifty years before his disciples manufactured a personal *God* out of him. The personal *God* is necessary; and at the same time we know that instead of and better than the vain imaginations of a personal *God*, in which ninety-nine cases out of a hundred are unworthy of human worship, we have in this world, living and talking in our midst, living *Gods*, now and then. These are more worthy of worship than any imaginary *God*, any creation of our imagination - that is to say, any idea of *God* which you or I can have. Buddha is a much higher idea, a more living and idolized ideal than the ideal you or I can conceive of in our minds; and therefore it is that they have always commanded the worship of humankind, even to the exclusion of the imaginary deities .

(30)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 2.4.14

Gita 4.7-8

4. Worship of Divine Incarnations is the First Step towards Recognition of the Oneness of God and Humanity

When... any gods or other beings are worshipped in and for themselves, such worship is only ritualistic karma; and as a vidya (science) it gives us only the fruit belonging to that particular vidya; but when the devas or any other beings are looked upon as Brahman and worshipped, the result obtained is the same as by worshipping of Ishwara. This explains how, in many cases, both in the Shrutis and the Smritis, a God, or a sage, or some other extraordinary being is taken up and lifted, as it were, out of his or her own nature and idealized into Brahman, and is then worshipped. (31)

In the Vedas we find mention of the matsya avatara (the fish incarnation) only. Whether all believe this doctrine or not, is not the point. The real meaning, however, of this avataravada is the worship of humanity - to see God in human beings is the real God-vision. The Hindu does not go through nature to nature's God - he or she goes to the God of humanity through Humanity. (32)

The theory of incarnation is the first link in the chain of ideas leading to the recognition of the oneness of God and humanity. God appearing first in one human form, then re-appearing at different times in other human forms, is at last recognized as being in every human form, or in all human beings. (33)

Cross reference to:

Mand. Up., 2

5. The Manifestation of the Divinity of Humanity

We believe that every being is divine, is God. Every soul is a sun covered over with clouds of ignorance; the difference between soul and soul is owing to the difference in the density of these clouds. We believe that this is the conscious or unconscious basis of all religions, and that this is the explanation of the

whole history of human progress, either in the material, intellectual, or spiritual planes - the same Spirit is manifesting through different planes. (34)

Humanity is a good deal conscious, partly unconscious - and there is a possibility of getting beyond consciousness. It is only when we become human beings that we can go beyond reason. The words higher or lower can only be used in the phenomenal world. To say them of the noumenal world is simply contradictory, because there is no differentiation there. Human manifestation is the highest in the phenomenal world. The Vedantist says that he or she is higher than the devas. The gods will have to die and will become human beings again; and in the human body alone they will become perfect. (35)

Infinite knowledge abides within every one in the fullest measure. You are not really ignorant, though you may appear to be so. You are incarnations of God, all of you. You are the incarnation of the almighty, omnipresent, divine Principle. You may laugh at me now, but the time will come when you will understand. You must. Nobody will be left behind. (36)

Cross reference to:

Isha Up., 16

Mand. Up., 2

Mund. Up., 3.2.9

Gita 5.19

d) Humanity Can Be Ever-Free While Living

The question is: is it necessary to pass through all the lower stages to reach the highest, or can a plunge be taken at once? The modern American boy takes twenty-five years to attain that which his forefathers took hundreds of years to do. The present-day Hindu gets in twenty years to the heights reached in eight thousand years by his or her ancestors. On the physical side, the embryo goes from the ameba to the human being in the womb. These are the teachings of modern science. Vedanta goes further and tells us that we not only have to live the life of all past humanity, but also the future life. Whoever does the

first is the educated person, the second is the jivanmukta, forever free (even while living). (37)

The Vedanta teaches that nirvana can be attained here and now, that we do not have to wait for death to reach it. Nirvana is the realization of the Self; and after having once known that, if only for an instant, never again can one be deluded by the mirage of personality. Having eyes, we must see the apparent, but all the time we know what it is; we have found out its true nature. It is the screen that hides the Self, which is unchanging. The screen opens and we find the Self behind it. All change is in the screen. In the saint the screen is thin and the reality can almost shine through. In the sinner the screen is thick, and we are liable to lose sight of the truth that the Atman is there, as well as behind the saint's screen. When the screen is wholly removed we find it never existed - that we were the Atman and nothing else. Even the screen is forgotten. (38)

Cross-reference to:

Shve. Up., 4.3

Gita 5.19

Ntp. Up., 1.6

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS

PART III, SECTION 7: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE VEDIC MESSAGE IN INDIA

Chapter 17: Sectarian Commentators on the Vedanta

a) Sects, the Division of Spiritual Labor

1. The Interpretation of the Vedas by Various Sects Should be Allowed

The Vedas are the common source of Hinduism in all its varied stages, as also of Buddhism and every other religious belief in India. The seeds of the multifarious growth of Indian thought on religion lie buried in the Vedas. Buddhism and the rest of India's religious thought are the outcome of the unfolding and expansion of those seeds, and modern Hinduism also is only their developed and matured form. With the expansion or the contraction of society, those seeds lie more or less expanded at one place or more or less contracted at another.(1)

There are certain principles in which, I think, we - whether Vaishnavas, Shaktas or Ganapatyas, whether we belong to the ancient Vedantists or the modern ones, whether belonging to the old, rigid sects or the modern reformed ones - are all one; and whoever calls him or herself a Hindu believes in those principles. Of course, there is a difference in the interpretation, in the explanation of those principles, and that difference should be there, and it should be allowed, for our standard is not to bind everyone down to our position. It would be a sin to force everyone to work out our own interpretation of things, and to live by our methods.(2)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 1.164, 46

2. All Religions and All Methods of Work and Worship Lead Us to One and the Same Goal

[The] peculiar idea of the Vedanta is that we must allow this infinite variation in religious thought and not try to bring everybody to the same opinion, because the goal is the same.(3)

Every sect of every religion presents only one ideal of its own to humankind, but the eternal Vedantic religion opens to humankind an infinite number of doors

for ingress into the inner shrine of divinity and places before humanity an almost inexhaustible array of ideals, there being in each of them a manifestation of the eternal One. With the kindest solicitude the Vedanta points out to aspiring men and women the numerous roads, hewn out of the solid rock of the realities of human life by the glorious sons and daughters - or human manifestations of God - in the past and in the present, and stands with arms outstretched to welcome all - to welcome even those that are yet to be - to that Home of Truth and that Ocean of Bliss wherein the human soul, liberated from the net of maya, may transport itself with perfect freedom and with eternal joy.(4)

The grandest idea in the religion of the Vedanta is that we may reach the same goal by different paths; and these paths I have generalized into four, viz. those of work, love, psychology, and knowledge. But you must, at the same time, remember that these divisions are not very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other; but according to the type which prevails, we name the divisions. It is not that you can find people who have no other faculty than that of work, nor that you can find people who are no more than devoted worshippers only, nor that there are people who have no more than mere knowledge. These divisions are made in accordance with the type, or the tendency that may be seen to prevail in people. We have found that, in the end, all these four paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the same goal.(5)

3. The Religion and the Vedas Has the Vigor to Absorb Sect after Sect

Three religions now stand in the world which have come down to us from time prehistoric - Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism. They have all received tremendous shocks and all of them proved themselves by their survival their internal strength. But while Judaism failed to absorb Christianity and was driven out of its place of birth by its all-conquering daughter, and a handful of Parsees is all that remains to tell the tale of their grand religion, sect after sect arose in India and seemed to shake the religion of the Vedas to its very foundations; but, like the waters of the seashore in a tremendous earthquake it receded only for a while, only to return in an all-absorbing flood, a thousand times more vigorous; and when the tumult of the rush was over, these sects were all sucked in, absorbed and assimilated into the immense body of the mother faith.

From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the lowest ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindus' religion.(6)

[Many] books constitute the scriptures of the Hindus. When there is such a mass of sacred books in a nation and a race which has devoted the greatest part of its energies to the thought of philosophy and spirituality (nobody knows for how many thousands of years), it is quite natural that there should be so many sects; indeed it is a wonder that there are not thousands more.(7)

4. It Is the Necessity of the Age That All Sects Should Be Allowed to Live

To preach Vedanta in the land of India and before an Indian audience seems... to be an anomaly. But it is the one thing that has to be preached, and it is the necessity of the age that it must be preached. For... all the Indian sects must bear allegiance to the Upanishads; but among those sects there are many apparent contradictions. Many times the great sages of yore themselves could not understand the underlying harmony of the Upanishads. Many times even sages quarreled; so much so that it became a proverb that there are no sages who do not differ.(8)

There are some religions [including the Vedic] which have come down to us from the remotest antiquity, which are imbued with the idea that all sects should be allowed to live, that every sect has a meaning, a great idea, embedded within itself and, therefore, it is necessary for the good of the world and ought to be helped. In modern times the same idea is prevailing and attempts are made from time to time to reduce it to practice. These attempts do not always come up to our expectations, to the required efficiency. Nay, to our great disappointment, we sometimes find that we are quarreling all the more.(9)

We may take different points of view as to what the Vedas are. There may be one sect which regards one portion as more sacred than another, but that matters little so long as we say that we are all brothers and sisters in the Vedas, that out of these venerable, eternal, marvelous books has come everything that we possess today, good, holy and pure. Well, therefore, if we believe in all this, let this principle first of all be preached broadcast

throughout the length and breadth of [India]. If this be true, let the Vedas have that prominence which they always deserve and which we all believe in.(10)

b) Vedanta, the Sect Which Must Cover the Whole Ground of Indian Religious Life

1. The Vedic Sect Which Now Really Covers India is Vedanta, Which Is Itself Divided into Three Schools

The Upanishads not being in a systematized form, it was easy for philosophers to take up texts as they liked to form a system. The Upanishads had always to be taken, else there would be no basis. Yet we find all the different schools of thought in the Upanishads.(11)

There are six schools of philosophy in India that are regarded as orthodox, because they believe in the Vedas.(12)

Of the three orthodox divisions [of Hinduism] - the Sankhyas, the Naiyayikas, and the Mimamsakas - the former two, although they existed as philosophical schools, failed to form any sect. The one sect that now really covers India is that of the later Mimamsakas or Vedantists. Their philosophy is called Vedantism.(13)

[In the Brahma-Sutras] Vyasa's philosophy is par excellence that of the Upanishads. He wrote in sutra form, that is, in brief, algebraic symbols without nominative or verb. This cause so much ambiguity that out of the Sutras came dualism, mono-dualism and monism or "roaring Vedanta".(14)

The Sutras of Vyasa have been variously explained by different commentators (15)

2. The Modern Custom Is to Identify the Word "Vedanta" with the School of Non-Dualism

All the schools of Hindu philosophy start from the Vedanta or Upanishads, but the monists took the name to themselves as a specialty, because they wanted to base the whole of their theology and philosophy upon the Vedanta and nothing else. In course of time, the Vedanta prevailed and all the various sects of India

that now exist can be referred to one or other of its schools. Yet these schools are not unanimous in their opinions.(16)

Of late it has become the custom of most people to identify the word Vedanta with the Advaitic system of the Vedanta philosophy. We all know that Advaitism [non-dualism] is only one branch of the various philosophic systems that have been founded on the Upanishads. The followers of the Vishishtadvaitic [qualified non-dualism] system have as much reverence for the Upanishads as the followers of the Advaita , and the Vishishtadvaitists claim as much authority for the Vedanta as does the Advaitist. So do the Dualists; so does every other sect in India. But the word Vedantist has become identified in the popular mind with the word Advaitist, and perhaps with some reason; because, although we have the Vedas for our scriptures, we have Smritis and Puranas - subsequent writings - to illustrate the doctrine of the Vedas; these, of course, have not the same weight as the Vedas. And the law is that wherever these Puranas and Smritis differ from any part of the Shruti [canonical text], the Shruti must be followed and the Smriti rejected. Now, in the expositions of the great Advaitic philosopher, Shankara, and the school founded by him we find most of the authorities cited are from the Upanishads; very rarely is an authority cited from the Smritis except, perhaps, to elucidate a point which could hardly be found in the Shrutis. On the other hand, other schools take refuge more and more in the Smritis and less and less in the Shrutis; and as we go to the more and more Dualistic sects, we find a proportionate quantity of the Smritis quoted, which is out of all proportion to what we should expect from a Vedantist. It is, perhaps, because these gave such predominance to the Puranic authorities that the Advaitist came to be considered as the Vedantist par excellence, if I may say so.(17)

In what is being written and taught in the West about the religious thought of India, one school of Indian thought is principally represented - that which is called Advaitism, the monistic [non-dual] side of Indian religion; and sometimes it is thought that all the teachings of the Vedas are comprised in that one system of philosophy. There are, however, various phases of Indian thought; and, perhaps, this non-dualistic form is in the minority as compared with the other phases. From the most ancient times there have been various sects of thought in India; and, as there never was a formulated or recognized church or any body of men to designate the doctrines which should be believed in by each school, people were very free to choose their own forms, make their own

philosophy and establish their own sects. We, therefore, find that from the most ancient times India was full of religious sects. At the present time, I do not know how many hundreds of sects we have in India; and several fresh ones are coming into existence every year. It seems that the religious activity of the nation is simply inexhaustible.(18)

Unfortunately there is the mistaken notion in modern India [also] that the word Vedanta has reference only to the Advaita system; but you must always remember that in modern India the three prasthanas are considered equally important in the study of all the systems of religion.(19)

The word Vedanta, however, must cover the whole ground of Indian religious life; and, being part of the Vedas, by all acceptance it is the most ancient literature we have.(20)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.10a

3. The Three Vedantic Schools Are All Equally Important and Do Not Contradict Each Other, But Fulfill

It would be wrong to confine the word Vedanta to only one system which has arisen out of the Upanishads. The Vishishtadvaitist has as much right to be called a Vedantist as the Advaitist; in fact, I will go a little further and say that what we really mean by the word Hindu is really the same as the Vedantist.(21)

This is what I mean by Vedanta, that it covers the ground of dualism, of qualified monism, and Advaitism in India. Perhaps we may even take in parts of Buddhism and of Jainism, too - if they would come in - for our hearts are sufficiently large. But it is they that will not come in. We are ready - for, upon severe analysis you will always find that the essence of Buddhism was all borrowed from the same Upanishads; even the ethics, the so-called great and wonderful ethics of Buddhism were there, word for word, in some one or other of the Upanishads; and so, too, all the good doctrines of the Jains were there, minus their vagaries. In the Upanishads also we find the germs of all subsequent development of Indian religious thought.(22)

The Vedanta philosophy, as it is generally called at the present day, really comprises all the various sects that now exist in India. Thus there have been various interpretations; and, to my mind, they have been progressive, beginning with the dualistic or Dvaita and ending with the non-dualistic or Advaita.(23)

Our solution is that the Advaita is not antagonistic to Dvaita (dualism). We say the latter is only one of three steps. The first is dualism. Then we get to a higher state - partial non-dualism. And at last we find we are one with the universe. Therefore the three do not contradict, but fulfill.(24)

4. The Vedanta Contains All of Religion and Its Three Schools Represent the Stages of Humanity's Gradual Spiritual Growth

If one studies the Vedas between the lines, one sees a religion of harmony.(25)

I want you to note that the three systems [of Indian philosophy] have been current in India almost from time immemorial; for you must not believe that Shankara was the inventor of the Advaita system. It existed ages before Shankara was born; he was one of its last representatives. So with the Vishishtadvaita system; it had existed ages before Ramanuja appeared, as we already know from the commentaries he has written; so with the dualistic systems that have existed side by side with the others. And with my little knowledge I have come to the conclusion that they do not contradict each other.

Just as in the case of the six darshanas [systems of Indian philosophy], we find they are a gradual unfolding of the grand principles whose music, beginning far back in soft, low notes, ends in the triumphant blast of the Advaita, so also in these three systems we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals until everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system. Therefore these three are not contradictory.(26)

To realize God, the Brahman (as the Dvaitins say) or to become Brahman (as the Advaitins say) - is the aim and end of the whole teaching of the Vedas; and every other teaching therein contained represents a stage in the course of our

progress thereto.(27)

All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essential of religion. The Vedanta, applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India, is Hinduism. The first stage, i.e. Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe, is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Islam. The Advaita, as applied in its yoga-perception form, is Buddhism, etc. Now, by religion is meant the Vedanta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, their surrounding, and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that, although the philosophy is the same, the Shaktas, Shaivas, etc. apply it each to their own special cult and forms.(28)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

Mund. Up., 2.1.1

c) The Mistake of the Thinking the Upanishads Teach Only One Thing

1. Every Indian Philosopher Must Find His or Her Authority in the Upanishads

Whatever be the philosophy or sect, everyone in India has to find his or her authority in the Upanishads. If he or she cannot, his or her sect would be heterodox.(29)

In India... in spite of all these jarring sects which we see today and all those that have been in the past, the one authority, the basis of all these systems, has yet been the Upanishads, the Vedanta. Whether you are a dualist, or a qualified monist, Advaitist, Vishishtadvaitist, Shuddhadvaitist, or any other Advaitist, or a dualist, or whatever you may call yourself, there stand behind you as authority your Shastras, your scriptures, the Upanishads. Whatever system in India does not obey the Upanishads cannot be called orthodox; and even the systems of the Jains and the Buddhists have been rejected from the

soil of India only because they did not bear allegiance to the Upanishads. Thus the Vedanta, whether we know it or not, has penetrated all the sects in India, and what we call Hinduism, this mighty banyan with its immense, almost infinite ramifications, has been throughout interpenetrated by the influence of the Vedanta. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we think the Vedanta, we live in the Vedanta, we breathe in the Vedanta, and we die in the Vedanta; and every Hindu does that.(30)

The Vedanta, then, practically forms the scriptures of the Hindus, and all systems of philosophy that are orthodox have to take it as their foundation. Even the Buddhists and Jains, when it suits their purpose, will quote a passage from the Vedanta as authority.(31)

We know that all our great philosophers, whether Vyasa, Patanjali, or Gautama, and even the father of all philosophy, the great Kapila himself, whenever they wanted an authority for what they wrote, every one of them found it in the Upanishads and nowhere else; for therein are the truths that remain for ever.(32)

Either in the sharp analysis of the Vaisheshikas, resulting in the wonderful theories about the paramanus, dvyanus and trasarenius [atoms, entities composed of two atoms, entities composed of three atoms], or the still more wonderful analysis displayed in the discussions of jati, dravya, guna, samavaya (genus, substance, quality and inhesion or inseparability), and to the various categories of the Naiyayikas, rising to the solemn march of the thought of the Sankhyas, the fathers of the theories of evolution, ending with the ripe fruit, the result of all these researches, the Sutras of Vyasa - the one background to all these different analyses and syntheses of the human mind is still the Shrutis.(33)

2. Vedantic Sects Have Been Founded by Explaining the Upanishadic Conception from Only One Standpoint

You find that the [Upanishadic] texts have been commented upon by different commentators, preached by great teachers, and sects founded upon them; and you find that in these books of the Vedas there are apparently contradictory ideas.(34)

Commentators came and tried to smooth down [the highest and lowest thoughts which have all been preserved in the Vedas] and to bring out wonderful new ideas from the old things; they tried to find spiritual ideas even in the midst of the most ordinary statements, but the texts remained and as such, they are the most wonderful historical study.(35)

Now I will try to lay before you the ideas that are contained in the three sects, the dualistic, qualified no-dualistic and non-dualistic [which cover all six schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy].... All the Vedantists agree on three points. They believe in God, in the Vedas as revealed, and in cycles.... [We have already considered these]; but before going on, I will make one remark - that these different Vedanta systems have one common psychology, and that is the psychology of the Sankhya system. The Sankhya psychology is very much like the psychologies of the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika systems, differing only in minor particulars....

The Vedantists, [however], reject the Sankhya ideas of the soul and nature. They claim that between them there is a huge gulf to be bridged over. On the one hand, the Sankhya system comes to nature, and then at once it has to jump over to the other side and come to the soul, which is entirely separate from nature. How can these different colors, as the Sankhya calls them, be able to act on that soul which is by its nature colorless? So the Vedantists, from the very first, affirm that this soul and this nature are one.... They admit that what the Sankhya calls nature exists, but say that nature is God. It is this Being, the Sat, which has become converted into all this - the universe, humanity, soul, and everything that exists. Mind and Mahat are but the manifestations of that one Sat. But then the difficulty arises that that would be pantheism. How came that Sat, which is unchangeable, as they admit (for that which is absolute is unchangeable) to be changed into that which is changeable and perishable? The Advaitists here have a theory which they call vivarta vada or apparent manifestation.(36)

[Now], there are certain [Vedic] texts which are entirely dualistic, others are entirely monistic. The dualistic commentator, knowing no better, wishes to knock the monistic texts on the head. Preachers and priests want to explain them in the dualistic meaning. The monistic commentator serves the dualistic texts in a similar fashion. Now this is not the fault of the Vedas. It is foolish to attempt to prove that the whole of the Vedas is dualistic. It is equally foolish

to attempt to prove that the whole of the Vedas is non-dualistic. They are dualistic and non-dualistic, both. We understand them better today in the light of newer ideas. These are but different conceptions leading to the final conclusion that both dualistic and monistic conceptions are necessary for the evolution of the mind, and therefore the Vedas preach them. In mercy to the human race the Vedas show the various steps to the higher goal. Not that they are contradictory, vain words used by the Vedas to delude children; they are necessary, not only for children, but for many a grownup person. So long as we have a body and so long as we are deluded by the idea of our identity with the body, so long as we have five senses and see the external world, we must have a personal God. For if we have all these ideas, we must take, as the great Ramanuja has proved, all the ideas about God and nature and the individualized soul; when you take the one you have to take the whole triangle - we cannot avoid it. Therefore, so long as you see the external world, to avoid a personal God and a personal soul is arrant lunacy.(37)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.10

Taitt. Up., 2.4

Cha. Up., 3.1.4 (?)

Cha. Up., 3.14.1.

Cha. Up., 6.1.4

Cha. Up., 7.25.1

Kena Up., 1.3, 2.2

Mund. Up., 1.1.3

3. By Making the Texts Suit Their Own Philosophy Our Commentators Have Created Apparent Contradictions in the Upanishadic Theme of Unity in Diversity

All the great commentators in these different schools were at times "conscious liars" in order to make the texts suit their philosophy.(38)

The Advaitic commentator, whenever an Advaitic text comes, preserves it just as it is; but the same commentator, as soon as a dualistic text presents itself, tortures it if he can and brings the most queer meaning out of it. Sometimes the unborn becomes a goat - such are the wonderful changes effected. To suit the commentator, the word aja (the unborn) is explained as aja, a she-goat. In the same way, if not in a still worse fashion, the texts are handled by the dualistic commentator. Every dualistic text is preserved, and every text that speaks of non-dualistic philosophy is tortured in any fashion he likes. This Sanskrit language is so intricate, the Sanskrit of the Vedas is so ancient, and the Sanskrit philology so perfect, that any amount of discussion can be carried on for ages in regard to the meaning of any word. If pandits takes it into their heads, they can render anybody's prattle into correct Sanskrit by force of argument and quotation of texts and rules. These are the difficulties in our way of understanding the Upanishads.(39)

[Having] an idea of studying the grammar of the Vedas I began with all earnestness to study Panini and the Mahabhashya, but to my surprise I found that the best part of the Vedic grammar consists only of exceptions to the rules. A rule is made and later there comes a statement to the effect, "This rule will be an exception". So you see what an amount of liberty there is for anybody to write anything, the only safeguard being the dictionary of Yaska. Still, in this you will find, for the most part, but a large number of synonyms.(40)

Our great commentators, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya... committed mistakes. Each one believed that the Upanishads are the sole authority, but thought that they preached one thing, one path only. Thus Shankaracharya committed the mistake of supposing that the whole of the Upanishads taught one thing, which was Advaitism and nothing else; and wherever a passage bearing distinctly the Dvaita idea occurred, he twisted and tortured the meaning to make it support his own theory. So with Ramanuja and Madhvacharya when a pure Advaitic text occurred. It was perfectly true that the Upanishads had one thing to teach, but that was taught as a going up from one step to another.(41)

I am bound to tell you that [thinking that the three systems are contradictory] has been a mistake committed by not a few. We find that an Advaitist teacher keeps intact those texts which especially teach Advaitism and tries to interpret the dualistic or qualified non-dualistic texts into his own meaning. Similarly, we find dualistic teachers trying to read their dualistic meaning into Advaitic texts. Our gurus were great men and women; yet there is a saying, "Even the faults of a guru must be told." I am of the opinion that in this only they were mistaken. We need not go into text-torturing, we need not go into any sort of religious dishonesty, we need not go into any sort of grammatical twaddle, we not go about trying to put our own ideas into texts that were never meant for them; but the work is plain and becomes easier once you understand the marvelous doctrine of adhikarabheda.... The old idea of arundhati nyaya applies. To show someone the fine star arundhati, one takes the big and brilliant star nearest to it, upon which he or she is asked to fix his or her eyes first, and then it becomes quite easy to direct his or her sight to arundhati. This is the task before us; and to prove my idea I will have simply to show you the Upanishads, and you will see it.(42)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

Mund. Up., 1.1.3

d) The Great Commentators on the Vedas

1. The Mimamsakas, Who Believed That We, as We Are, Create the Universe through the Vedas

This is the claim of a certain sect of karmis, [the Mimamsakas, a Hindu philosophical sect]: the universe is thought and the Vedas are the words. We can create and uncreate this whole universe. Repeating the words, the unseen thought is aroused, and as a result a seen effect is produced.... They think that each one of us is a creator. Pronounce the words, the thought which corresponds will arise, and the result will become visible. "Thought is the power of the word, the word is the expression of the thought", they say.(43)

2. The Sankhyas, Who Attempted to Harmonize the Philosophy of the Vedas through Reason and Taught That Our Nature Is Purity and Perfection

We think the Sankhya philosophy is the first attempt to harmonize the philosophy of the Vedas through reason.(44)

The commonism all through India [is] this marvelous doctrine of the soul, of the perfection of the Soul, [which is] commonly believed in by all sects. As says our great philosopher Kapila [the founder of the Sankhya school], if purity had not been the nature of the soul it could never attain purity afterwards, for anything that was not perfect by nature, even if it attained to perfection, that perfection would go away again. If impurity is the nature of humanity, then humanity will have to remain impure, even though it may be pure for five minutes. The time will come when this purity will wash out, pass away, and the old natural impurity will have its sway once more. Therefore, say all our philosophers, good is our nature, perfection is our nature, not imperfections, not impurity - and we should remember that.(45)

The Vedanta requires of us faith, for conclusiveness cannot be reached by argumentation. Then why has the slightest flaw detected in the position of the schools the Sankhya and the Nyaya been overwhelmed by a fusillade of dialectics? In whom, moreover, are we to put our faith? Everybody seems to be mad over establishing his own view; if, according to Vyasa [in the Brahma Sutras] even the greatest muni Kapila, "the greatest among perfected souls" [Swet. Up., 5.2] is himself deeply involved in error, then who would say that Vyasa may not be so involved in a greater measure? Did Kapila, then, fail to understand the Vedas? (46)

3. Sri Krishna, Who Showed the Validity of the Various Steps in Religion

What do you find in the Gita, and what in modern commentators? One non-dualistic commentator takes up an Upanisad; there are so many dualistic passages which he twists and tortures into some meaning and wants to bring them all into a meaning of his own. If a dualistic commentator comes, there are so many non-dualistic texts which he begins to torture to bring them all round to a dualistic meaning. But you find in the Gita there is no attempt at torturing any one of them. They are all all right, says the Lord; for slowly and gradually the human soul rises up and up, step after step, from the gross to the fine,

from the fine to the finer, until it reaches the Absolute, the goal. That is what is in the *Gita*. Even the Karma-Kanda is taken up and it is shown that, although it cannot give salvation direct, but only indirectly, yet that also is valid; images are valid indirectly, ceremonies, forms, everything is valid, only with one condition - purity of heart. For worship is valid and leads to the goal if the heart is pure and the heart is sincere; and all these various modes of worship are necessary - else why should they be there? Religions and sects are not the work of hypocrites and wicked people who invented all these to get a little money, as some of our modern people want to think. However reasonable that explanation may seem, it is not true and they were not invented that way at all. They are the outcome of the necessity of the human soul. They are all here to satisfy the hankering and thirst of different classes of human minds; and you need not preach against them. The day when that necessity will cease, they will vanish along with the cessation of that necessity; and so long as that necessity remains, they must be there in spite of your preaching, in spite of your criticisms. You may bring the sword or the gun into play, you may deluge the world with human blood; but so long as there is a necessity for idols, they must remain. These forms, and all the various steps in religion will remain; and we understand from Lord Krishna why they should.(47)

4. Some Meanings from the Brahma-Sutras

No foundation for the authority of the Vedas has been adduced in the Vedanta Sutras. First it has been said that the Vedas are the authority for the existence of God, and then it has been argued that the authority for the Vedas is the text, "He breathed out, as it were, all knowledge" [Brih. Up., 2.4.10], Now is not this statement vitiated by what in Western logic is called an argument in a circle?(48)

In the *Gita* the way is laid open to all men and women, to all caste and color; but Vyasa [the author of the Brahma-Sutras] tries to put meanings upon the Vedas to cheat the poor shudras.(49)

5. Buddha, the Great Vedantist

i) Buddha's Fearless Analysis of the Vedas and His Large-Heartedness in Throwing Their Hidden Truths Broadcast over the World

Buddha was a great Vedantist (for Buddhism is really only an offshoot of Vedanta) and Shankara is often called a "hidden Buddhist". Buddha made the analysis; Shankara made the synthesis out of it. Buddha never bowed down to anything - neither Veda, nor caste, nor priest, nor custom. He fearlessly reasoned so far as reason could take him. Such a fearless search for truth and love for every living thing the world has never seen.(50)

Buddha was more brave and sincere than any [other] teacher. He said, "Believe no book; the Vedas are all humbug. If they agree with me, so much the better for the books. I am the greatest book; sacrifice and prayer are useless."(51)

[The commentators say]: The same God who gives out the Vedas becomes Buddha again to annul them.(52)

There is no help [for the Hindus] out of the clutches of the Buddhists. You may quote the Vedas, but he does not believe them. He will say, "My Tripitakas say otherwise, and they are without beginning or end, not even written by Buddha, for Buddha says he is only reciting them; they are eternal." And he adds, "Yours are wrong, ours are the true Vedas; yours are manufactured by the brahmin priests, therefore out with them!" (53)

ii) Buddha Gave Power and Heart to Vedantic Ideas

Buddha was one of the sannyasins of the Vedanta. He started a new sect, just as others are started even today. The ideas which are now called Buddhism were not his. They were much more ancient. He was a great man who gave the ideas power. The unique element in Buddhism was its social element.(54)

What Buddha did was to break wide open the gates of that very religion which was confined in the Upanishads to a particular caste. What special greatness does his theory of nirvana confer on him? His greatness lies in his unrivaled sympathy. The high orders of samadhi, etc. that lend gravity to his religion are almost all there in the Vedas; what are absent there are his intellect and his heart, which have never been paralleled throughout the history of the world.(55)

iii) It Was Absolutely Necessary for Buddha to Emphasize Non-Violence and Faith in His Teachings

Even in the philosophical writings of the Buddhists or Jains, the help of the Shrutis are never rejected; and in at least some of the Buddhist schools and in the majority of the Jain writings, the authority of the Shrutis is fully admitted, excepting what they call the himsaka Shrutis [dealing with sacrifices involving violence to animals] which they hold to be interpolations of the brahmins.(56)

Buddhist ritual itself, [however], came from the Vedic.(57)

Buddha was the first man to stand against [purification of the mind through sacrifices and such other external means]. But the inner essence of the ideas remained as of old - look at that doctrine of mental exercises which he preached and that mandate of his to believe in the Suttas instead of the Vedas. Caste also remained as of old (caste was not wholly obsolete at the time of Buddha); but it was now determined by personal qualifications; and those that were not believers in his religion were declared heretics, all in the old style. Heretic was a very ancient word with the Buddhists, but then they never had recourse to the sword (good souls!), and had great toleration. Argument blew up the Vedas. But what is the proof of your religion? Well, put faith in it! - the same procedure as in all religions. It was, however, and imperative necessity of the times; and that was the reason of his having incarnated himself. His doctrine was like that of Kapila.(58)

iv) Buddha's Rejection of the Personal God Could Not Hold the Popular Mind

Buddha is expressly agnostic about God; but God is everywhere preached in [Vedanta].(59)

Every one of Buddha's teachings is founded [on] the Vedanta. He was one of those monks who wanted to bring out the truths hidden in those books and in the forest monasteries. I do not believe that the world is ready for them, even now; it still wants those lower religions which teach of a personal God. Because of this, the original Buddhism could not hold the popular mind until it took up the modifications which were reflected back from Tibet and the Tartars. Original Buddhism was not at all nihilistic. It was but an attempt to combat caste and priestcraft.(60)

Hindus can give up everything except their God. To deny God is to cut off the very ground from under the feet of devotion. Devotion and God the Hindus must cling to. They can never relinquish these. And here, in the teaching of Buddha, are no God and no soul - simply work. What for? Not for the self, for the self is a delusion. We shall be ourselves when this delusion has vanished. Very few are there in the world that can rise to that height and work for work's sake.(61)

6. Beliefs of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika School

According to Nyaya, "Shabda or Veda (the criterion of truth) is the word of those who have realized the highest."(62)

Shabdhas are again divided into two classes, the Vedic shabdhas and those in common use. I found this position in the Nyaya book called Shabdashaktiprakashika. There the arguments indicate, no doubt, great power of thought; but, oh, the terminology confounds the brain!(63)

[The Vaisheshikas] are called orthodox because they accepted the Vedas, although they denied the existence of a personal God, believing that everything sprang from the atom or nature.(64)

7. Some Puranic and Tantric Ideas Which Do Not Agree with the Vedas

In the Puranas you find that, during the first divine incarnation, the minavatara,[fish avatar], the Veda is first made manifest. The Vedas having been first revealed in this incarnation, the other creative manifestations followed. (65)

In the Puranas we find many things which do not agree with the Vedas. For instance, it is written in the Puranas that some one lives ten thousand years another twenty thousand years; but in the Vedas we find: "Human beings live indeed a hundred years." [Isha Up., 2] Which are we to accept in this case? Certainly the Vedas. Notwithstanding statements like these, I do not depreciate the Puranas. They contain many beautiful and illuminating teachings and words of wisdom of yoga, bhakti, jnana and karma; those, of course, we should accept.(66)

There is no mention of the division of time into four yugas in the Vedas. They are arbitrary assumptions of the Pauranika times.(67)

The Puranas, no doubt, say that a certain caste has the right to such and such a recension of the Vedas, or a certain caste has no right to study them, or that this portion of the Vedas is for the Satya Yuga and that portion is for the Kali Yuga. But, mark you, the Veda does not say so; it is only your Puranas that do so. But can the servant dictate to the master?(68)

[In principle] it is improper to hold many texts on the same subject to be contradicted by one or two. Why, then, are the long-continued [Vedic] customs of madhuparka [serving beef to a guest] and the like repealed by one or two [Puranic] texts such as, "The horse-sacrifice, the cow-sacrifice, sannyasa, meat-offering in the shraddha [funeral] ceremony are to be forsaken in the Kali Yuga", and so forth?(69)

The Tantra says that in the Kali-Yuga the Vedic mantras are futile.(70)

The Smritis and Puranas are productions of people of limited intelligence and are full of fallacies, errors, and the feelings of class and malice. Only parts of them breathing broadness of spirit and love are acceptable; the rest are to be rejected. The Upanishads and the Gita are the true scriptures.(71)

8. Shankaracharya, the Greatest Teacher of Vedanta

i. Shankaracharya Showed That There Is Only One Infinite Reality and Humans Can Come to It through All the Various Presentations

Shankaracharya... caught the rhythm of the Vedas, the national cadence.... Indeed, I always imagine that he had some vision such as mine [of a rishi chanting the Rig Veda] when he was young, and recovered the ancient music that way. Anyway, his whole life's work is nothing but that, the throbbing of the beauty of the Vedas and Upanishads.(72)

The greatest teacher of the Vedanta philosophy was Shankaracharya. By solid reasoning he extracted from the Vedas the truths of Vedanta, and on them built up the wonderful system of jnana that is taught in his commentaries. He

unified all the conflicting descriptions of Brahman and showed that there is only one, infinite Reality.(73)

Shankara says: God is to be reasoned on, because the Vedas say so. Reason helps inspiration; books and realized reason - or individualized perception - both are proofs of God. The Vedas are, according to him, a sort of incarnation of universal knowledge. The proof of God is that He brought forth the Vedas, and the proof of the Vedas is that such wonderful books could only have been given out by Brahman. They are the mine of all knowledge and they have come out of Brahman as someone breathes out air [Brih. Up, 2.4.10]; therefore we know that It is infinite in power and knowledge. It may or may not have created the world - that is a trifle; to have produced the Vedas is more important! The world has come to know God through the Vedas; there is no other way. And so universal is this belief held by Shankara in the all-inclusiveness of the Vedas, that there is even a Hindu proverb that, if a man loses his cow, he goes to look for her in the Vedas! (74)

Shankara showed, too, that as a humanity can only travel slowly on the upward road, all the varied presentations are needed to suit its varying capacity.(75)

Work and worship... are necessary to take away the veil, to lift off the bondage and illusion. They do not give up freedom; but all the same, without effort on our own part we do not open our eyes and see what we are. Shankara further says that Advaita Vedanta is the crowning glory of the Vedas; but the lower Vedas are also necessary, because they teach work and worship; and through these many come to the Lord. Others may come without any help but Advaita.(76)

Relative knowledge is good, because it leads to absolute knowledge; but neither the knowledge of the senses, nor of the mind, nor even of the Vedas is true, since they are all within the realm of relative knowledge.(77)

ii) Despite His Grand and Rational Doctrine, Shankaracharya Had No Great Liberality of Heart

Shankara's doctrine [is] far more grand and rational [than that of Buddha]. Buddha and Kapila are always saying that the world is full of grief and nothing but that - flee from it - ay, for your life, do! Is happiness altogether absent

here?... There is grief, forsooth, but what can be done? Perchance some will suggest that grief itself will appear as happiness when you become used to it by constant suffering. Shankara does not take this line of argument. He says: This world is and is not - manifold, yet one; I shall unravel its mystery - I shall know whether grief be there, or anything else; I do not flee from it as from a bugbear. I will know all about it - as to the infinite pain that attends its search, well, I am embracing it in its fullest measure. Am I a beast that you frighten me with happiness and misery, decay and death, which are but the outcome of the senses? I will know about it - I will give up my life for it. There is nothing to know about in this world - therefore, if there be anything beyond this relative existence - what the Lord Buddha has designated as prajnapara - the transcendental - if such there be, I want that alone. Whether happiness attends it, or grief, I do not care. What a lofty idea! How grand! The religion of Buddha has reared itself upon the Upanishads, and upon that also the philosophy of Shankara. Only, Shankara had not the slightest bit of Buddha's wonderful heart, dry intellect merely! For fear of the Tantras, for fear of the mob, in his attempt to cure a boil, he amputated the very arm itself! [He neglected the rank and file of his countrymen which had been captured by Tantricism, of which the excesses were threatening the purity of the Vedic religion](78)

Shankara's intellect was sharp as a razor. He was a good arguer and scholar, no doubt of that, but he had no great liberality; his heart too seems to have been like that. Besides, he used to take great pride in his brahminism, much like the southern brahmin of the priest class, you may say. How he has defended his commentary in the Vedanta Sutras that the non-brahmin castes will not attain to a supreme knowledge of Brahman! And what specious arguments! Referring to Vidura [a saintly character in the Mahabharata who was of low caste], he has said that he became a knower of Brahman by reason of his brahmin body in his previous incarnation. Well, if nowadays a shudra [lowest caste person] attains to knowledge of Brahman shall we have to side without your Shankara and maintain that, because he had been a brahmin in his previous birth, therefore he attained to this knowledge! Goodness! What is the use of dragging in brahminism with so much ado! The Vedas have entitled anyone belonging to the three upper castes to a study of the Vedas and the realization of Brahman, haven't they? So Shankara had no need whatsoever of displaying this curious bit of pedantry on this subject, contrary to the Vedas.(79)

Shankaracharya could not adduce any proof from the Vedas to the effect that the shudra should not study the Vedas. He only quotes, "The shudra is not conceived of as a performer of yajna or Vedic sacrifices" [Taitt. Samhita 7.1.1.6] to maintain that when he is not entitled to perform yajnas, neither has he any right to study the Upanishads and the like. But the same acharya contends, with reference to the "Now then commences hence the inquiry about Brahman" [Vedanta Sutras, 1.1.1] that the words now then does not mean subsequent to the study of the Vedas, because it is contrary to proof that the study of the Upanishads is not permissible without the previous study of the Vedic mantras and Brahmanas and because there is no intrinsic sequence between the Vedic karma-kanda and jnana-kanda. It is evident, therefore, that one may attain to the knowledge of Brahman without having studied the ceremonial parts of the Vedas. So, if there is no sequence between the sacrificial practices and jnana, why does the acharya contradict his own statement when it is a case of the shudras, by inserting the clause, "By the force of the same logic"? Why should the shudra not study the Upanishads?(80)

The Upanishads and the Gita are the true scriptures; Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir and so on are the true avatars, for they had hearts as broad as the sky - and, above all, Ramakrishna. Shankara, Ramanuja, etc. seem to have been mere pundits with much narrowness of heart. Where is that love, that weeping heart at the sorrows of others? Dry pedantry of the pandit, and the feeling of only oneself getting to salvation hurry-scurry! But is that going to be possible? Was it ever likely, or will it ever be so? (81)

9. Ramanuja, Who Maintained Eternal Differences within Brahman

Truly it has been said of the Upanishads by Ramanuja that they form the head, the shoulders, the crest of the Vedas, and surely enough the Upanishads have become the Bible of modern India.(82)

Ramanuja says that the Vedas are the holiest study. Let the sons of the three upper castes get the sutra [] and at eight, ten, or eleven years of age begin the study, which means going to a guru and learning the Vedas word for word with perfect intonation and pronunciation.

Visistadvaita is qualified Advaita (monism). Its expounder was Ramanuja. He says, "Out of the ocean of milk of the Vedas Vyasa has churned this butter of

philosophy, the better to help humankind." He says again, "All virtues and all qualities belong to Brahman, Lord of the universe. He is the greatest Purusha.(83)

Although the system of Ramanuja admits the unity of the total, within that totality of existence there are, according to him, eternal differences. Therefore, for all practical purposes, this system also being dualistic, it was easy for Ramanuja to keep the distinction between the personal soul and the personal God very clear.(84)

10. Madhvacharya, Who Had No Place for Reasoning, but Emphasized Vedic Revelation and the Puranas

Madhva was a thoroughgoing dualist or Dvaitist. He claims that even women may study the Vedas. He quotes chiefly from the Puranas. He says that Brahman means Vishnu, not Shiva at all, because there is no salvation except through Vishnu.

There is no place for reasoning in Madhva's explanation; it is all taken from revelation in the Vedas. (85)

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PART III, SECTION 7: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE VEDIC MESSAGE IN INDIA

Chapter 18: Reaction to Foreign Invasion

a) When the Kings Supported Priestly Tyranny, India Became a Cheap and Ready Prey to the Muslim Invaders

In the Vedic and adjoining periods the royal power could not manifest itself on account of the grinding pressure of the priestly power. We have seen how, during the Buddhistic revolution, resulting in the fall of the brahminical supremacy, the royal power in India reached its culminating point. [Chapter 7, e 1] In the interval between the fall of the Buddhistic and the establishment of the Muslim empire, we have seen how the royal power was trying to raise its head through the Rajputs in India and how it failed in its attempt. At the root of this failure, too, could be traced the same old endeavors of the Vedic priestly class to bring back and revive with a new life their original (ritualistic) days.(1)

[The priests and the kings]... now friendly to each other... and engaged in the satisfaction of mutual self-interest..., being steeped in all the vices consequent upon such a union, e.g. the sucking of the blood of the masses, taking revenge on the enemy, spoliation of others' property, etc., they in vain tried to imitate the rajasuya and other Vedic sacrifices of the ancient kings, and only made a ridiculous farce of them. The result was that they were bound hand and foot by a formidable train of sycophantic attendance and its obsequious flatteries; and, being entangled in an interminable net of rites and ceremonies with flourishes

of mantras and the like, they soon became a cheap and ready prey to the Muslim invaders from the West.(2)

The kshatriyas had always been the backbone of India; so also had they been the supporters of science and liberty, and their voices had rung out again and again to clear the land from superstitions; and throughout the history of India they ever formed the invulnerable barrier to aggressive priestly tyranny.

When the greater part of their number sank into ignorance and another portion mixed their blood with savages from Central Asia and lent their swords to establish the rule of priests in India, her cup became full to the brim and down sank the land of Bharata [India], not to rise again until the kshatriyas rouse themselves and, making themselves free, strike the chains from the feet of the rest. Priestcraft is the bane of India. Can people degrade their brothers and sisters and themselves escape degradation? (3)

b) The Muslim Turks, Themselves Renegades from the Vedic Religion (Buddhism), Crushed Brahminical Supremacy under Their Feet

What is called the Muslim invasion, conquest, or colonization of India means only this - that, under the leadership of the Muslim Turks, who were renegades from Buddhism, those sections of the Hindu race who continued in the faith of their ancestors were repeatedly conquered by the other section of that very race who also were renegades from Buddhism or the Vedic religion, and served under the Turks, having been forcibly converted to Islam by their superior strength.(4)

The brahmin power had lost all its own internal strength and stamina and become the weakest of the weak. What wonder it should be broken into a thousand pieces and fall at the mere touch of the storm of the Muslim invaders from the West! That great brahmin power fell - who knows if ever to rise again?

The resuscitation of the priestly power under Muslim rule was, on the other hand, an utter impossibility. The Prophet Muhammad was himself dead against the priestly class in any shape and tried his best to destroy this power by formulating rules and injunctions to that effect.... The utmost the Muslim kings could do as a favor to the priestly class - the spiritual guides of the idolatrous,

hateful Kafirs - was to allow them somehow to pass their life silently and wait for their last moment....

Crushing the brahminical supremacy under his feet, the Muslim king was able to restore to a considerable extent the lost glories of such dynasties as the Maurya, the Gupta, the Andhra and the Kshatrapa.

Thus the priestly power - which sages like Kumarila, Shankara and Ramanuja had tried to reestablish, which for some time was supported by the sword of the Rajput power, and which tried to rebuild its structure on the fall of its Jain and Buddhist adversaries - was, under Muslim rule, laid to sleep for ever, knowing no awakening.(5)

c) The South Became the Repository of Vedic Learning, the Backbone of the Hindu Religion

The Muslim tried for centuries to subjugate the South, but can scarcely be said to have got even a strong foothold; and when the strong and united empire of the Moguls was very near completing its conquest, the hills and plateaus of the South poured in their bands of fighting peasants and horsemen, determined to die for the religion which Ramdas preached and Tuka sang; and in a short time the gigantic empire of the Moguls was only a name.(6)

In the South, again, was born the wonderful Sayanacharya - the strength of whose arms, vanquishing the Muslims, kept King Bukka on his throne, whose wise counsels gave stability to the Vidyanagar kingdom, whose state policy established lasting peace and prosperity in the Deccan, whose superhuman genius and extraordinary industry produced the commentaries on the whole Vedas - and the product of whose wonderful sacrifice, renunciation and researches was the Vedantic treatise named Panchadashi - that sannyasin Vidyanaraya Muni or Sayana, was born in this land.(7)

The South [remained] the repository of Vedic learning, and... [therefore], in spite of reiterated assertions of aggressive ignorance, [today] it is the Shruti that is still the backbone of all the different divisions of the Hindu religion.(8)

d) The Vitality of India's Spirituality Was Constructively Conserved by a Host of Reformers

[The fanatical belief of many of the invaders into India is] that those who do not belong to their sect have no right to live. They will go to a place where the fire will never be quenched when they die; in this life they are only fit to be made into slaves or murdered; and that they have only the right to live as slaves to "the true believers", but never as free people. So in this way, when these waves burst upon India, everything was submerged. Books and literature and civilization went down.

But there is a vitality in the race which is unique in the history of humanity, and perhaps that vitality comes from non-resistance. Non-resistance is the greatest strength. In meekness and mildness lies the greatest strength. In suffering is greater strength than in doing. In resisting one's own passions is far higher strength than in hurting others. And that has been the watchword of the race through all its difficulties, its misfortunes and its prosperity. It is the only nation that never went beyond its frontiers to cut the throats of its neighbors. It is a glorious thing. It makes me rather patriotic to think I am born a Hindu, a descendant of the only race that never went out to hurt anyone, and whose only action upon humanity has been giving and enlightening and teaching, but never robbing.(9)

[India] is the ancient land where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country, the same India whose influx of spirituality is represented, as it were, on the material plane by rolling rivers like oceans, where the eternal Himalayas, rising tier above tier with their snow-caps look, as it were, into the very mysteries of heaven. Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. Here first sprang up inquiries into the nature of humanity and into the internal world. Here first arose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the existence of a supervising God, and immanent God in nature and in humanity, and here the highest ideals of religion and philosophy have attained their culminating points. This is the land from whence, like tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world, and this is the land whence once more such tides must proceed in order to bring life and vigor into the decaying races of humankind. It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world,

with its undying vigor, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal.(10)

All along, in the history of the Hindu race, there never was any attempt at destruction, only construction. One sect wanted to destroy, and they were thrown out of India - they were the Buddhists. We have a host of reformers - Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and Chaitanya. These were great reformers, who were always constructive and built according to the circumstances of their time. This is our peculiar method of work. All the modern reformers take to European, destructive reformation which never did good to anyone and never will. Only once was a modern reformer mostly constructive, and that was Raja Rammohan Roy. The progress of the Hindu race has been towards the realization of the Vedantic ideals. All history of Indian life is the struggle for the realization of the idea of the Vedanta through good or bad fortune. Whenever there was any reforming sect or religion which rejected the Vedantic idea, it was smashed into nothing.(11)

e) In Northern India the Masses Were Kept within the Fold of Hinduism at the Cost of New Thoughts and Aspirations

1. The Vedantic Movements under the Muslims Preached the Muslim Idea of the Equality of Human Beings

To the Muslim rule we owe that great blessing - the destruction of exclusive privilege. That rule was, after all, not all bad; and nothing is all good. The Muslim conquest of India came as a salvation to the downtrodden, to the poor. That is why one-fifth of our people have become Muslims. It was not the sword that did it all. It would be the height of madness to think it was all the work of sword and fire.(12)

The movements in northern India during the Muslim period are characterized by their uniform attempt to hold the masses back from joining the religion of the conquerors - which brought in its train social and spiritual equality for all.

The friars of the orders founded by Ramananda, Kabir, Dadu, Chaitanya or Nanak were all agreed in preaching the equality of human beings, however differing from each other in philosophy. Their energy was for the most part spent in checking the rapid conquest of Islam among the masses, and they had

very little left to give birth to new thoughts and aspirations. Though evidently successful in their purpose of keeping the masses within the fold of the old religion, and tempering the fanaticism of the Muslims, they were mere apologists, struggling to obtain permission to live.(13)

2. The Mighty Spiritual Genius Chaitanya and His Teaching of Worship through the Senses

Wherever the Hindi language is spoken, even the lowest classes have more knowledge of the Vedantic religion than many of the highest in Lower Bengal.

And why so?

Transported from the soil of Mithila to Navadvip and developed by the fostering genius of Shiromani, Gadadhara, Jagadisha and a host of other great names, an analysis of the laws of reasoning, in some points superior to every other system in the whole world, expressed in wonderful and precise mosaic of language, stands the Nyaya of Bengal, respected and studied throughout the length and breadth of Hindusthan. But, alas, Vedic study was sadly neglected; and until within the last few years, scarcely anyone could be found in Bengal to teach the Mahabhashya of Patanjali. Once only a mighty genius rose above the never-ending avachchinnas and avachchedakas [determined and determining attribute] - Bhagavan Sri Krishna Chaitanya. For once the religious lethargy of Bengal was shaken, and for a time it entered into communion with the religious life of other parts of India....

The commentary which Sri Chaitanya wrote on the Vyasa-Sutras has either been lost or not found yet. His disciples joined themselves to the Madhvas of the South, and gradually the mantles of such giants as Rupa and Sanatana and Jiva Goswami fell on the shoulders of the Babajis, and the great movement of Sri Chaitanya was decaying fast, till of late years there is a sign of revival. I hope that it will regain its lost splendor.

The influence of Sri Chaitanya is all over India. Wherever the bhakti-marga [path of devotion] is known, there he is appreciated, studied, and worshipped. I have every reason to believe that the whole of the Vallabhacharya recension is only a branch founded by Sri Chaitanya. But most of his so-called disciples have become gadians (heads of monasteries) while he preached barefooted from

door to door in India, begging achandalas (all down to the lowest) to love God. (14)

Vaishnavism (the religion of Chaitanya) says, "It is all right, this tremendous love for father, for mother, for brother, husband or child. It is all right, if only you think that Krishna is the child; and when you give him or her food, that you are feeding Krishna" This was the cry of Chaitanya: "Worship God through the senses" - as against the Vedantic cry, "Control the senses! Suppress the senses!"(15)

3. The Creative Genius of Guru Govind Singh Produced the Political Unity of the Sikhs

One great prophet... arose in the North, Guru Govind Singh, the last guru of the Sikhs, with creative genius; and the result of his spiritual work was followed by the well-known political organization of the Sikhs. We have seen throughout the history of India, a spiritual upheaval is almost always succeeded by a political unity extending over more or less the area of the continent, which in its turn helps to strengthen the spiritual aspiration that brought it into being. But the spiritual aspiration that preceded the rise of the Mahratta or the Sikh empire was entirely reactionary. We seek in vain to find in the court of Poona or Lahore even a ray of reflection of that intellectual glory which surrounded the Moguls, much less the brilliance of Malava or Vidyanagara. It was intellectually the darkest period of Indian history; and both these meteoric empires, representing the upheaval of mass fanaticism and hating culture with all their hearts, lost all their motive power as soon as they had succeeded in destroying the rule of the hated Muslims.(16)

f) The English Occupation of India: The Appearance of the Supremacy of the Merchant Class

Then there came again a period of confusion. Friends and foes, the Mogul empire and its destroyers, and the till then peaceful foreign traders, French and English, all joined in a melee of fight. For more than half a century there was nothing but wars and pillage and destruction. And when the smoke and dust cleared, England was stalking victorious over all the rest. There has been half a century of law and order under the sway of Britain. Time alone will prove if it is of the order of progress or not.(17)

After an age-long play of action between the two forces [priests and kings], the final victory of the royal power was echoed on the soil of India for several centuries in the name of foreign monarchs professing an entirely different religion from the faith of the land [the Moguls]. But at the end of this Muslim period, another entirely new power made its appearance in the arena and slowly began to assert its prowess in the affairs of the Indian world.

This power is so new, its nature and working are so foreign to the Indian mind, its rise so inconceivable, and its vigor so insuperable that, though it wields the suzerain power up till now, only a handful of Indians understand what this power is.

We are talking of the occupation of India by England.

From very ancient times, the fame of India's vast wealth and her rich granaries has enkindled in many powerful foreign nations the desire to conquer her. She has been, in fact, again and again conquered by foreign nations. Then why should we say that the occupation of India by England was something new and foreign to the Indian mind?

From time immemorial the Indians have seen the mightiest royal power tremble before the frown of the ascetic priest, devoid of worldly desire, armed with spiritual strength - the power of mantras and religious lore - and the weapon of curses. They have also seen the subject people silently obey the commands of their heroic, all-powerful suzerains, backed by their armies, like a flock of sheep before a lion. But that a handful of vaishyas (traders) who, despite their great wealth, have ever crouched awe-stricken not only before the king but also before any member of the royal family, would unite, cross for purposes of business, rivers and seas, would, solely by virtue of their intelligence and wealth, by degrees make puppets of the long-established Hindu and Muslim dynasties; not only so, but that they would also buy the services of the ruling powers of their own country and use their valor and learning as powerful instruments for the influx of their own riches - this is a spectacle entirely novel to the Indians, as also the spectacle that the descendants of the mighty nobility of [England]... would, in no distant future, consider it the zenith of human ambition to be sent to India as obedient servants of a body of merchants

called the East India Company - such a sight was, indeed, a novelty unseen by India before!(18)

2.The Religious Movements in India during British Rule Are the Voices of the Dead and Dying

1. The New Sects Are Merely Pleading for Permission to Live

There have been a few religious movements amongst the Indian people during the British rule, following the same line that was taken up by the northern sects during the sway of the empire of Delhi. They are the voices of the dead and dying - the feeble tones of a terrorized people, pleading for permission to live. They are very eager to adjust their spiritual or social surroundings according to the tastes of their conquerors - if only they are left the right to live, especially the sects under English domination, in which social differences with the conquering race are more glaring than the spiritual. The Hindu sects of the century seem to have set one ideal of truth before them - they approval of their English masters. No wonder that these sects have mushroom lives to live. The vast body of the Indian people religiously hold aloof from them and the only popular recognition they get is the jubilation of the people when they die.(19)

At the present moment, we may see three different positions of the national religion - the orthodox, the Arya Samaj, and the Brahmo Samaj. The orthodox covers the ground taken by the Vedic Hindus of the Mahabharata epoch. The Arya Samaj corresponds to Jainism, and the Brahmo Samaj to the Buddhists. (20)

2. Hindu Orthodoxy, Terrible Orthodoxy

If you tell a Hindu, "Our Bible does not say -so-and-so" [he or she will reply]: "Oh, your Bible! It is a babe of history. What other Bible could there be except the Vedas? What other book could there be? All knowledge is in God. Do you mean to say that God teaches by two or more Bibles? God's knowledge came out in the Vedas. Do you mean to say that God committed a mistake, then? That, afterwards, God wanted to do something better and taught another Bible to another nation? You cannot bring another book that is as old as the Vedas. Everything else - it was all copied after that." They would not listen to you. And

the Christian brings the Bible. They say, "That is a fraud. God speaks only once, because God never makes mistakes."

Now, just think of that. That orthodoxy is terrible. And if you ask Hindus that they are to reform their society and do this and that, they say, "Is it in the books? If it is not, I do not care to change. You wait, in five [hundred] years more you will find that this is good." If you say to them, "This social institution that you have is not right", they say, "How do you know that?" Then they say, "Our social institutions in this matter are the better. Wait five [hundred] years and your institution will die. The test is the survival of the fittest. You live, but there is not one community in the world that lives five hundred years together. Look here! We have been standing all the time." That is what they would say. Terrible orthodoxy! And thank God I have crossed that ocean.(21)

3. The Arya Samaj, Whose Teaching Goes against Received National Opinion

The idea that the Samhitas are the only Vedas is very recent and has been started by the late Swami Dayananda. This opinion has not got any hold on the orthodox population.

The reason for this opinion was that, though Swami Dayananda could find a consistent theory of the whole based on a new interpretation of the Samhitas, the difficulties remained the same, only they fell back on the Brahmanas. And in spite of the theories of interpretation and interpolation, a good deal still remains.

Now, if it is possible to build a consistent religion on the Samhitas, it is a thousand times more sure that a very consistent and harmonious faith can be based upon the Upanishads; and moreover, here one has not to go against the already received national opinion. Here all the acharyas (teachers) of the past would side with you and you have a vast scope for new progress.(22)

4. The Brahma Samaj, Which Could Not Hold Its Own against the "Old Vedanta"

The Brahma Samaj, like Christian Science in [the USA] spread in Calcutta for a certain time and then died out. I am not sorry, neither glad that it died. It has done its work - viz., social reform. Its religion was not worth a cent, and so it

must die out.... I am even now a great sympathizer with its reforms, but the "booby" religion could not hold its own against the "old Vedanta".(23)

h) The Violent Conflict between the Western and Vedic Ideals Produced a Wave of Reformers Who Simply Played into the Hands of the Europeans

In the beginning of the present century, when Western influence began to pour into India, when Western conquerors, sword in hand, came to demonstrate to the children of the sages that they were mere barbarians, a race of dreamers, that their religion was but mythology, and God and soul and everything they had been struggling for were mere words without meaning, that the thousands of years of struggle, the thousands of years of endless renunciation, had all been in vain, the question began to be agitated among young men at the universities whether the whole national existence up till then had been a failure, whether they must begin anew on the occidental plan, tear up their old books, burn their philosophies, drive away their preachers, and break down their temples. Did not the occidental conquerors, the people who demonstrated their religion with sword and gun, say that all the old ways were superstition and idolatry? Children brought up and educated in the new schools started on the occidental plan drank in these ideas from childhood; and it is not to be wondered at that doubts arose. But instead of throwing away superstition and making a real search after truth, the test of truth became, "What does the West say?" The priest must go, the Vedas must be burned, because the West has said so.(24)

India is slowly awakening through her friction with outside nations; and as a result of this little awakening, is the appearance, to a certain extent, of free and independent thought in modern India. On one side is modern Western science, dazzling the eyes with the brilliancy of a myriad suns and driving the chariot of hard and fast facts collected by the application of tangible powers direct in their incision; on the other are the hopeful and strengthening traditions of her ancient forebears, in the days when she was at the zenith of her glory - traditions that have been brought out of the pages of her history by the great sages of her own land and outside, that ran for numberless years and centuries through her every vein with the quickening of life drawn from universal love - traditions that reveal unsurpassed valor, superhuman genius, and supreme spirituality, which are the envy of the gods - these inspire her with future hopes. On the one side, rank materialism, plenitude of fortune, accumulation of gigantic power and intense sense-pursuits have, through foreign

literature, cause a tremendous stir; on the other, through the confounding din of all these discordant sounds she hears, in low yet unmistakable accents the heart-rending cries of her ancient gods, cutting her to the quick. There lie before her various strange luxuries introduced from the West - celestial drinks, costly, well-served food, splendid apparel, magnificent palaces, new modes of conveyance, new manners, new fashions, dressed in which well-educated girls move about in shameless freedom - all these are arousing unfelt desires. Again, the scene changes and in its place appear, with stern presence, Sita, Savitri, austere religious vows, fastings, the forest retreat, the matted locks and orange garb of semi-naked sannyasins, samadhi and the search after the Self. On one side is the independence of Western societies based on self-interest; on the other is the extreme self-sacrifice of the Aryan society. In this violent conflict, is it strange that Indian society should be tossed up and down? Of the West, the goal is individual independence, the language of money-making, education, the means politics; of India, the goal is mukti, the language of the Vedas, the means renunciation. For a time, modern India thinks, as it were: I am ruining this worldly life of mine in vain expectation of uncertain spiritual welfare hereafter which has spread its fascination over me; and again, she listens spellbound - "Here, in this world of death and change, where is thy happiness?" (25)

Our Hindu ancestors sat down and thought of God and morality, and so we have brains to use for the same ends; but in the rush of trying to get gain, we are likely to lose them again.(26)

On one side the new India is saying, "We should have full freedom in the selection of husband and wife, because in the marriage in which we are involved [is] the happiness and misery of our future life; we must have the right to determine according to our own free will." On the other, old India is dictating, "Marriage is not for sense-enjoyment, but to perpetuate the race. This is the Indian concept of marriage. By producing children you are contributing to and are responsible for the future good or evil of society. Hence, society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry and whom you shall not. That form of marriage obtains in society which is conducive most to its well-being; do you give up your desire for individual pleasure for the good of the many."

On one side, new India is saying, " If only we adopt Western ideas, Western language, Western food, Western dress, and Western manners, we shall be as

strong and powerful as the Western nations"; on the other, old India is saying, "Fools! By imitation, others' ideas never become one's own; nothing, unless earned, is your own. Does the ass in the lion's skin ever become the lion?"

On the one side, new India is saying, "What the Western nations do is surely good; otherwise how did they become so great?" On the other side, old India is saying, "The flash of lightning is intensely bright, but only for a moment; look out, boys, it is dazzling your eyes. Beware!"

Have we not, then, to learn anything from the West? Must we not needs try and exert ourselves for better things? Are we perfect? Is our society entirely spotless, without any flaw? There are many things to learn, we must struggle for new and higher things till we die - struggle is the end of human life.... That person or that society which has nothing to learn is already in the jaws of death. Yes. Learn we must many things from the West; but there are fears, as well....

O, India, this is your terrible danger: the spell of the West and imitating the West is getting such a strong hold upon you that what is good and what is bad is no longer decided by reason, judgement, discrimination, or reference to the Shastras. Whatever ideas, whatever manners the white people praise or like are good; whatever things they dislike or censure are bad. Alas! What can be a more tangible proof of foolishness than this?

The Western ladies move freely everywhere, therefore that is good, they choose their husbands for themselves; therefore that is the highest step of advancement; the Westerners disapprove of our dress, decorations, food, and ways of living; therefore they must be very bad; the Westerners condemn image worship as sinful; surely, then, image worship is the greatest sin, there is no doubt of it!

The Westerners say that worshipping a single deity is fruitful of the highest good, therefore let us throw our gods and goddesses into the River Ganges! The Westerners hold caste distinctions to be obnoxious, therefore let all the different castes be jumbled into one! The Westerners say that child-marriage is the root of all evils, therefore that is also very bad, of a certainty it is!

We are not discussing here whether these customs deserve continuance or rejection; but if the mere disapproval of the Westerners be the measure of the abominableness of our manners and customs, then it is our duty to raise our emphatic protest against it.(27)

Out of the feeling of unrest produced [by the conflict of Western influence and the Vedantic tradition] there arose a wave of so-called reform in India.(28)

The orthodox have more faith and more strength in themselves [than the reformers], in spite of their crudeness; but the reformers simply play into the hands of the Europeans and pander to their vanity. (29)

The West wants every bit of spirituality through social improvement. The East wants every bit of social power through spirituality. Thus it was that the modern reformers saw no way to reform but by first crushing out the religion of India. They tried, and they failed. Why? Because few of them ever studied their own religion, and not one ever underwent the training necessary to understand the Mother of all religions.(30)

i) **Uniting under the Common Ideal of Spirituality Will Alone Make the Future India**

We see how in Asia, and especially in India, race difficulties, linguistic difficulties, social difficulties, national difficulties, all melt away before the unifying power of religion. We know that, to the Indian mind, there is nothing higher than religious ideals, that this is the keynote of Indian life; and we can only work in the line of least resistance. It is not only true that the ideal of religion is the highest ideal; in the case of India, it is the only possible means of work; work in any other line, without first strengthening this, would be disastrous. Therefore, the first plank in the making of the future India, the first step that is to be hewn out of that rock of ages, is this unification of religion. All of us have to be taught that we Hindus - Dualists, qualified monists, or monists, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, or Pashupatas - to whatever denomination we may belong, have certain common ideas behind us; and that the time has come when, for the well-being of ourselves, for the well-being of our race, we must give up all our little quarrels and differences. Be sure, these quarrels are entirely wrong; they are condemned by our scriptures, forbidden by our forebears; and those great men and women from whom we claim our descent,

whose blood is in our veins, look down with contempt on their children quarreling about minute differences.(31)

The characteristic of [our] nation is...transcendentalism, this struggle to go beyond, this daring to tear the veil off the face of nature at any risk, at any price, a glimpse of the beyond. That is our ideal; but of course all the people in a country cannot give up entirely. Do you want to enthuse them? Then here is the way to do so: your talk of politics, of social regeneration, you talks of money-making and commercialism - all these will roll off like water from a duck's back. This spirituality, then, is what you have to teach to the world. Have we to learn anything else, have we to learn anything from the world? We have, perhaps, to gain a little material knowledge, in the power of organization, in the ability to handle powers, organizing powers, in bringing in the best results out of the smallest causes. This, perhaps, to a certain extent we may learn from the West. But if anyone preaches in India the ideal of eating and drinking and making merry, if anyone wants to apotheosize the material world into a God, that he or she is a liar; he or she has no place in this holy land, the Indian mind does not want to listen to him or her. Ay, in spite of all the sparkle and glitter of Western civilization, in spite of all its polish and its marvelous manifestation of power, standing upon this platform I tell them to their face that it is all vain. It is vanity of vanities. God alone lives, soul alone lives, spirituality alone lives. Hold on to that.

Yet, perhaps, some sort of materialism toned down to our own requirements, would be a blessing to many of our brothers and sisters who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the mistake made in every country and every society; and it is a greatly regrettable thing that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on people who are not ready for them has been made of late. My method need not be yours. The sannyasin, as you all know, is the ideal of the Hindu's life and everyone by our Shastras is compelled to give up. Every Hindu who has tasted the fruits of this world must give up in the latter part of his or her life and whoever does not is not a Hindu and has no more right to call him or herself a Hindu. We know that this is the ideal - to give up after seeing and experiencing the vanity of things. Having found out that the heart of the material world is a mere hollow, containing only ashes, give it up and go back. The mind is circling forward, as it were, towards the senses; and that mind has to circle backwards; the pravritti has to stop and the nivritti has to begin. That is the ideal. But that ideal can

only be realized after a certain amount of experience. We cannot teach the child the truth of renunciation; the child is a born optimist, his whole life is in his or her senses, his whole life is one mass of sense-enjoyment. So, there are childlike people in every society who require a certain amount of experience, of enjoyment, to see through the vanity of it, and then renunciation will come to them. There has been ample provision made for them in our books; but, unfortunately, in later times there has been a tendency to bind everyone down by the same laws as those by which the sannyasin is bound, and that is a great mistake. But for that, a good deal of the poverty and misery that you see in India need not have been. A poor person's life is hemmed in and bound down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off! Let the poor souls enjoy themselves a little and then they will raise themselves up and renunciation will come to them of itself. Perhaps in this line we can be taught something by the Western people; but we must be very cautious in learning these things. I am sorry to say that most of the examples one meets nowadays of people who have imbibed the Western ideas are more or less failures.(32)

Renunciation - that is the flag, the banner of India floating over the world, the one undying thought which India sends again and again as a warning to dying races, as a warning to all tyranny, as a warning to wickedness in the world. Ay, Hindus, let not your hold of that banner go. Hold it aloft. Even if you are weak and cannot renounce, do not lower the ideal. Say, "I am weak and cannot renounce the world", but do not try to be hypocrites, torturing texts and making specious arguments and trying to throw dust in the eyes of people who are ignorant. Do not do that, but own you are weak. For the idea is great, that of renunciation. What matters it if millions fail in the attempt, if ten soldiers or even two return victorious! Blessed be the millions dead! Their blood has bought the victory. This renunciation is the one idea throughout the different Vedic sects except one, and that is the Vallabhacharya sect in the Bombay Presidency - and most of you are aware of what comes where renunciation does not exist. We want orthodoxy - even the hideously orthodox, even those who smother themselves with ashes, even those who stand with their hands uplifted. Ay, we want them, unnatural though they may be, for standing for that idea of giving up, and acting as a warning to the race against succumbing to the effeminate luxuries that are creeping into India, eating into our very vitals, and tending to make the whole race a race of hypocrites. We want to have a little asceticism. Renunciation conquered India in days of yore; it has still to conquer

India. Still it stands as the greatest and highest of Indian ideals - this renunciation. The land of Buddha, the land of Ramanuja, of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the land of renunciation, the land where, from days of yore, Karma-Kanda was preached against - and even today there are hundreds who have given up everything and become jivanmuktas - ay, will the land give up its ideals? Certainly not. There may be people whose brains have become turned by Western luxurious ideals; there may be thousands and hundreds of thousands who have drunk deep of enjoyment, this curse of the West - the senses - the curse of the world; yet for all that, there will be other thousands in this motherland of mine, to whom religion will ever be a reality and who will be ever ready to give up without counting the cost, if need be.(33)

Cross reference to:

Kaiv. Up., 2

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31. CW, Vol.3: The Future of India, pp.287-288.

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PART III, SECTION 7: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE VEDIC MESSAGE IN INDIA

Chapter 19: Intellectual and Social Abuses in Modern Times

a) For the Last Thousand Years We Have Been Weakened by Non-Vedic Stories

1. In Their Ordinary Lives Indians Are Mostly Puranic or Tantric

The Upanishads are our scriptures. They have been differently explained and, as I have told you already, whenever there is a difference between subsequent Puranic literature and the Vedas, the Puranas must give way. But it is at the same time true that, as a practical result, we find ourselves ninety percent Puranic and ten percent Vedic - if even so much as that.(1)

There was a time in India when the Karma-Kanda had its sway. There are many grand ideals, no doubt, in that portion of the Vedas. Some of our present daily worship is still according to the precepts of the Karma-Kanda. But, with all that, the Karma-Kanda of the Vedas has almost disappeared from India. Very little of our life today is bound and regulated by the orders of the Karma-Kanda of the Vedas. In our ordinary lives we are mostly Puranic or Tantric; and, even when some Vedic texts are used by the brahmins of India, the adjustment of the texts is mostly not according to the Vedas, but according to the Tantras or Puranas. As such, to call ourselves Vaidikas (Vedic) in the sense of following the Karma-Kanda of the Vedas, I do not think would be proper. But the other fact stands that we are all of us Vedantists. The people who call themselves Hindus

would better be called Vedantists ; and, as I have shown you, under that one name Vedantic come in all our sects, whether dualists or non-dualists.(2)

Modern Hinduism is largely Puranic, that is, post-Buddhistic, in origin. Dayananda Saraswati has pointed out, [for example], that though a wife is absolutely necessary in the sacrifice of the domestic fire, which is a Vedic rite, she may not touch the shalagrama shila, or the household idol, because that dates from the later period of the Puranas.(3)

The Tantras Are Poisoning the Minds of the People of Bengal

There are in my motherland, most unfortunately, persons who will take up one of the Tantras and say that the practice of this Tantra is to be obeyed; he or she who does not do so is no more orthodox in his or her views.(4)

When I see how much the Vamachara [Tantra] has entered our [Bengali] society, I find it a most disgraceful place, with all of its boast of culture. These Vamachara sects are honeycombing our society in Bengal. Those who come out in the daytime and preach most loudly about achara, it is they who carry on the horrible debauchery at night and are backed by the most dreadful books. They are ordered by the books to do these things. You who are of Bengal know of it. The Bengal Shastras are the Vamachara Tantras. They are published by the cart-load, and you poison the minds of your children with them instead of teaching them our Shrutis. Fathers of Calcutta, do you not feel ashamed that such horrible stuff as these Vamachara Tantras, with translations too, should be put into the hands of your boys and girls, and their minds poisoned, and that they should be brought up with the idea that these are the Shastras of the Hindus? If you are ashamed, take them away from your children and let them read the true Shastras - the Vedas, the Gita and the Upanishads.(5)

The Strength-Giving, Practical Upanishads Should Be Worshipped Rather Than the Puranas

I have always found "occultism" injurious and weakening to humanity. What we want is strength. We Indians, more than any other race, want strong and vigorous thought. We have enough of the superfine in all concerns. For centuries we have been stuffed with the mysterious; the result is that our intellectual and spiritual digestion is almost hopelessly impaired, and the race has

been dragged down to the depths of hopeless imbecility - never before or since experienced by any other civilized community. There must be freshness and vigor of thought to make a virile race. More than enough to strengthen the whole world exists in the Upanishads. The Advaita is the eternal mine of strength. But it requires to be applied. It must first be cleared of the incrustation of scholasticism and then in all its simplicity, beauty and sublimity be taught over the length and breadth of the land, as applied to the minutest detail of daily life. "This is a very large order"; but we must work towards it, nevertheless, as if it would be accomplished tomorrow. Of one thing I am sure - that whoever wants to help his fellow beings through genuine love and unselfishness will work wonders.(6)

The more I read the Upanishads, my friends, my countrymen, the more I weep for you, for therein is the great practical application. - strength, strength for us What we need is strength. Who will give us strength? There are thousands to weaken us, and of stories we have had enough. Every one of our Puranas, if you press it, gives out stories enough to fill three-fourths of the libraries of the world. Everything that can weaken us as a race we have had for the last thousand years. It seems as if during that period the national life had this one end in view, viz. how to make us weaker and weaker till we have become real earthworms, crawling at the feet of everyone who dares to put his foot on us. Therefore, my friends, as one of your blood, as one who lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength, and every time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength.(7)

But nowadays we have put the Puranas on an even higher pedestal than the Vedas! The study of the Vedas has almost disappeared from Bengal. How I wish that day will soon come when in every home the Vedas will be worshipped together with the shalagrama, the household deity, when the young, the old, and the women will inaugurate the worship of the Veda!(8)

b) The Degeneration of the Caste System Has Led to India's Downfall

1. The Heredity Caste System Must Go, for It has Replaced the Original System Based on Individual Qualities

From the time of the Upanishads down to the present day, nearly all of our great teachers have wanted to break through the barriers of caste, i.e. caste in

its degenerate state, not the original system. What little good you see in the present caste clings to it from the original caste, which was the most glorious social institution.(9)

The jati dharma or dharma enjoined according the different castes, this swadharma, that is, one's own dharma (the set of duties prescribed for people according to their capacity and position), is the very basis of Vedic religion and Vedic society.... It is the path of welfare for all societies in every land, the ladder to ultimate freedom. With the decay of this jati dharma, this swadharma, has come the downfall of our land. But the jati dharma or swadharma as commonly understood at present by the higher castes is rather a new evil, which has to be guarded against. They think they know everything of jati dharma, but really they know nothing of it. Regarding their own village customs as the eternal customs laid down by the Vedas, and appropriating to themselves all the privileges they are going to their doom! I am not talking of caste as determined by qualitative distinction, but of the hereditary caste system. I admit that the qualitative caste system is the primary one; but the pity is that qualities yield to birth in two or three generations.(10)

There is a certain class of people whose conviction is that, from time eternal, there is a treasure of knowledge which contains the wisdom of everything past, present and future. These people hold that it was their own forebears who had the sole privilege of having the custody of this treasure. The ancient sages, the first possessors of it, bequeathed in succession this treasure and its true import to their descendants only. They are, therefore, the only inheritors to it; as such, let the rest of the world worship them.

May we ask these people what they think should be the condition of the other peoples who have not got such forebears? "Their condition is doomed" is the general answer. The more kind-hearted among them are perchance pleased to rejoin, "Well, let them come and serve us. As a reward for such service, they will be born in our caste in the next birth. That is the only hope we can hold out to them." "Well, the moderns are making many new and original discoveries in the field of science and the arts which you neither dreamt of, nor it there any proof that your forebears ever had any knowledge of. What do you say to that?" "Why, certainly our forebears know all these things, the knowledge of which is now unfortunately lost to us. Do you want proof? I can show you one. Look! Here is a secret Sanskrit verse...." Needless to add that the modern

party, who believes in direct evidence only, never attaches any seriousness to such replies and proofs.(11)

That we have fallen is the sure sign that the basis of the jati dharma has been tampered with. Therefore, what you call the jati dharma is quite contrary to what we have in fact. First, read your Shastras through and through, and you will easily see that what the Shastras define as caste dharma has disappeared almost everywhere from the land.(12)

The caste system [as practiced] is opposed to the religion of the Vedanta. Caste is a social custom, and all our great teachers have tried to break it down. From Buddhism onwards, every sect has preached against caste and every time it has only riveted the chains. Caste is simply the outgrowth of the political institutions of India; it is a hereditary trade guild. Trade competition with Europe has broken caste more than any teaching.(13)

Although our caste rules have so far changed from the time of Manu still, if he should come to us now, he would call us Hindus. Caste is a social organization and not a religious one. It was the outcome of the natural evolution of our society. It was found necessary and convenient at one time. It has served its purpose. But for it, we would long ago have become Muslims. It is useless now. It may be dispensed with. The Hindu religion no longer require the prop of the caste system.(14)

2. The Ideal of Caste Is to Raise Humanity Slowly and Gently to the Level of the Ideal Spiritual Person

The solution [to the problem of caste] is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher. And that is the line of work that is found in all our books, in spite of what you may hear from some people whose knowledge of their own scriptures and whose capacity to understand the mighty plans of the ancients are only zero. They do not understand; but those do who have brains, who have the intellect to grasp the whole scope of the work. They stand aside and follow the wonderful procession of national life through the ages. They can trace it step by step through all the books, ancient and modern. What is the plan? The ideal at one end is the brahmin and at the other end, the chandala, and the whole work is to raise the chandala to the brahmin. Slowly and slowly you find more and more privileges granted to them.

There are books where you read such fierce words as these: "If the shudra hears the Vedas, fill his ears with molten lead; and if he remembers a line, cut his tongue out. If he says to the brahmin, 'You brahmin' cut his tongue out." This is diabolical old barbarism, no doubt - that goes without saying - but do not blame the law-givers, who simply record the customs of the community. Such devils sometimes arose among the ancients. There have been devils everywhere, more or less, in all ages. Accordingly, you will find that later on this tone is modified a little, as for instance: "Do not disturb the shudras, but do not teach them higher things." Then gradually we find in other Smritis, especially those that have full power now, that if the shudras imitate the manners and customs of the brahmins, they do well and ought to be encouraged. Thus it is going on. I have no time to place before you all these workings, not how they can be traced out in detail; but coming to plain facts, we find that all the castes are to rise slowly and slowly. There are thousands of castes, and some are even getting admission into brahminhood - for what prevents any caste from declaring that they are brahmins? Thus caste, with all its rigor, has been created in that manner. Let us suppose that there are castes here with ten thousand people in each. If these put their heads together and said, "We will call ourselves brahmins", nothing can stop them. I have seen it in my own life. Some castes become strong, and as soon as they all agree, who is to say nay? Because whatever it was, each caste was made exclusive of the other. It did not meddle with others' affairs; even the several divisions of one caste did not meddle with the other divisions. Those powerful epoch-makers, Shankaracharya and others, were the great caste-makers. I cannot tell you all the wonderful things they fabricated, and some of you may resent what I have to say. But in my travels and experiences I have traced them out and have arrived at most wonderful results. They would sometimes get hold of hordes of Baluchis [aboriginals] and at once make them kshatriyas; also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them brahmins forthwith.(15)

Our solution of the caste question is not degrading those who are already high up, is not running amok through food and drink, is not jumping out of our own limits to have more enjoyment; but it comes by every one of us fulfilling the dictates of our Vedantic religion, by our attaining spirituality and by our becoming the ideal brahmin. There is a law laid on each one of you in this land [of India] by your ancestors, whether you are Aryans, non-Aryans, rishis, brahmins, or the very lowest outcasts. The command is the same to you all, that you must make progress without stopping, and that from the highest human

being to the lowest pariah every one in this country has to try to become the ideal brahmin. This Vedantic idea is applicable not only here, by over the whole world. Such is our ideal of caste as meant for raising humanity slowly and gently towards the realization of that great ideal of the spiritual person who is non-resisting, calm, steady, worshipful, pure and meditative. In that ideal there is God.(16)

3. If the Brahmins Cannot Live Up to the Vedas Themselves Let Them Accept Others and Build Up a New Aryan Society

Where are the four castes today in this country? Answer me, [brahmins of Bengal]. I do not see the four castes. Just as our Bengali proverb has it: " A headache without a head", so you want to make this varnashrama [caste system] here. There are not [the traditional] four castes here. I see only the brahmin and the shudra. If there are kshatriyas and vaishyas, where are they and why do you brahmins not order them to take the yajnopavita [investiture with the sacred thread] and study the Vedas, as every Hindu ought to do? And if the vaishyas and kshatriyas do not exist, but only the brahmins and shudras, the Shastras say that the brahmin must not live where there are only shudras; so, depart, bag and baggage! Do you know what the Shastras say about people who have been eating mlechchha [non-Hindu] food and living under the government of the mlechchhas, as you have been doing for the past thousand years? Do you know the penance for that? The penance would be burning yourself with your own hands. Do you want to pass as teachers and walk like hypocrites? If you believe in your Shastras, burn yourself first like the one great brahmin who went with Alexander the Great and burnt himself because he thought he had eaten the food of a mlechchha. Do like that, and you will see that the whole nation will be at your feet. You do not believe your own Shastras and yet want to make others believe in them. If you think you are not able to do that in this age, admit your weakness and excuse the weakness of others; take the other castes up, give them a helping hand, let them study the Vedas and become just as good Aryans as any other Aryans in the world, and be you likewise Aryans.(17)

The meaning of the mantras in the shraddha ceremony [for ancestors] is very edifying. The mantras depict the suffering and care undergone by our parents on our behalf. The performance of it is an honor paid to the memory of the sum total of the spirits of our forebears, whose virtues we inherit. Sraddha has

nothing to do with one's salvation. Yet no Hindu who loves his or her religion, his or her country, his or her past and his or her great forebears should give up shraddha. The outward formalities and the feeding of brahmins are not essential. We have no brahmins in these days worthy of being fed on shraddha days. The brahmins fed ought not to be professional eaters, but brahmins who feed disciples gratis and teach them true Vedic doctrines. In these days, shraddha may be performed mentally.(18)

c) Blind Allegiance to Non-Vedic Usages Has Been One of the Main Causes of the Downfall of India

1. The Real Worship in India Is to the God of Popular Custom

The Vedanta was (and is) the boldest system of religion. It stopped nowhere, and it had one advantage: there was no body of priests who sought to suppress every one who tried to tell the truth. There was always absolute religious freedom. In India the bondage of superstitions is a social one;... in the West society is very free. Social matters in India are very strict, but religious opinion is free.(19)

We all find the most contradictory usages prevailing in our [Indian] midst and also religious opinions prevailing in [Indian] society which scarcely have any authority in the scriptures of the Hindus; and in many cases we read in books and see with astonishment, customs of the country that have neither their authority in the Vedas nor in the Smritis nor Puranas, but are simply local. And yet each ignorant villager thinks that if that little local custom dies out, he or she will no more remain a Hindu. In his or her mind Vedantism and these little local customs have been indissolubly identified. In reading the scriptures it is hard for him or her to understand that what he or she is doing has not the sanction of the scriptures, and that the giving up of them will not hurt him or her at all; but, on the contrary, will make him or her a better person. (20)

Unfortunately for India at the present time... a petty village custom seems now the real authority, and not the teaching of the Upanishads. A petty idea current in a wayside village in Bengal seems to have the authority of the Vedas, and even something better. And that word orthodox - how wonderful its influence! To the villager, the following of every little bit of the Karma-Kanda is the very height

of "orthodoxy" and one who does not do it is told, "Get away, you are no more a Hindu."(21)

Minor social usages will also be recognized and accepted when they are compatible with the spirit of the true scriptures and the conduct and example of the holy sages. But blind allegiance only to usages such as are repugnant to the spirit of the Shastras and the conduct of holy sages has been one of the main causes of the downfall of the Aryan race.(22)

There is the towering temple of the eternal Hindu religion, and how many ways of approaching it! And what can you not find there? From the absolute Brahman of the Vedantin down to Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, Uncle Sun, the rat-riding Ganesha, and the minor deities such as Shashthi and Makal, and so forth. Which is lacking there? And in the Vedas, in the Vedanta and the philosophies, in the Puranas and the Tantras, there are lots of materials, a single sentence of which is enough to break one's chain of transmigration for ever. And, Oh! The crowd! Millions and millions of people are rushing towards the temple. I, too, had a curiosity to see and join in the rush. But what was this that met my eyes when I reached the spot! Nobody was going inside the temple! By the side of the door there was standing a figure with fifty heads, a hundred arms, two hundred bellies, and five hundred legs; and everyone was rolling at the feet of it. I asked someone the reason and got the reply; "Those deities that you see in the interior, it is worship enough for them to make a short prostration, or throw in a few flowers from a distance. But the real worship must be offered to him who is at the gate; and those Vedas, the Vedanta, the philosophies, the Puranas, and other scriptures that you see - there is no harm if you hear them read now and again; but you must obey the mandate of this one." Then I asked again, "Well, what is the name of this God of gods?" "He is named Popular Custom - came the reply.(23)

2. The Identification of Vedanta with Popular Custom in the Common Mind Is Based upon Juggling with the Meaning of the Vedas

There is another difficulty: these scripture of ours have been very vast. We read in the Mahabhashya of Patanjali, that great philological work, that the Sama-Veda had one thousand branches. Where are they all? Nobody knows. So with each of the Vedas; the major portion of these books have disappeared, and it is only the minor portion that remains with us. They were all taken charge of

by particular families; and either those families died out or were killed under foreign persecution, or somehow became extinct; and with them that branch of the learning of the Vedas they took charge of became extinct also. This fact we ought to remember, as it always forms the sheet-anchor in the hands of those who want to preach anything new or to defend anything, even against the Vedas. Wherever in India there is a discussion between local custom and the Shrutis, and whenever it is pointed out that local custom is against the scriptures, the argument that is forwarded is that it is not, that the customs existed in the branch of the Shrutis which has become extinct, and so has been a recognized one. In the midst of all these varying methods of reading and commenting on our scriptures it is very difficult indeed to find the thread that runs through all of them; for we become convinced at once that there must be some common ground underlying all these varying divisions and subdivisions. There must be a harmony, a common plan, upon which all these little bits of buildings have been constructed, some basis common to this apparently hopeless mass of confusion which we call our religion. Otherwise, it could not have stood so long, it could not have endured so long.(24)

One more idea. There is a peculiar custom in Bengal, which they call kula-guru, or hereditary guruship. "My father was your guru, now I shall be your guru. My father was the guru of your father, so I shall be yours." What is a guru? Let us go back to the Shrutis: "They who know the secret of the Vedas" [Brih. Up., 4.3.33 and Vivekachudamani, verse 33], not bookworms, nor grammarians, nor pandits in general, but he or she who knows the meaning... We do not want such [pandits]. What can they teach if they have no realizations?(25)

Any number of lies in the name of a religious book are all right. In India, if I want to teach anything new and simply state it on my own authority, as what I think, nobody will come to listen to me; but if I take some passage from the Vedas and juggle with it, and give it the most impossible meaning, murder everything that is reasonable in it, and bring out my own ideas as the ideas that were meant by the Vedas, all the fools will follow me in a crowd.(26)

I am very sorry to notice in [Bombay] the thorough want of Sanskrit and other learning. The people of this part of the country have for their religion a certain bundle of local superstitions about eating, drinking and breathing, and that is about the whole of their religion.

Poor fellows! Whatever the rascally and wily priests teach them - all sort of mummery and tomfoolery as the very gist of the Vedas and Hinduism (mind you, neither these rascals of priests nor their forebears have so much as seen a volume of the Vedas for the last four hundred generations) - they follow, and degrade themselves. Lord help them from the rakshasas (demons) in the shape of the brahmins of the Kali Yuga.(27)

3. Modern Hinduism Has Lost the Spirit of Religion and Become a Religion of "Don't Touchism"

A dreadful slough is in front of you - take care; many fall into it and die. The slough is this, that the present religion of the Hindu is not in the Vedas, nor in the Puranas, nor in bhakti, nor in mukti - religion has entered the cooking-pot. The present religion of the Hindus is neither the path or knowledge nor that of reason - it is "don't touchism". "Don't touch me! Don't touch me!" - that exhausts its description. See that you do not lose your lives in this dire irreligion of "don't touchism"....; it is a form of mental disease.(28)

There is a danger of our religion getting into the kitchen. We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor Pauranics, nor Tantrics. We are just "don't touchists". Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is, "Don't touch me, I am holy." If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum. It is a sure sign of softening of the brain when the mind cannot grasp the higher problems of life; all originality is lost, the mind has lost all its strength, its activity, and its power and thought, and just tries to go round and round in the smallest curve it can find. (29)

The Vedas have two parts, mandatory and optional. The mandatory injunctions are eternally binding on us and constitute the Hindu religion. The optional ones are not so. The brahmins at one time ate beef and married shudras. A calf was killed to please the guest. Shudras cooked for brahmins. The food cooked by a male brahmin was considered as polluted food.(30)

In Pilibit in January of 1901, the swami adduced facts and authorities from the Vedas and the Samhitas in proof of his claim [that] even the Vedic rishis ate, and enjoined upon others, to eat beef, the very name of which is not offensive to the ears of orthodox Hindus. In the old Vedic period it was the practice to kill cows in honor of guests and at certain ceremonies and on auspicious

occasions, and he supported his remarks by dilating on the evils that had accrued in the degeneracy of the Hindu race through the fanaticism of anti-meat-eating and the deshacharas and lokacharas [local customs] of the so-called orthodoxists.(31)

The Hindu religion no longer requires the prop of the caste system. A brahmin may interdine with anybody, even a pariah. He or she won't thereby lose his or her spirituality. A degree of spirituality that is destroyed by the touch of a pariah is a very poor quantity. It is almost at the zero point. Spirituality of a brahmin must overflow, blaze and burn, so as to warm into spiritual life not only one pariah, but thousands of pariahs who may touch him or her. The old rishis observed no distinctions or restrictions as regards food. Anyone who feels that his or her spirituality is so flimsy that the sight of a low caste person annihilates it, need not approach a pariah and must keep his precious little to him or herself.(32)

People in India have given up the Vedas and all their philosophy is in the kitchen. The religion of India at the present time is "don't-touchism" - that is, a religion which the English people will never accept.(33)

In modern India the spirit of religion is gone. Only the externals remain. The people are neither Hindus nor Vedantists, they are merely don't-touchists; the kitchen is their temple and cooking pots their devata (object of worship). This state of things must go. The sooner it is given up, the better for our religion. Let the Upanishads shine in their glory and at the same time let not quarrels exist between different sects.(34)

d) Treading on the Necks of the Poor and the Low Has Made the Orthodox Hindus Objects of Indifference and Contempt and Undermined Faith in the Vedic Seers

1. By Despising the Lower Classes and Monopolizing Religious Knowledge for a Very Long Time, the Brahmins Themselves Have Become Beasts of Burden

In this country of ours, the very birthplace of Vedanta, our masses have been hypnotized for ages into [slavery and weakness]. To touch them is pollution, to sit with them is pollution! Hopeless they were born, hopeless they must remain! And the result is that they have been sinking, sinking, sinking, and have come to

the last stage to which a human being can come. For what country is there in the world where people have to sleep with the cattle? And for this blame nobody else, do not make the mistake of the ignorant. The effect is here, and the cause is, too. We are to blame. Stand up, be bold, and take the blame on your own shoulders. Do not go about throwing mud at others; for all the faults you suffer from you are the sole and only cause.(35)

Swami Vivekananda: You have been despising the lower classes of the country for a very long time and, as a result, you have now become objects of contempt in the eyes of the world.

[Brahmin] Disciple: When did you find us despising them?

Swami Vivekananda: Why, [the] priest class never let the non-brahmin read the Vedas and Vedanta, and all such weighty Shastras - never touch them, even... They have only kept them down. It is they who have always done like that through selfishness. It was the brahmins who made a monopoly of the religious books and kept the question of sanction and prohibition in their own hands. And, repeatedly calling the other races of India low and vile, they put this belief into their heads that they were really such. If you tell a someone, "You are low, you are vile" in season and out of season, then he or she is bound to believe in course of time that he or she is really so. This is called hypnotism. The non-brahmin classes are now slowly raising themselves. Their faith in brahminical scriptures and mantras is getting shaken. Through the spread of Western education all the tricks of the brahmins are giving way, like the banks of the Padma [river] in the rainy season.

Disciple: Yes, sir, the stricture of orthodoxy is gradually lessening nowadays.

Swami Vivekananda: It is as it should be. The brahmins, in fact, gradually took a course of gross immorality and oppression. Through selfishness they introduced a large number of strange, non-Vedic, immoral and unreasonable doctrines - simply to keep their own prestige. And the fruits of that they are reaping forthwith.

Disciple: What may those fruits be, sir?

Swami Vivekananda: Don't you perceive them? It is simply due to you [brahmins] having despised the masses of India that you have now been living a life of slavery for the last thousand years; it is therefore that you are objects of hatred in the eyes of foreigners and are looked upon with indifference by your countrymen.(36)

And where are they through whose physical labor only are possible the influence of the brahmin, the prowess of the kshatriya and the fortune of the vaishya? What is their history who, being the real body of society, are designated at all times in all countries as "the base born"? - for whom kind India has prescribed the mild punishments, "Cut out his tongue, chop off his flesh", and others of like nature, for such a grave offense as any attempt on their part to gain a share of the knowledge and wisdom monopolized by the higher classes - those "moving corpses" of India, and the "beasts of burden" of other countries - the shudras; what is their lot in life? What shall I say of India? Let alone her shudra class, her brahmins, to whom belonged the acquisition of real scriptural knowledge are now the foreign professors, her kshatriyas the ruling Englishmen, and vaishya, too - the English, in whose bone and marrow is the instinct of trade - so that only the shudra-ness, the beast-of-burden-ness, is now left with the Indians themselves.(37)

2. Lack of Sympathy Has Hidden the Vedantic Conception of the Dignity of Humanity

Oh, how my heart aches to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up. The poor, the low, the sinner, in India have no friends, no help - they cannot rise, no matter how hard they try. Nay, they sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by cruel society, and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they, too, are human beings. And the result is slavery. Thoughtful people within the last few years have seen it, but unfortunately laid it at the door of the Hindu religion; and to them the only way of bettering is by crushing this grandest religion of the world. Hear me, my friend; I have discovered the secret, through the grace of the Lord. Religion is not at fault. On the contrary, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy, the want of heart...

No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as does Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines of paramarthika and vyavaharika. [supreme truth versus "common life"](38)

I claim that no destruction of religion is necessary to improve Hindu society, and that this state of society exists, not on account of religion, but because religion has not been applied to society as it should have been. This I am ready to prove from our old books, every word of it.(39)

The Shastras start by giving the right to study the Vedas to everybody, without distinction of sex, caste or creed.(40)

Ay, but it was only for the sannyasin - rahasya, (esoteric)! The Upanishads were in the hands of the sannyasin; he went into the forest! Shankara was a little kind and said that even grihasthas (householders) may study the Upanishads; it will do them good; it will not hurt them. But still the idea is that the Upanishads talked only of the forest life of the recluse... These conceptions of the Vedanta must come out, must remain, not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but also they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor,, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman, and child, whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be.(41)

3. Under Buddhism and Foreign Invasion Women Were Deprived of Their Vedic Rights

It is very difficult to understand why in [India] so much difference is made between men and women when the Vedas declare that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings.(42)

Q: Are you... entirely satisfied with the position of women [in India]?

Swami Vivekananda: By no means; but our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own

problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. Our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.

Q: How do you account for the evil influence which you attribute to Buddhism?

Swami Vivekananda: It came only with the decay of the faith. Every movement triumphs by dint of some unusual characteristic and, when it falls, that point of pride becomes its chief element of weakness. The Lord Buddha - the greatest of men - was a marvelous organizer and carried the world by this means. But his religion was the religion of a monastic order. It had, therefore, the evil effect of making the very robe of the monk honored. He also introduced for the first time the community life of religious houses and thereby necessarily made women inferior to men, since the great abbesses could take no important step without the advice of certain abbots. It ensured its immediate object - the solidarity of the faith. You see, only its far-reaching effects are to be deplored.

Q: But sannyasa is recognized in the Vedas!

Swami Vivekananda: Of course it is, but without making any distinction between men and women (43)

The vaishya and the shudra [when writing letters] should sign themselves as dasa and dasi [servant, male or female]; but the brahmin and kshatriya should write deva and devi. [god and goddess]. Moreover, these distinctions of caste and the like have been the invention of our modern, sapient brahmins. Who is a servant, and to whom? Everyone is a servant of the Lord Hari. Hence a woman should use her patronymic, that is, the surname of her husband. This is the ancient Vedic custom.(44)

In what scriptures do you find statements that women are not competent for knowledge and devotion? In the period of degradation, when the priests made the other castes incompetent for the study of the Vedas, they deprived women also of their rights.(45)

There is a passage in the later law books that a woman shall not read the Vedas. So it is prohibited to a weak brahmin, even; if a brahmin boy is not strong-minded, the law applies to him also. But that does not show that education is

prohibited to them, for the Vedas are not all that the Hindus have. Every other book a woman can read, all the mass of Sanskrit literature, that whole ocean of literature, science, drama, poetry is all for them; they can go there and read that, except the scriptures. In later days the idea was that a woman was not intended to be a priest; what is the use of her studying the Vedas?(46)

[The barbarous custom of] child-marriage was resorted to in northern India to protect the girls from falling into the hands of the ruthless [Muslim] invaders who would carry them off to their harems. (47)

4. Out of a Strong Desire for Progress, the Brahmins Have Taken Up Western Usages and Belittle the Aryan Sages

There is no escaping out of [the endless net of priestly power] now. Tear the net and the priesthood of the priest is shaken to its foundation! There is implanted in everyone, naturally, a strong desire for progress; and those who, finding that the fulfillment of this desire is an impossibility so long as one is trammled in the shackles of priesthood, rend this net and take to the profession of other castes in order to earn money thereby - them, society immediately dispossesses of their priestly rights. Society has no faith in the brahmin-hood of the so-called brahmins who, instead of keeping the shikha [sacred tuft of hair], part their hair; who, giving up their ancient habits and ancestral customs, clothe themselves in semi-European dress and adopt the newly introduced usages from the West in a hybrid fashion. Again, in those parts of India, wherever this newcomer, the English government, is introducing new modes of education and opening up new channels for the coming in of wealth, there hosts of brahmin youths are giving up their hereditary priestly profession and trying to earn their livelihood and become rich by adopting the calling of other castes, with the result that the habits and customs of the priestly class, handed down from our distant forebears, are scattered to the winds and are fast disappearing from the land.(48)

There are people today who, after drinking the cup of Western wisdom, thinks that they know everything. They laugh at the ancient sages. All Hindu thought is to them arrant trash - philosophy mere child's prattle, and religion the superstition of fools. On the other hand there are people - educated, but a sort of monomaniacs, who run to the other extreme and want to explain the omen of this and that. They has philosophical and metaphysical, and Lord knows what

other puerile explanations for every superstition that belongs to their particular race, or their peculiar gods, or their peculiar village. Every little village superstition is to them a mandate of the Vedas; and upon the carrying out of it, according to them, depends the national life. You must beware of this. I would rather see every one of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for atheists are alive and you can make something out of them. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon life. Avoid these two.(49)

There are two great obstacles on our path in India - the Scylla of the old orthodoxy, and the Charybdis of modern European civilization. Of those two, I vote for the old orthodoxy and not for the Europeanized system; for the old orthodox people may be ignorant, they may be crude, but they are real human beings, they have faith, they have strength, they stand on their own feet; while Europeanized people have no backbone, they are a mass of heterogeneous ideas picked up at random from every source - and these ideas are unassimilated, undigested, unharmonized. They do not stand on their own feet, and their heads are turning round and round. Where is the motive power of their work? In a few, patronizing pats from the English people. Their schemes of reforms, their vehement vituperations against the evils of certain social customs have, as the mainspring, some European patronage. Why are some of our customs called evil? Because the Europeans say so. That is about the reason they give. I would not submit to that. Stand and die in your own strength; if there is any sin the world, it is weakness. Avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death. These unbalanced creatures are not yet formed into distinct personalities. What are we to call them - men, women, or animals? On the other hand, these old, orthodox people were staunch, and were real human beings.(50)

A pandit asked Swami Vivekananda if there was any harm in giving up sandhyavandanam or prayers performed in the morning, noon and evening, which he had had to do for lack of time. "What!" cried out the swami, almost with ferocity, "Those giants of old, the ancient rishis, who never walked, but strode - the like of whom, if you are to think [of] for a moment, you would be shriveled into a moth - they, sir, had time and you have none!"... When a Westernized Hindu spoke in a belittling manner of the "meaningless teachings" of the Vedic seers, the swami fell upon him with thunderbolt vehemence, crying out, "Man, a little learning has muddled your brain! How dare you criticize your venerable forebears, how dare you bastardize the blood of the rishis in your veins by

speaking in such a fashion! Have you tested the science of the rishis? Have you even so much as read the Vedas? There is the challenge thrown by the rishis! If you dare oppose them, take it up, put their teachings to the test, and they shall not be found wanting! What is making this race contemptible is just such intellectual bigotry and lop-sidedness as you manifest!"(51)

5. Lack of Faith and Physical Weakness Have Broken the Backbone of India

What do we want in India? If foreigners want [the teachings of the Upanishads] we want them twenty times more. Because, in spite of the greatness of the Upanishads, in spite of our boasted ancestry of sages, I must tell you that, compared with many other races, we are weak, very weak. First of all is our physical weakness. That physical weakness is the cause of at least one third of our miseries. We are lazy, we cannot work, we cannot combine, we do not love each other; we are intensely selfish, no three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other. That is the state in which we are - hopelessly disorganized mobs, immensely selfish, fighting each other for centuries as to whether a certain mark is to be put on our foreheads this way or that, writing volumes and volumes upon such momentous questions as to whether the look of someone spoils my food or not! This we have been doing for the past few centuries. We cannot expect anything from a race whose whole brain energy has been occupied in such wonderfully beautiful problems and researches! And are we not ashamed of ourselves? Ay, sometimes we are; but though we think these things frivolous, we cannot give them up. We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it.(52)

What we want is... shraddha, [faith]. Unfortunately, it has nearly vanished from India, and that is why we are in our present state. What makes the difference between person and person is the difference in this shraddha, and nothing else. What makes one person great and another weak and low is this shraddha... This shraddha must enter into you. Whatever material power you see manifested by the Western races is the outcome of this shraddha, because they believe in their muscles; and if you believe in your Spirit, how much more will it work? Believe in that infinite Soul, the infinite power which, with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That Atman, which nothing can destroy, is, in Its

infinite power and glory, only waiting to be called out. For here is the great difference between all other philosophies and the Indian philosophy, whether dualistic, qualified monistic, or monistic - they all firmly believe that everything is in the Soul itself. It has only to come out and manifest itself. Therefore, this shraddha is what I want, and what all of us here want - this faith in ourselves; and before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that loss of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have shraddha, and everything else is bound to follow. (53)

Would you believe me, we have less faith than the Englishman or woman - a thousand times less faith! These are plain words, but I say them; I cannot help it. Don't you see how the Englishmen and women, when they catch our ideals, become mad, as it were; and, although they are the ruling class, they come to India to preach our own religion, notwithstanding the jeers and ridicule of their own countrymen? How many of you [Indians] could do that? And why cannot you do it? Do you not know why? You know more than they do; you are more wise than is good for you, that is your difficulty! Simply because your blood is like water, your brain sloughing, your body is weak! You must change the body. Physical weakness is the cause, and nothing else. You have talked of reforms, of ideals, and all these things for the past hundred years, but when it comes to practice you are not to be found anywhere - till you have disgusted the whole world, and the very name of reform is a thing of ridicule! And what is the cause? Do you not know? You know too well. The only cause is that you are weak, you have no faith in yourselves! Centuries and centuries, a thousand years of crushing tyranny of castes and kings and foreigners and your own people have taken out all your strength.... Your backbone is broken, you are like downtrodden worms. Who will give you strength? Let me tell you, strength, strength is what we want. And the first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads, and believe "I am the Soul", "me the sword cannot cut, nor instruments pierce, me the fire cannot burn, me the air cannot dry; I am the omnipotent, I am the omniscient." [Gita 2.24] So repeat those blessed, saving words. Do not say we are weak; we can do anything and everything. What can we not do? Everything can be done by us. We all have the same, glorious Soul; let us believe in it.(54)

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON THE VEDAS AND UPANISHADS

By Sister Gayatriprana of the Vedanta Society of Southern California

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PART III, SECTION 7: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE VEDIC MESSAGE IN INDIA

Chapter 17: Sectarian Commentators on the Vedanta

a) *Sects, the Division of Spiritual Labor*

1. *The Interpretation of the Vedas by Various Sects Should be Allowed*

The Vedas are the common source of Hinduism in all its varied stages, as also of Buddhism and every other religious belief in India. The seeds of the multifarious growth of Indian thought on religion lie buried in the Vedas. Buddhism and the rest of India's religious thought are the outcome of the unfolding and expansion of those seeds, and modern Hinduism also is only their developed and matured form. With the expansion or the contraction of society, those seeds lie more or less expanded at one place or more or less contracted at another.(1)

There are certain principles in which, I think, we - whether Vaishnavas, Shaktas or Ganapatyas, whether we belong to the ancient Vedantists or the modern ones, whether belonging to the old, rigid sects or the modern reformed ones - are all one; and whoever calls him or herself a Hindu believes in those principles. Of course, there is a difference in the interpretation, in the explanation of those principles, and that difference should be there, and it should be allowed, for our standard is not to bind everyone down to our position. It would be a sin to force everyone to work out our own interpretation of things, and to live by our methods.(2)

Cross reference to:

Rig Veda, 1.164, 46

2. *All Religions and All Methods of Work and Worship Lead Us to One and the Same Goal*

[The] peculiar idea of the Vedanta is that we must allow this infinite variation in religious thought and not try to bring everybody to the same opinion, because the goal is the same.(3)

Every sect of every religion presents only one ideal of its own to humankind, but the eternal Vedantic religion opens to humankind an infinite number of doors for ingress into the inner shrine of divinity and places before humanity an almost inexhaustible array of ideals, there being in each of them a manifestation of the eternal One. With the kindest solicitude the Vedanta points out to aspiring men and women the numerous roads, hewn out of the solid rock of the realities of human life by the glorious sons and daughters - or human manifestations of God - in the past and in the present, and stands with arms outstretched to welcome all - to welcome even those that are yet to be - to that Home of Truth and that Ocean of Bliss wherein the human soul, liberated from the net of maya, may transport itself with perfect freedom and with eternal joy.(4)

The grandest idea in the religion of the Vedanta is that we may reach the same goal by different paths; and these paths I have generalized into four, viz. those of work, love, psychology, and knowledge. But you must, at the same time, remember that these divisions are not very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other; but according to the type which prevails, we name the divisions. It is not that you can find people who have no other faculty than that of work, nor that you can find people who are no more than devoted worshippers only, nor that there are people who have no more than mere knowledge. These divisions are made in accordance with the type, or the tendency that may be seen to prevail in people. We have found that, in the end, all these four paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the same goal.(5)

3. The Religion and the Vedas Has the Vigor to Absorb Sect after Sect

Three religions now stand in the world which have come down to us from time prehistoric - Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism. They have all received tremendous shocks and all of them proved themselves by their survival their internal strength. But while Judaism failed to absorb Christianity and was driven out of its place of birth by its all-conquering daughter, and a handful of Parsees is all that remains to tell the tale of their grand religion, sect after sect arose in India and seemed to shake the religion of the Vedas to its very foundations; but, like the waters of the seashore in a tremendous earthquake it receded only for a while, only to return in an all-absorbing flood, a thousand times more vigorous; and when the tumult of the rush was over, these sects were all sucked in, absorbed and assimilated into the immense body of the mother faith.

From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the lowest ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindus' religion.(6)

[Many] books constitute the scriptures of the Hindus. When there is such a mass of sacred books in a nation and a race which has devoted the greatest part of its energies to the thought of philosophy and spirituality (nobody knows for how many thousands of years), it is quite natural that there should be so many sects; indeed it is a wonder that there are not thousands more.(7)

4. It Is the Necessity of the Age That All Sects Should Be Allowed to Live

To preach Vedanta in the land of India and before an Indian audience seems... to be an anomaly. But it is the one thing that has to be preached, and it is the necessity of the age that it must be preached. For... all the Indian sects must bear allegiance to the Upanishads; but among those sects there are many apparent contradictions. Many times the great sages of yore themselves could not understand the underlying harmony of the Upanishads. Many times even sages quarreled; so much so that it became a proverb that there are no sages who do not differ.(8)

There are some religions [including the Vedic] which have come down to us from the remotest antiquity, which are imbued with the idea that all sects should be allowed to live, that every sect has a meaning, a great idea, embedded within itself and, therefore, it is necessary for the good of the world and ought to be helped. In modern times the same idea is prevailing and attempts are made from time to time to reduce it to practice. These attempts do not always come up to our expectations, to the required efficiency. Nay, to our great disappointment, we sometimes find that we are quarreling all the more.(9)

We may take different points of view as to what the Vedas are. There may be one sect which regards one portion as more sacred than another, but that matters little so long as we say that we are all brothers and sisters in the Vedas, that out of these venerable, eternal, marvelous books has come everything that we possess today, good, holy and pure. Well, therefore, if we believe in all this, let this principle first of all be preached broadcast throughout the length and breadth of [India]. If this be true, let the Vedas have that prominence which they always deserve and which we all believe in.(10)

b) Vedanta, the Sect Which Must Cover the Whole Ground of Indian Religious Life

1. The Vedic Sect Which Now Really Covers India is Vedanta, Which Is Itself Divided into Three Schools

The Upanishads not being in a systematized form, it was easy for philosophers to take up texts as they liked to form a system. The Upanishads had always to be taken, else there would be no basis. Yet we find all the different schools of thought in the Upanishads.(11)

There are six schools of philosophy in India that are regarded as orthodox, because they believe in the Vedas.(12)

Of the three orthodox divisions [of Hinduism] - the Sankhyas, the Naiyayikas, and the Mimamsakas - the former two, although they existed as philosophical schools, failed to form any sect. The one sect that now really covers India is that of the later Mimamsakas or Vedantists. Their philosophy is called Vedantism.(13)

[In the *Brahma-Sutras*] Vyasa's philosophy is par excellence that of the Upanishads. He wrote in sutra form, that is, in brief, algebraic symbols without nominative or verb. This cause so much ambiguity that out of the *Sutras* came dualism, mono-dualism and monism or "roaring Vedanta".(14)

The Sutras of Vyasa have been variously explained by different commentators (15)

2. The Modern Custom Is to Identify the Word "Vedanta" with the School of Non-Dualism

All the schools of Hindu philosophy start from the Vedanta or Upanishads, but the monists took the name to themselves as a specialty, because they wanted to base the whole of their theology and philosophy upon the Vedanta and nothing else. In course of time, the Vedanta prevailed and all the various sects of India that now exist can be referred to one or other of its schools. Yet these schools are not unanimous in their opinions.(16)

Of late it has become the custom of most people to identify the word *Vedanta* with the Advaitic system of the Vedanta philosophy. We all know that Advaitism [non-dualism] is only one branch of the various philosophic systems that have been founded on the Upanishads. The followers of the Vishishtadvaitic [qualified non-dualism] system have as much reverence for the Upanishads as the followers of the Advaita, and the Vishishtadvaitists claim as much authority for the Vedanta as does the Advaitist. So do the Dualists; so does every other sect in India. But the word *Vedantist* has become identified in the popular mind with the word Advaitist, and perhaps with some reason; because, although we have the Vedas for our scriptures, we have Smritis and Puranas - subsequent writings - to illustrate the doctrine of the Vedas; these, of course, have not the same weight as the Vedas. And the law is that wherever these Puranas and Smritis differ from any part of the Shruti [canonical text], the Shruti must be followed and the Smriti rejected. Now, in the expositions of the great Advaitic philosopher, Shankara, and the school founded by him we find most of the authorities cited are from the Upanishads; very rarely is an authority cited from the Smritis except, perhaps, to elucidate a point which could hardly be found in the Shrutis. On the other hand, other schools take refuge more and more in the Smritis and less and less in the Shrutis; and as we go to the more and more Dualistic sects, we find a proportionate quantity of the Smritis quoted, which is out of all proportion to what we should expect from a Vedantist. It is, perhaps, because these gave such predominance to the Puranic authorities that the Advaitist came to be considered as the Vedantist *par excellence*, if I may say so.(17)

In what is being written and taught in the West about the religious thought of India, one school of Indian thought is principally represented - that which is called Advaitism, the monistic [non-dual] side of Indian religion; and sometimes it is thought that all the teachings of the Vedas are comprised in that one system of philosophy. There are, however, various phases of Indian thought; and, perhaps, this non-dualistic form is in the minority as compared with the other phases. From the most ancient times there have been various sects of thought in India; and, as there never was a formulated or recognized church or any body of men to designate the doctrines which should be believed in by each school, people were very free to choose their own forms, make their own philosophy and establish their own sects. We, therefore, find that from the most ancient times India was full of religious sects. At the present time, I do not know how many hundreds of sects we have in India; and several fresh ones are coming into existence every year. It seems that the religious activity of the nation is simply inexhaustible.(18)

Unfortunately there is the mistaken notion in modern India [also] that the word *Vedanta* has reference only to the Advaita system; but you must always remember that in modern India the

three prasthanas are considered equally important in the study of all the systems of religion.(19)

The word *Vedanta*, however, must cover the whole ground of Indian religious life; and, being part of the Vedas, by all acceptance it is the most ancient literature we have.(20)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.10a

3. The Three Vedantic Schools Are All Equally Important and Do Not Contradict Each Other, But Fulfill

It would be wrong to confine the word *Vedanta* to only one system which has arisen out of the Upanishads. The Vishishtadvaitist has as much right to be called a Vedantist as the Advaitist; in fact, I will go a little further and say that what we really mean by the word *Hindu* is really the same as the Vedantist.(21)

This is what I mean by Vedanta, that it covers the ground of dualism, of qualified monism, and Advaitism in India. Perhaps we may even take in parts of Buddhism and of Jainism, too - if they would come in - for our hearts are sufficiently large. But it is they that will not come in. We are ready - for, upon severe analysis you will always find that the essence of Buddhism was all borrowed from the same Upanishads; even the ethics, the so-called great and wonderful ethics of Buddhism were there, word for word, in some one or other of the Upanishads; and so, too, all the good doctrines of the Jains were there, minus their vagaries. In the Upanishads also we find the germs of all subsequent development of Indian religious thought.(22)

The Vedanta philosophy, as it is generally called at the present day, really comprises all the various sects that now exist in India. Thus there have been various interpretations; and, to my mind, they have been progressive, beginning with the dualistic or Dvaita and ending with the non-dualistic or Advaita.(23)

Our solution is that the Advaita is not antagonistic to Dvaita (dualism). We say the latter is only one of three steps. The first is dualism. Then we get to a higher state - partial non-dualism. And at last we find we are one with the universe. Therefore the three do not contradict, but fulfill.(24)

4. The Vedanta Contains All of Religion and Its Three Schools Represent the Stages of Humanity's Gradual Spiritual Growth

If one studies the Vedas between the lines, one sees a religion of harmony.(25)

I want you to note that the three systems [of Indian philosophy] have been current in India almost from time immemorial; for you must not believe that Shankara was the inventor of the Advaita system. It existed ages before Shankara was born; he was one of its last representatives. So with the Vishishtadvaita system; it had existed ages before Ramanuja

appeared, as we already know from the commentaries he has written; so with the dualistic systems that have existed side by side with the others. And with my little knowledge I have come to the conclusion that they do not contradict each other.

Just as in the case of the six darshanas [systems of Indian philosophy], we find they are a gradual unfolding of the grand principles whose music, beginning far back in soft, low notes, ends in the triumphant blast of the Advaita, so also in these three systems we find the gradual working up of the human mind towards higher and higher ideals until everything is merged in that wonderful unity which is reached in the Advaita system. Therefore these three are not contradictory.(26)

To realize God, the Brahman (as the Dvaitins say) or to become Brahman (as the Advaitins say) - is the aim and end of the whole teaching of the Vedas; and every other teaching therein contained represents a stage in the course of our progress thereto.(27)

All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essential of religion. The Vedanta, applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India, is Hinduism. The first stage, i.e. Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe, is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Islam. The Advaita, as applied in its yoga-perception form, is Buddhism, etc. Now, by religion is meant the Vedanta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, their surrounding, and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that, although the philosophy is the same, the Shaktas, Shaivas, etc. apply it each to their own special cult and *forms*.(28)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

Mund. Up., 2.1.1

c) The Mistake of the Thinking the Upanishads Teach Only One Thing

1. Every Indian Philosopher Must Find His or Her Authority in the Upanishads

Whatever be the philosophy or sect, everyone in India has to find his or her authority in the Upanishads. If he or she cannot, his or her sect would be heterodox.(29)

In India... in spite of all these jarring sects which we see today and all those that have been in the past, the one authority, the basis of all these systems, has yet been the Upanishads, the Vedanta. Whether you are a dualist, or a qualified monist, Advaitist, Vishishtadvaitist, Shuddhadvaitist, or any other Advaitist, or a dualist, or whatever you may call yourself, there stand behind you as authority your Shastras, your scriptures, the Upanishads. Whatever system in India does not obey the Upanishads cannot be called orthodox; and even the systems of the Jains and the Buddhists have been rejected from the soil of India only because they did not bear allegiance to the Upanishads. Thus the Vedanta, whether we know it or not, has penetrated

all the sects in India, and what we call Hinduism, this mighty banyan with its immense, almost infinite ramifications, has been throughout interpenetrated by the influence of the Vedanta. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we think the Vedanta, we live in the Vedanta, we breathe in the Vedanta, and we die in the Vedanta; and every Hindu does that.(30)

The Vedanta, then, practically forms the scriptures of the Hindus, and all systems of philosophy that are orthodox have to take it as their foundation. Even the Buddhists and Jains, when it suits their purpose, will quote a passage from the Vedanta as authority.(31)

We know that all our great philosophers, whether Vyasa, Patanjali, or Gautama, and even the father of all philosophy, the great Kapila himself, whenever they wanted an authority for what they wrote, every one of them found it in the Upanishads and nowhere else; for therein are the truths that remain for ever.(32)

Either in the sharp analysis of the Vaisheshikas, resulting in the wonderful theories about the *paramanus*, *dvyanus* and *trasarenius* [atoms, entities composed of two atoms, entities composed of three atoms], or the still more wonderful analysis displayed in the discussions of *jati*, *dravya*, *guna*, *samavaya* (genus, substance, quality and inhesion or inseparability), and to the various categories of the Naiyayikas, rising to the solemn march of the thought of the Sankhyas, the fathers of the theories of evolution, ending with the ripe fruit, the result of all these researches, the Sutras of Vyasa - the one background to all these different analyses and syntheses of the human mind is still the Shrutis.(33)

2. Vedantic Sects Have Been Founded by Explaining the Upanishadic Conception from Only One Standpoint

You find that the [Upanishadic] texts have been commented upon by different commentators, preached by great teachers, and sects founded upon them; and you find that in these books of the Vedas there are apparently contradictory ideas.(34)

Commentators came and tried to smooth down [the highest and lowest thoughts which have all been preserved in the Vedas] and to bring out wonderful new ideas from the old things; they tried to find spiritual ideas even in the midst of the most ordinary statements, but the texts remained and as such, they are the most wonderful historical study.(35)

Now I will try to lay before you the ideas that are contained in the three sects, the dualistic, qualified no-dualistic and non-dualistic [which cover all six schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy]... All the Vedantists agree on three points. They believe in God, in the Vedas as revealed, and in cycles.... [We have already considered these]; but before going on, I will make one remark - that these different Vedanta systems have one common psychology, and that is the psychology of the Sankhya system. The Sankhya psychology is very much like the psychologies of the Nyaya and the Vaisheshika systems, differing only in minor particulars....

The Vedantists, [however], reject the Sankhya ideas of the soul and nature. They claim that between them there is a huge gulf to be bridged over. On the one hand, the Sankhya system comes to nature, and then at once it has to jump over to the other side and come to the soul,

which is entirely separate from nature. How can these different colors, as the Sankhya calls them, be able to act on that soul which is by its nature colorless? So the Vedantists, from the very first, affirm that this soul and this nature are one.... They admit that what the Sankhya calls nature exists, but say that nature is God. It is this Being, the Sat, which has become converted into all this - the universe, humanity, soul, and everything that exists. Mind and Mahat are but the manifestations of that one Sat. But then the difficulty arises that that would be pantheism. How came that Sat, which is unchangeable, as they admit (for that which is absolute is unchangeable) to be changed into that which is changeable and perishable? The Advaitists here have a theory which they call *vivarta vada* or apparent manifestation.(36)

[Now], there are certain [Vedic] texts which are entirely dualistic, others are entirely monistic. The dualistic commentator, knowing no better, wishes to knock the monistic texts on the head. Preachers and priests want to explain them in the dualistic meaning. The monistic commentator serves the dualistic texts in a similar fashion. Now this is not the fault of the Vedas. It is foolish to attempt to prove that the whole of the Vedas is dualistic. It is equally foolish to attempt to prove that the whole of the Vedas is non-dualistic. They are dualistic and non-dualistic, both. We understand them better today in the light of newer ideas. These are but different conceptions leading to the final conclusion that both dualistic and monistic conceptions are necessary for the evolution of the mind, and therefore the Vedas preach them. In mercy to the human race the Vedas show the various steps to the higher goal. Not that they are contradictory, vain words used by the Vedas to delude children; they are necessary, not only for children, but for many a grownup person. So long as we have a body and so long as we are deluded by the idea of our identity with the body, so long as we have five senses and see the external world, we must have a personal God. For if we have all these ideas, we must take, as the great Ramanuja has proved, all the ideas about God and nature and the individualized soul; when you take the one you have to take the whole triangle - we cannot avoid it. Therefore, so long as you see the external world, to avoid a personal God and a personal soul is arrant lunacy.(37)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 1.4.10

Taitt. Up., 2.4

Cha. Up., 3.1.4 (?)

Cha. Up., 3.14.1.

Cha. Up., 6.1.4

Cha. Up., 7.25.1

Kena Up., 1.3, 2.2

Mund. Up., 1.1.3

3. By Making the Texts Suit Their Own Philosophy Our Commentators Have Created Apparent Contradictions in the Upanishadic Theme of Unity in Diversity

All the great commentators in these different schools were at times "conscious liars" in order to make the texts suit their philosophy.(38)

The Advaitic commentator, whenever an Advaitic text comes, preserves it just as it is; but the same commentator, as soon as a dualistic text presents itself, tortures it if he can and brings the most queer meaning out of it. Sometimes *the unborn* becomes *a goat* - such are the wonderful changes effected. To suit the commentator, the word *aja* (the unborn) is explained as *aja*, a she-goat. In the same way, if not in a still worse fashion, the texts are handled by the dualistic commentator. Every dualistic text is preserved, and every text that speaks of non-dualistic philosophy is tortured in any fashion he likes. This Sanskrit language is so intricate, the Sanskrit of the Vedas is so ancient, and the Sanskrit philology so perfect, that any amount of discussion can be carried on for ages in regard to the meaning of any word. If pandits takes it into their heads, they can render anybody's prattle into correct Sanskrit by force of argument and quotation of texts and rules. These are the difficulties in our way of understanding the Upanishads.(39)

[Having] an idea of studying the grammar of the Vedas I began with all earnestness to study Panini and the *Mahabhashya*, but to my surprise I found that the best part of the Vedic grammar consists only of exceptions to the rules. A rule is made and later there comes a statement to the effect, "This rule will be an exception". So you see what an amount of liberty there is for anybody to write anything, the only safeguard being the dictionary of Yaksa. Still, in this you will find, for the most part, but a large number of synonyms.(40)

Our great commentators, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya... committed mistakes. Each one believed that the Upanishads are the sole authority, but thought that they preached one thing, one path only. Thus Shankaracharya committed the mistake of supposing that the whole of the Upanishads taught one thing, which was Advaitism and nothing else; and wherever a passage bearing distinctly the Dvaita idea occurred, he twisted and tortured the meaning to make it support his own theory. So with Ramanuja and Madhvacharya when a pure Advaitic text occurred. It was perfectly true that the Upanishads had one thing to teach, but that was taught as a going up from one step to another.(41)

I am bound to tell you that [thinking that the three systems are contradictory] has been a mistake committed by not a few. We find that an Advaitist teacher keeps intact those texts which especially teach Advaitism and tries to interpret the dualistic or qualified non-dualistic texts into his own meaning. Similarly, we find dualistic teachers trying to read their dualistic meaning into Advaitic texts. Our gurus were great men and women; yet there is a saying, "Even the faults of a guru must be told." I am of the opinion that in this only they were mistaken. We need not go into text-torturing, we need not go into any sort of religious dishonesty, we need not go into any sort of grammatical twaddle, we not go about trying to put our own ideas into texts that were never meant for them; but the work is plain and becomes easier once you understand the marvelous doctrine of adhikarabheda... The old idea of *arundhati nyaya* applies. To show someone the fine star arundhati, one takes the big and brilliant star nearest to it, upon

which he or she is asked to fix his or her eyes first, and then it becomes quite easy to direct his or her sight to arundhati. This is the task before us; and to prove my idea I will have simply to show you the Upanishads, and you will see it.(42)

Cross reference to:

Cha. Up., 6.8.7

Mund. Up., 1.1.3

d) *The Great Commentators on the Vedas*

1. *The Mimamsakas, Who Believed That We, as We Are, Create the Universe through the Vedas*

This is the claim of a certain sect of karmis, [the Mimamsakas, a Hindu philosophical sect]: the universe is thought and the Vedas are the words. We can create and uncreate this whole universe. Repeating the words, the unseen thought is aroused, and as a result a seen effect is produced.... They think that each one of us is a creator. Pronounce the words, the thought which corresponds will arise, and the result will become visible. "Thought is the power of the word, the word is the expression of the thought", they say.(43)

2. *The Sankhyas, Who Attempted to Harmonize the Philosophy of the Vedas through Reason and Taught That Our Nature Is Purity and Perfection*

We think the Sankhya philosophy is the first attempt to harmonize the philosophy of the Vedas through reason.(44)

The common *ism* all through India [is] this marvelous doctrine of the soul, of the perfection of the Soul, [which is] commonly believed in by all sects. As says our great philosopher Kapila [the founder of the Sankhya school], if purity had not been the nature of the soul it could never attain purity afterwards, for anything that was not perfect by nature, even if it attained to perfection, that perfection would go away again. If impurity is the nature of humanity, then humanity will have to remain impure, even though it may be pure for five minutes. The time will come when this purity will wash out, pass away, and the old natural impurity will have its sway once more. Therefore, say all our philosophers, good is our nature, perfection is our nature, not imperfections, not impurity - and we should remember that.(45)

The Vedanta requires of us faith, for conclusiveness cannot be reached by argumentation. Then why has the slightest flaw detected in the position of the schools the Sankhya and the Nyaya been overwhelmed by a fusillade of dialectics? In whom, moreover, are we to put our faith? Everybody seems to be mad over establishing his own view; if, according to Vyasa [in the *Brahma Sutras*] even the greatest muni Kapila, "the greatest among perfected souls" [*Swet. Up., 5.2*] is himself deeply involved in error, then who would say that Vyasa may not be so involved in a greater measure? Did Kapila, then, fail to understand the Vedas? (46)

3. *Sri Krishna, Who Showed the Validity of the Various Steps in Religion*

What do you find in the *Gita*, and what in modern commentators? One non-dualistic commentator takes up an Upanisad; there are so many dualistic passages which he twists and tortures into some meaning and wants to bring them all into a meaning of his own. If a dualistic commentator comes, there are so many non-dualistic texts which he begins to torture to bring them all round to a dualistic meaning. But you find in the *Gita* there is no attempt at torturing any one of them. They are all all right, says the Lord; for slowly and gradually the human soul rises up and up, step after step, from the gross to the fine, from the fine to the finer, until it reaches the Absolute, the goal. That is what is in the *Gita*. Even the Karma-Kanda is taken up and it is shown that, although it cannot give salvation direct, but only indirectly, yet that also is valid; images are valid indirectly, ceremonies, forms, everything is valid, only with one condition - purity of heart. For worship is valid and leads to the goal if the heart is pure and the heart is sincere; and all these various modes of worship are necessary - else why should they be there? Religions and sects are not the work of hypocrites and wicked people who invented all these to get a little money, as some of our modern people want to think. However reasonable that explanation may seem, it is not true and they were not invented that way at all. They are the outcome of the necessity of the human soul. They are all here to satisfy the hankering and thirst of different classes of human minds; and you need not preach against them. The day when that necessity will cease, they will vanish along with the cessation of that necessity; and so long as that necessity remains, they must be there in spite of your preaching, in spite of your criticisms. You may bring the sword or the gun into play, you may deluge the world with human blood; but so long as there is a necessity for idols, they must remain. These forms, and all the various steps in religion will remain; and we understand from Lord Krishna why they should.(47)

4. *Some Meanings from the Brahma-Sutras*

No foundation for the authority of the Vedas has been adduced in the *Vedanta Sutras*. First it has been said that the Vedas are the authority for the existence of God, and then it has been argued that the authority for the Vedas is the text, "He breathed out, as it were, all knowledge" [*Brih. Up.*, 2.4.10], Now is not this statement vitiated by what in Western logic is called an argument in a circle?(48)

In the *Gita* the way is laid open to all men and women, to all caste and color; but Vyasa [the author of the *Brahma-Sutras*] tries to put meanings upon the Vedas to cheat the poor shudras.(49)

5. *Buddha, the Great Vedantist*

i) *Buddha's Fearless Analysis of the Vedas and His Large-Heartedness in Throwing Their Hidden Truths Broadcast over the World*

Buddha was a great Vedantist (for Buddhism is really only an offshoot of Vedanta) and Shankara is often called a "hidden Buddhist". Buddha made the analysis; Shankara made the synthesis out of it. Buddha never bowed down to anything - neither Veda, nor caste, nor priest, nor custom. He fearlessly reasoned so far as reason could take him. Such a fearless search for truth and love for every living thing the world has never seen.(50)

Buddha was more brave and sincere than any [other] teacher. He said, "Believe no book; the Vedas are all humbug. If they agree with me, so much the better for the books. I am the greatest book; sacrifice and prayer are useless."(51)

[The commentators say]: The same God who gives out the Vedas becomes Buddha again to annul them.(52)

There is no help [for the Hindus] out of the clutches of the Buddhists. You may quote the Vedas, but he does not believe them. He will say, "My *Tripitakas* say otherwise, and they are without beginning or end, not even written by Buddha, for Buddha says he is only reciting them; they are eternal." And he adds, "Yours are wrong, ours are the true Vedas; yours are manufactured by the brahmin priests, therefore out with them!" (53)

ii) *Buddha Gave Power and Heart to Vedantic Ideas*

Buddha was one of the sannyasins of the Vedanta. He started a new sect, just as others are started even today. The ideas which are now called Buddhism were not his. They were much more ancient. He was a great man who gave the ideas power. The unique element in Buddhism was its social element.(54)

What Buddha did was to break wide open the gates of that very religion which was confined in the Upanishads to a particular caste. What special greatness does his theory of nirvana confer on him? His greatness lies in his unrivaled sympathy. The high orders of samadhi, etc. that lend gravity to his religion are almost all there in the Vedas; what are absent there are his intellect and his heart, which have never been paralleled throughout the history of the world.(55)

iii) *It Was Absolutely Necessary for Buddha to Emphasize Non-Violence and Faith in His Teachings*

Even in the philosophical writings of the Buddhists or Jains, the help of the Shrutis are never rejected; and in at least some of the Buddhist schools and in the majority of the Jain writings, the authority of the Shrutis is fully admitted, excepting what they call the *himsaka Shrutis* [dealing with sacrifices involving violence to animals] which they hold to be interpolations of the brahmins.(56)

Buddhist ritual itself, [however], came from the Vedic.(57)

Buddha was the first man to stand against [purification of the mind through sacrifices and such other external means]. But the inner essence of the ideas remained as of old - look at that doctrine of mental exercises which he preached and that mandate of his to believe in the Suttas instead of the Vedas. Caste also remained as of old (caste was not wholly obsolete at the time of Buddha); but it was now determined by personal qualifications; and those that were not believers in his religion were declared heretics, all in the old style. *Heretic* was a very ancient word with the Buddhists, but then they never had recourse to the sword (good souls!), and had great toleration. Argument blew up the Vedas. But what is the proof of your religion? Well, put faith in it! - the same procedure as in all religions. It was, however, and imperative necessity of

the times; and that was the reason of his having incarnated himself. His doctrine was like that of Kapila.(58)

iv) ***Buddha's Rejection of the Personal God Could Not Hold the Popular Mind***

Buddha is expressly agnostic about God; but God is everywhere preached in [Vedanta].(59)

Every one of Buddha's teachings is founded [on] the Vedanta. He was one of those monks who wanted to bring out the truths hidden in those books and in the forest monasteries. I do not believe that the world is ready for them, even now; it still wants those lower religions which teach of a personal God. Because of this, the original Buddhism could not hold the popular mind until it took up the modifications which were reflected back from Tibet and the Tartars. Original Buddhism was not at all nihilistic. It was but an attempt to combat caste and priestcraft.(60)

Hindus can give up everything except their God. To deny God is to cut off the very ground from under the feet of devotion. Devotion and God the Hindus must cling to. They can never relinquish these. And here, in the teaching of Buddha, are no God and no soul - simply work. What for? Not for the self, for the self is a delusion. We shall be ourselves when this delusion has vanished. Very few are there in the world that can rise to that height and work for work's sake.(61)

6. ***Beliefs of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika School***

According to Nyaya, "Shabda or Veda (the criterion of truth) is the word of those who have realized the highest."(62)

Shabdas are again divided into two classes, the Vedic shabdas and those in common use. I found this position in the Nyaya book called *Shabdashaktiprakashika*. There the arguments indicate, no doubt, great power of thought; but, oh, the terminology confounds the brain!(63)

[The Vaisheshikas] are called orthodox because they accepted the Vedas, although they denied the existence of a personal God, believing that everything sprang from the atom or nature.(64)

7. ***Some Puranic and Tantric Ideas Which Do Not Agree with the Vedas***

In the Puranas you find that, during the first divine incarnation, the minavatara,[fish avatar], the Veda is first made manifest. The Vedas having been first revealed in this incarnation, the other creative manifestations followed. (65)

In the Puranas we find many things which do not agree with the Vedas. For instance, it is written in the Puranas that some one lives ten thousand years another twenty thousand years; but in the Vedas we find: "Human beings live indeed a hundred years." [*Isha Up.*, 2] Which are we to accept in this case? Certainly the Vedas. Notwithstanding statements like these, I do not depreciate the Puranas. They contain many beautiful and illuminating teachings and words of wisdom of yoga, bhakti, jnana and karma; those, of course, we should accept.(66)

There is no mention of the division of time into four yugas in the Vedas. They are arbitrary assumptions of the Pauranika times.(67)

The Puranas, no doubt, say that a certain caste has the right to such and such a recension of the Vedas, or a certain caste has no right to study them, or that this portion of the Vedas is for the Satya Yuga and that portion is for the Kali Yuga. But, mark you, the Veda does not say so; it is only your Puranas that do so. But can the servant dictate to the master?(68)

[In principle] it is improper to hold many texts on the same subject to be contradicted by one or two. Why, then, are the long-continued [Vedic] customs of madhuparka [serving beef to a guest] and the like repealed by one or two [Puranic] texts such as, "The horse-sacrifice, the cow-sacrifice, sannyasa, meat-offering in the shraddha [funeral] ceremony are to be forsaken in the Kali Yuga", and so forth?(69)

The Tantra says that in the Kali-Yuga the Vedic mantras are futile.(70)

The Smritis and Puranas are productions of people of limited intelligence and are full of fallacies, errors, and the feelings of class and malice. Only parts of them breathing broadness of spirit and love are acceptable; the rest are to be rejected. The Upanishads and the Gita are the true scriptures.(71)

8. Shankaracharya, the Greatest Teacher of Vedanta

i. Shankaracharya Showed That There Is Only One Infinite Reality and Humans Can Come to It through All the Various Presentations

Shankaracharya... caught the rhythm of the Vedas, the national cadence.... Indeed, I always imagine that he had some vision such as mine [of a rishi chanting the Rig Veda] when he was young, and recovered the ancient music that way. Anyway, his whole life's work is nothing but that, the throbbing of the beauty of the Vedas and Upanishads.(72)

The greatest teacher of the Vedanta philosophy was Shankaracharya. By solid reasoning he extracted from the Vedas the truths of Vedanta, and on them built up the wonderful system of jnana that is taught in his commentaries. He unified all the conflicting descriptions of Brahman and showed that there is only one, infinite Reality.(73)

Shankara says: God is to be reasoned on, because the Vedas say so. Reason helps inspiration; books and realized reason - or individualized perception - both are proofs of God. The Vedas are, according to him, a sort of incarnation of universal knowledge. The proof of God is that He brought forth the Vedas, and the proof of the Vedas is that such wonderful books could only have been given out by Brahman. They are the mine of all knowledge and they have come out of Brahman as someone breathes out air [*Brih. Up, 2.4.10*]; therefore we know that It is infinite in power and knowledge. It may or may not have created the world - that is a trifle; to have produced the Vedas is more important! The world has come to know God through the Vedas; there is no other way. And so universal is this belief held by Shankara in the all-inclusiveness of

the Vedas, that there is even a Hindu proverb that, if a man loses his cow, he goes to look for her in the Vedas! (74)

Shankara showed, too, that as a humanity can only travel slowly on the upward road, all the varied presentations are needed to suit its varying capacity.(75)

Work and worship... are necessary to take away the veil, to lift off the bondage and illusion. They do not give up freedom; but all the same, without effort on our own part we do not open our eyes and see what we are. Shankara further says that Advaita Vedanta is the crowning glory of the Vedas; but the lower Vedas are also necessary, because they teach work and worship; and through these many come to the Lord. Others may come without any help but Advaita.(76)

Relative knowledge is good, because it leads to absolute knowledge; but neither the knowledge of the senses, nor of the mind, nor even of the Vedas is true, since they are all within the realm of relative knowledge.(77)

ii) *Despite His Grand and Rational Doctrine, Shankaracharya Had No Great Liberality of Heart*

Shankara's doctrine [is] far more grand and rational [than that of Buddha]. Buddha and Kapila are always saying that the world is full of grief and nothing but that - flee from it - ay, for your life, do! Is happiness altogether absent here?... There is grief, forsooth, but what can be done? Perchance some will suggest that grief itself will appear as happiness when you become used to it by constant suffering. Shankara does not take this line of argument. He says: This world is and *is not - manifold, yet one*; I shall unravel its mystery - I shall know whether grief be there, or anything else; I do not flee from it as from a bugbear. I will know all about it - as to the infinite pain that attends its search, well, I am embracing it in its fullest measure. Am I a beast that you frighten me with happiness and misery, decay and death, which are but the outcome of the senses? I will know about it - I will give up my life for it. There is nothing to know about in this world - therefore, if there be anything beyond this relative existence - what the Lord Buddha has designated as *prajnapara* - the transcendental - if such there be, I want that alone. Whether happiness attends it, or grief, I do not care. What a lofty idea! How grand! The religion of Buddha has reared itself upon the Upanishads, and upon that also the philosophy of Shankara. Only, Shankara had not the slightest bit of Buddha's wonderful heart, dry intellect merely! For fear of the Tantras, for fear of the mob, in his attempt to cure a boil, he amputated the very arm itself! [He neglected the rank and file of his countrymen which had been captured by Tantricism, of which the excesses were threatening the purity of the Vedic religion](78)

Shankara's intellect was sharp as a razor. He was a good arguer and scholar, no doubt of that, but he had no great liberality; his heart too seems to have been like that. Besides, he used to take great pride in his brahminism, much like the southern brahmin of the priest class, you may say. How he has defended his commentary in the *Vedanta Sutras* that the non-brahmin castes will not attain to a supreme knowledge of Brahman! And what specious arguments! Referring to Vidura [a saintly character in the *Mahabharata* who was of low caste], he has said that he became a knower of Brahman by reason of his brahmin body in his previous incarnation. Well, if

nowadays a shudra [lowest caste person] attains to knowledge of Brahman shall we have to side without your Shankara and maintain that, because he had been a brahmin in his previous birth, therefore he attained to this knowledge! Goodness! What is the use of dragging in brahminism with so much ado! The Vedas have entitled anyone belonging to the three upper castes to a study of the Vedas and the realization of Brahman, haven't they? So Shankara had no need whatsoever of displaying this curious bit of pedantry on this subject, contrary to the Vedas.(79)

Shankaracharya could not adduce any proof from the Vedas to the effect that the shudra should not study the Vedas. He only quotes, "The shudra is not conceived of as a performer of yajna or Vedic sacrifices" [*Taitt. Samhita* 7.1.1.6] to maintain that when he is not entitled to perform yajnas, neither has he any right to study the Upanishads and the like. But the same acharya contends, with reference to the "Now then commences hence the inquiry about Brahman" [*Vedanta Suktas*, 1.1.1] that the words *now then* does not mean *subsequent to the study of the Vedas*, because it is contrary to proof that the study of the Upanishads is not permissible without the previous study of the Vedic mantras and Brahmanas and because there is no intrinsic sequence between the Vedic karma-kanda and jnana-kanda. It is evident, therefore, that one may attain to the knowledge of Brahman without having studied the ceremonial parts of the Vedas. So, if there is no sequence between the sacrificial practices and jnana, why does the acharya contradict his own statement when it is a case of the shudras, by inserting the clause, "By the force of the same logic"? Why should the shudra not study the Upanishads?(80)

The Upanishads and the Gita are the true scriptures; Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir and so on are the true avatars, for they had hearts as broad as the sky - and, above all, Ramakrishna. Shankara, Ramanuja, etc. seem to have been mere pundits with much narrowness of heart. Where is that love, that weeping heart at the sorrows of others? Dry pedantry of the pandit, and the feeling of only oneself getting to salvation hurry-scurry! But is that going to be possible? Was it ever likely, or will it ever be so? (81)

9. Ramanuja, Who Maintained Eternal Differences within Brahman

Truly it has been said of the Upanishads by Ramanuja that they form the head, the shoulders, the crest of the Vedas, and surely enough the Upanishads have become the Bible of modern India.(82)

Ramanuja says that the Vedas are the holiest study. Let the sons of the three upper castes get the sutra [] and at eight, ten, or eleven years of age begin the study, which means going to a guru and learning the Vedas word for word with perfect intonation and pronunciation.

Visistadvaita is qualified Advaita (monism). Its expounder was Ramanuja. He says, "Out of the ocean of milk of the Vedas Vyasa has churned this butter of philosophy, the better to help humankind." He says again, "All virtues and all qualities belong to Brahman, Lord of the universe. He is the greatest Purusha.(83)

Although the system of Ramanuja admits the unity of the total, within that totality of existence there are, according to him, eternal differences. Therefore, for all practical purposes, this system also being dualistic, it was easy for Ramanuja to keep the distinction between the personal soul and the personal God very clear.(84)

10. *Madhvacharya, Who Had No Place for Reasoning, but Emphasized Vedic Revelation and the Puranas*

Madhva was a thoroughgoing dualist or Dvaitist. He claims that even women may study the Vedas. He quotes chiefly from the Puranas. He says that Brahman means Vishnu, not Shiva at all, because there is no salvation except through Vishnu.

There is no place for reasoning in Madhva's explanation; it is all taken from revelation in the Vedas. (85)

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PART III, SECTION 7: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE VEDIC MESSAGE IN INDIA

Chapter 18: Reaction to Foreign Invasion

a) When the Kings Supported Priestly Tyranny, India Became a Cheap and Ready Prey to the Muslim Invaders

In the Vedic and adjoining periods the royal power could not manifest itself on account of the grinding pressure of the priestly power. We have seen how, during the Buddhistic revolution, resulting in the fall of the brahminical supremacy, the royal power in India reached its culminating point. [Chapter 7, e 1] In the interval between the fall of the Buddhistic and the establishment of the Muslim empire, we have seen how the royal power was trying to raise its head through the Rajputs in India and how it failed in its attempt. At the root of this failure, too, could be traced the same old endeavors of the Vedic priestly class to bring back and revive with a new life their original (ritualistic) days.(1)

[The priests and the kings]... now friendly to each other... and engaged in the satisfaction of mutual self-interest..., being steeped in all the vices consequent upon such a union, e.g. the sucking of the blood of the masses, taking revenge on the enemy, spoliation of others' property,

etc., they in vain tried to imitate the rajasuya and other Vedic sacrifices of the ancient kings, and only made a ridiculous farce of them. The result was that they were bound hand and foot by a formidable train of sycophantic attendance and its obsequious flatteries; and, being entangled in an interminable net of rites and ceremonies with flourishes of mantras and the like, they soon became a cheap and ready prey to the Muslim invaders from the West.(2)

The kshatriyas had always been the backbone of India; so also had they been the supporters of science and liberty, and their voices had rung out again and again to clear the land from superstitions; and throughout the history of India they ever formed the invulnerable barrier to aggressive priestly tyranny.

When the greater part of their number sank into ignorance and another portion mixed their blood with savages from Central Asia and lent their swords to establish the rule of priests in India, her cup became full to the brim and down sank the land of Bharata [India], not to rise again until the kshatriyas rouse themselves and, making themselves free, strike the chains from the feet of the rest. Priestcraft is the bane of India. Can people degrade their brothers and sisters and themselves escape degradation? (3)

b) The Muslim Turks, Themselves Renegades from the Vedic Religion (Buddhism), Crushed Brahminical Supremacy under Their Feet

What is called the Muslim invasion, conquest, or colonization of India means only this - that, under the leadership of the Muslim Turks, who were renegades from Buddhism, those sections of the Hindu race who continued in the faith of their ancestors were repeatedly conquered by the other section of that very race who also were renegades from Buddhism or the Vedic religion, and served under the Turks, having been forcibly converted to Islam by their superior strength.(4)

The brahmin power had lost all its own internal strength and stamina and become the weakest of the weak. What wonder it should be broken into a thousand pieces and fall at the mere touch of the storm of the Muslim invaders from the West! That great brahmin power fell - who knows if ever to rise again?

The resuscitation of the priestly power under Muslim rule was, on the other hand, an utter impossibility. The Prophet Muhammad was himself dead against the priestly class in any shape and tried his best to destroy this power by formulating rules and injunctions to that effect.... The utmost the Muslim kings could do as a favor to the priestly class - the spiritual guides of the idolatrous, hateful Kafirs - was to allow them somehow to pass their life silently and wait for their last moment....

Crushing the brahminical supremacy under his feet, the Muslim king was able to restore to a considerable extent the lost glories of such dynasties as the Maurya, the Gupta, the Andhra and the Kshatrapa.

Thus the priestly power - which sages like Kumarila, Shankara and Ramanuja had tried to reestablish, which for some time was supported by the sword of the Rajput power, and which

tried to rebuild its structure on the fall of its Jain and Buddhist adversaries - was, under Muslim rule, laid to sleep for ever, knowing no awakening.(5)

c) *The South Became the Repository of Vedic Learning, the Backbone of the Hindu Religion*

The Muslim tried for centuries to subjugate the South, but can scarcely be said to have got even a strong foothold; and when the strong and united empire of the Moguls was very near completing its conquest, the hills and plateaus of the South poured in their bands of fighting peasants and horsemen, determined to die for the religion which Ramdas preached and Tuka sang; and in a short time the gigantic empire of the Moguls was only a name.(6)

In the South, again, was born the wonderful Sayanacharya - the strength of whose arms, vanquishing the Muslims, kept King Bukka on his throne, whose wise counsels gave stability to the Vidyanagar kingdom, whose state policy established lasting peace and prosperity in the Deccan, whose superhuman genius and extraordinary industry produced the commentaries on the whole Vedas - and the product of whose wonderful sacrifice, renunciation and researches was the Vedantic treatise named *Panchadashi* - that sannyasin Vidyaranya Muni or Sayana, was born in this land.(7)

The South [remained] the repository of Vedic learning, and... [therefore], in spite of reiterated assertions of aggressive ignorance, [today] it is the Shruti that is still the backbone of all the different divisions of the Hindu religion.(8)

d) *The Vitality of India's Spirituality Was Constructively Conserved by a Host of Reformers*

[The fanatical belief of many of the invaders into India is] that those who do not belong to their sect have no right to live. They will go to a place where the fire will never be quenched when they die; in this life they are only fit to be made into slaves or murdered; and that they have only the right to live as slaves to "the true believers", but never as free people. So in this way, when these waves burst upon India, everything was submerged. Books and literature and civilization went down.

But there is a vitality in the race which is unique in the history of humanity, and perhaps that vitality comes from non-resistance. Non-resistance is the greatest strength. In meekness and mildness lies the greatest strength. In suffering is greater strength than in doing. In resisting one's own passions is far higher strength than in hurting others. And that has been the watchword of the race through all its difficulties, its misfortunes and its prosperity. It is the only nation that never went beyond its frontiers to cut the throats of its neighbors. It is a glorious thing. It makes me rather patriotic to think I am born a Hindu, a descendant of the only race that never went out to hurt anyone, and whose only action upon humanity has been giving and enlightening and teaching, but never robbing.(9)

[India] is the ancient land where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country, the same India whose influx of spirituality is represented, as it were, on the material plane by rolling rivers like oceans, where the eternal Himalayas, rising tier above tier with their snow-

caps look, as it were, into the very mysteries of heaven. Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. Here first sprang up inquiries into the nature of humanity and into the internal world. Here first arose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the existence of a supervising God, and immanent God in nature and in humanity, and here the highest ideals of religion and philosophy have attained their culminating points. This is the land from whence, like tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world, and this is the land whence once more such tides must proceed in order to bring life and vigor into the decaying races of humankind. It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigor, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal.(10)

All along, in the history of the Hindu race, there never was any attempt at destruction, only construction. One sect wanted to destroy, and they were thrown out of India - they were the Buddhists. We have a host of reformers - Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, and Chaitanya. These were great reformers, who were always constructive and built according to the circumstances of their time. This is our peculiar method of work. All the modern reformers take to European, destructive reformation which never did good to anyone and never will. Only once was a modern reformer mostly constructive, and that was Raja Rammohan Roy. The progress of the Hindu race has been towards the realization of the Vedantic ideals. All history of Indian life is the struggle for the realization of the idea of the Vedanta through good or bad fortune. Whenever there was any reforming sect or religion which rejected the Vedantic idea, it was smashed into nothing.(11)

e) In Northern India the Masses Were Kept within the Fold of Hinduism at the Cost of New Thoughts and Aspirations

1. The Vedantic Movements under the Muslims Preached the Muslim Idea of the Equality of Human Beings

To the Muslim rule we owe that great blessing - the destruction of exclusive privilege. That rule was, after all, not all bad; and nothing is all good. The Muslim conquest of India came as a salvation to the downtrodden, to the poor. That is why one-fifth of our people have become Muslims. It was not the sword that did it all. It would be the height of madness to think it was all the work of sword and fire.(12)

The movements in northern India during the Muslim period are characterized by their uniform attempt to hold the masses back from joining the religion of the conquerors - which brought in its train social and spiritual equality for all.

The friars of the orders founded by Ramananda, Kabir, Dadu, Chaitanya or Nanak were all agreed in preaching the equality of human beings, however differing from each other in philosophy. Their energy was for the most part spent in checking the rapid conquest of Islam among the masses, and they had very little left to give birth to new thoughts and aspirations. Though evidently successful in their purpose of keeping the masses within the fold of the old

religion, and tempering the fanaticism of the Muslims, they were mere apologists, struggling to obtain permission to live.(13)

2. *The Mighty Spiritual Genius Chaitanya and His Teaching of Worship through the Senses*

Wherever the Hindi language is spoken, even the lowest classes have more knowledge of the Vedantic religion than many of the highest in Lower Bengal.

And why so?

Transported from the soil of Mithila to Navadwip and developed by the fostering genius of Shiromani, Gadadhara, Jagadisha and a host of other great names, an analysis of the laws of reasoning, in some points superior to every other system in the whole world, expressed in wonderful and precise mosaic of language, stands the Nyaya of Bengal, respected and studied throughout the length and breadth of Hindusthan. But, alas, Vedic study was sadly neglected; and until within the last few years, scarcely anyone could be found in Bengal to teach the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali. Once only a mighty genius rose above the never-ending *avachchinnas* and *avachchedakas* [*determined and determining attribute*] - Bhagavan Sri Krishna Chaitanya. For once the religious lethargy of Bengal was shaken, and for a time it entered into communion with the religious life of other parts of India....

The commentary which Sri Chaitanya wrote on the *Vyasa-Sutras* has either been lost or not found yet. His disciples joined themselves to the Madhvas of the South, and gradually the mantles of such giants as Rupa and Sanatana and Jiva Goswami fell on the shoulders of the Babajis, and the great movement of Sri Chaitanya was decaying fast, till of late years there is a sign of revival. I hope that it will regain its lost splendor.

The influence of Sri Chaitanya is all over India. Wherever the bhakti-marga [path of devotion] is known, there he is appreciated, studied, and worshipped. I have every reason to believe that the whole of the Vallabhacharya recension is only a branch founded by Sri Chaitanya. But most of his so-called disciples have become gadians (heads of monasteries) while he preached barefooted from door to door in India, begging achandalas (all down to the lowest) to love God. (14)

Vaishnavism (the religion of Chaitanya) says, "It is all right, this tremendous love for father, for mother, for brother, husband or child. It is all right, if only you think that Krishna is the child; and when you give him or her food, that you are feeding Krishna" This was the cry of Chaitanya: "Worship God *through* the senses" - as against the Vedantic cry, "Control the senses! Suppress the senses!"(15)

3. *The Creative Genius of Guru Govind Singh Produced the Political Unity of the Sikhs*

One great prophet... arose in the North, Guru Govind Singh, the last guru of the Sikhs, with creative genius; and the result of his spiritual work was followed by the well-known political organization of the Sikhs. We have seen throughout the history of India, a spiritual upheaval is almost always succeeded by a political unity extending over more or less the area of the

continent, which in its turn helps to strengthen the spiritual aspiration that brought it into being. But the spiritual aspiration that preceded the rise of the Mahratta or the Sikh empire was entirely reactionary. We seek in vain to find in the court of Poona or Lahore even a ray of reflection of that intellectual glory which surrounded the Moguls, much less the brilliance of Malava or Vidyanagara. It was intellectually the darkest period of Indian history; and both these meteoric empires, representing the upheaval of mass fanaticism and hating culture with all their hearts, lost all their motive power as soon as they had succeeded in destroying the rule of the hated Muslims.(16)

f) The English Occupation of India: The Appearance of the Supremacy of the Merchant Class

Then there came again a period of confusion. Friends and foes, the Mogul empire and its destroyers, and the till then peaceful foreign traders, French and English, all joined in a melee of fight. For more than half a century there was nothing but wars and pillage and destruction. And when the smoke and dust cleared, England was stalking victorious over all the rest. There has been half a century of law and order under the sway of Britain. Time alone will prove if it is of the order of progress or not.(17)

After an age-long play of action between the two forces [priests and kings], the final victory of the royal power was echoed on the soil of India for several centuries in the name of foreign monarchs professing an entirely different religion from the faith of the land [the Moguls]. But at the end of this Muslim period, another entirely new power made its appearance in the arena and slowly began to assert its prowess in the affairs of the Indian world.

This power is so new, its nature and working are so foreign to the Indian mind, its rise so inconceivable, and its vigor so insuperable that, though it wields the suzerain power up till now, only a handful of Indians understand what this power is.

We are talking of the occupation of India by England.

From very ancient times, the fame of India's vast wealth and her rich granaries has enkindled in many powerful foreign nations the desire to conquer her. She has been, in fact, again and again conquered by foreign nations. Then why should we say that the occupation of India by England was something new and foreign to the Indian mind?

From time immemorial the Indians have seen the mightiest royal power tremble before the frown of the ascetic priest, devoid of worldly desire, armed with spiritual strength - the power of mantras and religious lore - and the weapon of curses. They have also seen the subject people silently obey the commands of their heroic, all-powerful suzerains, backed by their armies, like a flock of sheep before a lion. But that a handful of vaishyas (traders) who, despite their great wealth, have ever crouched awe-stricken not only before the king but also before any member of the royal family, would unite, cross for purposes of business, rivers and seas, would, solely by virtue of their intelligence and wealth, by degrees make puppets of the long-established Hindu and Muslim dynasties; not only so, but that they would also buy the services of the ruling powers of their own country and use their valor and learning as powerful instruments for the influx of

their own riches - this is a spectacle entirely novel to the Indians, as also the spectacle that the descendants of the mighty nobility of [England]... would, in no distant future, consider it the zenith of human ambition to be sent to India as obedient servants of a body of merchants called the East India Company - such a sight was, indeed, a novelty unseen by India before!(18)

2. The Religious Movements in India during British Rule Are the Voices of the Dead and Dying

1. The New Sects Are Merely Pleading for Permission to Live

There have been a few religious movements amongst the Indian people during the British rule, following the same line that was taken up by the northern sects during the sway of the empire of Delhi. They are the voices of the dead and dying - the feeble tones of a terrorized people, pleading for permission to live. They are very eager to adjust their spiritual or social surroundings according to the tastes of their conquerors - if only they are left the right to live, especially the sects under English domination, in which social differences with the conquering race are more glaring than the spiritual. The Hindu sects of the century seem to have set one ideal of truth before them - they approval of their English masters. No wonder that these sects have mushroom lives to live. The vast body of the Indian people religiously hold aloof from them and the only popular recognition they get is the jubilation of the people when they die.(19)

At the present moment, we may see three different positions of the national religion - the orthodox, the Arya Samaj, and the Brahma Samaj. The orthodox covers the ground taken by the Vedic Hindus of the Mahabharata epoch. The Arya Samaj corresponds to Jainism, and the Brahma Samaj to the Buddhists. (20)

2. Hindu Orthodoxy, Terrible Orthodoxy

If you tell a Hindu, "Our Bible does not say -so-and-so" [he or she will reply]: "Oh, your Bible! It is a babe of history. What other Bible could there be except the Vedas? What other book could there be? All knowledge is in God. Do you mean to say that God teaches by two or more Bibles? God's knowledge came out in the Vedas. Do you mean to say that God committed a mistake, then? That, afterwards, God wanted to do something better and taught another Bible to another nation? You cannot bring another book that is as old as the Vedas. Everything else - it was all copied after that." They would not listen to you. And the Christian brings the Bible. They say, "That is a fraud. God speaks only once, because God never makes mistakes."

Now, just think of that. That orthodoxy is terrible. And if you ask Hindus that they are to reform their society and do this and that, they say, "Is it in the books? If it is not, I do not care to change. You wait, in five [hundred] years more you will find that this is good." If you say to them, "This social institution that you have is not right", they say, "How do you know that?" Then they say, "Our social institutions in this matter are the better. Wait five [hundred] years and your institution will die. The test is the survival of the fittest. You live, but there is not one community in the world that lives five hundred years together. Look here! We have been standing all the time." That is what they would say. Terrible orthodoxy! And thank God I have crossed that ocean.(21)

3. The Arya Samaj, Whose Teaching Goes against Received National Opinion

The idea that the Samhitas are the only Vedas is very recent and has been started by the late Swami Dayananda. This opinion has not got any hold on the orthodox population.

The reason for this opinion was that, though Swami Dayananda could find a consistent theory of the whole based on a new interpretation of the Samhitas, the difficulties remained the same, only they fell back on the Brahmanas. And in spite of the theories of interpretation and interpolation, a good deal still remains.

Now, if it is possible to build a consistent religion on the Samhitas, it is a thousand times more sure that a very consistent and harmonious faith can be based upon the Upanishads; and moreover, here one has not to go against the already received national opinion. Here all the acharyas (teachers) of the past would side with you and you have a vast scope for new progress.(22)

4. The Brahma Samaj, Which Could Not Hold Its Own against the "Old Vedanta"

The Brahma Samaj, like Christian Science in [the USA] spread in Calcutta for a certain time and then died out. I am not sorry, neither glad that it died. It has done its work - viz., social reform. Its religion was not worth a cent, and so it must die out... I am even now a great sympathizer with its reforms, but the "booby" religion could not hold its own against the "old Vedanta".(23)

h) The Violent Conflict between the Western and Vedic Ideals Produced a Wave of Reformers Who Simply Played into the Hands of the Europeans

In the beginning of the present century, when Western influence began to pour into India, when Western conquerors, sword in hand, came to demonstrate to the children of the sages that they were mere barbarians, a race of dreamers, that their religion was but mythology, and God and soul and everything they had been struggling for were mere words without meaning, that the thousands of years of struggle, the thousands of years of endless renunciation, had all been in vain, the question began to be agitated among young men at the universities whether the whole national existence up till then had been a failure, whether they must begin anew on the occidental plan, tear up their old books, burn their philosophies, drive away their preachers, and break down their temples. Did not the occidental conquerors, the people who demonstrated their religion with sword and gun, say that all the old ways were superstition and idolatry? Children brought up and educated in the new schools started on the occidental plan drank in these ideas from childhood; and it is not to be wondered at that doubts arose. But instead of throwing away superstition and making a real search after truth, the test of truth became, "What does the West say?" The priest must go, the Vedas must be burned, because the West has said so.(24)

India is slowly awakening through her friction with outside nations; and as a result of this little awakening, is the appearance, to a certain extent, of free and independent thought in modern India. On one side is modern Western science, dazzling the eyes with the brilliancy of a myriad

suns and driving the chariot of hard and fast facts collected by the application of tangible powers direct in their incision; on the other are the hopeful and strengthening traditions of her ancient forebears, in the days when she was at the zenith of her glory - traditions that have been brought out of the pages of her history by the great sages of her own land and outside, that ran for numberless years and centuries through her every vein with the quickening of life drawn from universal love - traditions that reveal unsurpassed valor, superhuman genius, and supreme spirituality, which are the envy of the gods - these inspire her with future hopes. On the one side, rank materialism, plenitude of fortune, accumulation of gigantic power and intense sense-pursuits have, through foreign literature, cause a tremendous stir; on the other, through the confounding din of all these discordant sounds she hears, in low yet unmistakable accents the heart-rending cries of her ancient gods, cutting her to the quick. There lie before her various strange luxuries introduced from the West - celestial drinks, costly, well-served food, splendid apparel, magnificent palaces, new modes of conveyance, new manners, new fashions, dressed in which well-educated girls move about in shameless freedom - all these are arousing unfelt desires. Again, the scene changes and in its place appear, with stern presence, Sita, Savitri, austere religious vows, fastings, the forest retreat, the matted locks and orange garb of semi-naked sannyasins, samadhi and the search after the Self. On one side is the independence of Western societies based on self-interest; on the other is the extreme self-sacrifice of the Aryan society. In this violent conflict, is it strange that Indian society should be tossed up and down? Of the West, the goal is individual independence, the language of money-making, education, the means politics; of India, the goal is mukti, the language of the Vedas, the means renunciation. For a time, modern India thinks, as it were: I am ruining this worldly life of mine in vain expectation of uncertain spiritual welfare hereafter which has spread its fascination over me; and again, she listens spellbound - "Here, in this world of death and change, where is thy happiness?" (25)

Our Hindu ancestors sat down and thought of God and morality, and so we have brains to use for the same ends; but in the rush of trying to get gain, we are likely to lose them again.(26)

On one side the new India is saying, "We should have full freedom in the selection of husband and wife, because in the marriage in which we are involved [is] the happiness and misery of our future life; we must have the right to determine according to our own free will." On the other, old India is dictating, "Marriage is not for sense-enjoyment, but to perpetuate the race. This is the Indian concept of marriage. By producing children you are contributing to and are responsible for the future good or evil of society. Hence, society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry and whom you shall not. That form of marriage obtains in society which is conducive most to its well-being; do you give up your desire for individual pleasure for the good of the many."

On one side, new India is saying, " If only we adopt Western ideas, Western language, Western food, Western dress, and Western manners, we shall be as strong and powerful as the Western nations"; on the other, old India is saying, "Fools! By imitation, others' ideas never become one's own; nothing, unless earned, is your own. Does the ass in the lion's skin ever become the lion?"

On the one side, new India is saying, "What the Western nations do is surely good; otherwise how did they become so great?" On the other side, old India is saying, "The flash of lightning is intensely bright, but only for a moment; look out, boys, it is dazzling your eyes. Beware!"

Have we not, then, to learn anything from the West? Must we not needs try and exert ourselves for better things? Are we perfect? Is our society entirely spotless, without any flaw? There are many things to learn, we must struggle for new and higher things till we die - struggle is the end of human life.... That person or that society which has nothing to learn is already in the jaws of death. Yes. Learn we must many things from the West; but there are fears, as well....

O, India, this is your terrible danger: the spell of the West and imitating the West is getting such a strong hold upon you that what is good and what is bad is no longer decided by reason, judgement, discrimination, or reference to the Shastras. Whatever ideas, whatever manners the white people praise or like are good; whatever things they dislike or censure are bad. Alas! What can be a more tangible proof of foolishness than this?

The Western ladies move freely everywhere, therefore that is good, they choose their husbands for themselves; therefore that is the highest step of advancement; the Westerners disapprove of our dress, decorations, food, and ways of living; therefore they must be very bad; the Westerners condemn image worship as sinful; surely, then, image worship is the greatest sin, there is no doubt of it!

The Westerners say that worshipping a single deity is fruitful of the highest good, therefore let us throw our gods and goddesses into the River Ganges! The Westerners hold caste distinctions to be obnoxious, therefore let all the different castes be jumbled into one! The Westerners say that child-marriage is the root of all evils, therefore that is also very bad, of a certainty it is!

We are not discussing here whether these customs deserve continuance or rejection; but if the mere disapproval of the Westerners be the measure of the abominableness of our manners and customs, then it is our duty to raise our emphatic protest against it.(27)

Out of the feeling of unrest produced [by the conflict of Western influence and the Vedantic tradition] there arose a wave of so-called reform in India.(28)

The orthodox have more faith and more strength in themselves [than the reformers], in spite of their crudeness; but the reformers simply play into the hands of the Europeans and pander to their vanity. (29)

The West wants every bit of spirituality through social improvement. The East wants every bit of social power through spirituality. Thus it was that the modern reformers saw no way to reform but by first crushing out the religion of India. They tried, and they failed. Why? Because few of them ever studied their own religion, and not *one* ever *underwent* the training necessary to understand the *Mother of all religions*.(30)

i) Uniting under the Common Ideal of Spirituality Will Alone Make the Future India

We see how in Asia, and especially in India, race difficulties, linguistic difficulties, social difficulties, national difficulties, all melt away before the unifying power of religion. We know that, to the Indian mind, there is nothing higher than religious ideals, that this is the keynote of Indian life; and we can only work in the line of least resistance. It is not only true that the ideal of religion is the highest ideal; in the case of India, it is the only possible means of work; work in any other line, without first strengthening this, would be disastrous. Therefore, the first plank in the making of the future India, the first step that is to be hewn out of that rock of ages, is this unification of religion. All of us have to be taught that we Hindus - Dualists, qualified monists, or monists, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, or Pashupatas - to whatever denomination we may belong, have certain common ideas behind us; and that the time has come when, for the well-being of ourselves, for the well-being of our race, we must give up all our little quarrels and differences. Be sure, these quarrels are entirely wrong; they are condemned by our scriptures, forbidden by our forebears; and those great men and women from whom we claim our descent, whose blood is in our veins, look down with contempt on their children quarreling about minute differences.(31)

The characteristic of [our] nation is...transcendentalism, this struggle to go beyond, this daring to tear the veil off the face of nature at any risk, at any price, a glimpse of the beyond. That is our ideal; but of course all the people in a country cannot give up entirely. Do you want to enthuse them? Then here is the way to do so: your talk of politics, of social regeneration, you talks of money-making and commercialism - all these will roll off like water from a duck's back. This spirituality, then, is what you have to teach to the world. Have we to learn anything else, have we to learn anything from the world? We have, perhaps, to gain a little material knowledge, in the power of organization, in the ability to handle powers, organizing powers, in bringing in the best results out of the smallest causes. This, perhaps, to a certain extent we may learn from the West. But if anyone preaches in India the ideal of eating and drinking and making merry, if anyone wants to apotheosize the material world into a God, that he or she is a liar; he or she has no place in this holy land, the Indian mind does not want to listen to him or her. Ay, in spite of all the sparkle and glitter of Western civilization, in spite of all its polish and its marvelous manifestation of power, standing upon this platform I tell them to their face that it is all vain. It is vanity of vanities. God alone lives, soul alone lives, spirituality alone lives. Hold on to that.

Yet, perhaps, some sort of materialism toned down to our own requirements, would be a blessing to many of our brothers and sisters who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the mistake made in every country and every society; and it is a greatly regrettable thing that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on people who are not ready for them has been made of late. My method need not be yours. The sannyasin, as you all know, is the ideal of the Hindu's life and everyone by our Shastras is compelled to give up. Every Hindu who has tasted the fruits of this world must give up in the latter part of his or her life and whoever does not is not a Hindu and has no more right to call him or herself a Hindu. We know that this is the ideal - to give up after seeing and experiencing the vanity of things. Having found out that the heart of the material world is a mere hollow, containing only ashes, give it up and go back. The mind is circling forward, as it were, towards the senses; and that mind has to circle backwards; the pravritti has to stop and the nivritti has to begin. That is the ideal. But that ideal can only be realized after a certain amount of

experience. We cannot teach the child the truth of renunciation; the child is a born optimist, his whole life is in his or her senses, his whole life is one mass of sense-enjoyment. So, there are childlike people in every society who require a certain amount of experience, of enjoyment, to see through the vanity of it, and then renunciation will come to them. There has been ample provision made for them in our books; but, unfortunately, in later times there has been a tendency to bind everyone down by the same laws as those by which the sannyasin is bound, and that is a great mistake. But for that, a good deal of the poverty and misery that you see in India need not have been. A poor person's life is hemmed in and bound down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off! Let the poor souls enjoy themselves a little and then they will raise themselves up and renunciation will come to them of itself. Perhaps in this line we can be taught something by the Western people; but we must be very cautious in learning these things. I am sorry to say that most of the examples one meets nowadays of people who have imbibed the Western ideas are more or less failures.(32)

Renunciation - that is the flag, the banner of India floating over the world, the one undying thought which India sends again and again as a warning to dying races, as a warning to all tyranny, as a warning to wickedness in the world. Ay, Hindus, let not your hold of that banner go. Hold it aloft. Even if you are weak and cannot renounce, do not lower the ideal. Say, "I am weak and cannot renounce the world", but do not try to be hypocrites, torturing texts and making specious arguments and trying to throw dust in the eyes of people who are ignorant. Do not do that, but own you are weak. For the idea is great, that of renunciation. What matters it if millions fail in the attempt, if ten soldiers or even two return victorious! Blessed be the millions dead! Their blood has bought the victory. This renunciation is the one idea throughout the different Vedic sects except one, and that is the Vallabhacharya sect in the Bombay Presidency - and most of you are aware of what comes where renunciation does not exist. We want orthodoxy - even the hideously orthodox, even those who smother themselves with ashes, even those who stand with their hands uplifted. Ay, we want them, unnatural though they may be, for standing for that idea of giving up, and acting as a warning to the race against succumbing to the effeminate luxuries that are creeping into India, eating into our very vitals, and tending to make the whole race a race of hypocrites. We want to have a little asceticism. Renunciation conquered India in days of yore; it has still to conquer India. Still it stands as the greatest and highest of Indian ideals - this renunciation. The land of Buddha, the land of Ramanuja, of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the land of renunciation, the land where, from days of yore, Karma-Kanda was preached against - and even today there are hundreds who have given up everything and become jivanmuktas - ay, will the land give up its ideals? Certainly not. There may be people whose brains have become turned by Western luxurious ideals; there may be thousands and hundreds of thousands who have drunk deep of enjoyment, this curse of the West - the senses - the curse of the world; yet for all that, there will be other thousands in this motherland of mine, to whom religion will ever be a reality and who will be ever ready to give up without counting the cost, if need be.(33)

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Kaiv. Up., 2

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PART III, SECTION 7: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE VEDIC MESSAGE IN INDIA

Chapter 19: Intellectual and Social Abuses in Modern Times

a) For the Last Thousand Years We Have Been Weakened by Non-Vedic Stories

1. In Their Ordinary Lives Indians Are Mostly Puranic or Tantric

The Upanishads are our scriptures. They have been differently explained and, as I have told you already, whenever there is a difference between subsequent Puranic literature and the Vedas, the Puranas must give way. But it is at the same time true that, as a practical result, we find ourselves ninety percent Puranic and ten percent Vedic - if even so much as that.(1)

There was a time in India when the Karma-Kanda had its sway. There are many grand ideals, no doubt, in that portion of the Vedas. Some of our present daily worship is still according to the precepts of the Karma-Kanda. But, with all that, the Karma-Kanda of the Vedas has almost disappeared from India. Very little of our life today is bound and regulated by the orders of the Karma-Kanda of the Vedas. In our ordinary lives we are mostly Puranic or Tantric; and, even when some Vedic texts are used by the brahmins of India, the adjustment of the texts is mostly not according to the Vedas, but according to the Tantras or Puranas. As such, to call ourselves Vaidikas (Vedic) in the sense of following the Karma-Kanda of the Vedas, I do not think would be proper. But the other fact stands that we are all of us Vedantists. The people who call themselves Hindus would better be called Vedantists; and, as I have shown you, under that one name *Vedantic* come in all our sects, whether dualists or non-dualists.(2)

Modern Hinduism is largely Puranic, that is, post-Buddhistic, in origin. Dayananda Saraswati has pointed out, [for example], that though a wife is absolutely necessary in the sacrifice of the domestic fire, which is a Vedic rite, she may not touch the shalagrama shila, or the household idol, because that dates from the later period of the Puranas.(3)

The Tantras Are Poisoning the Minds of the People of Bengal

There are in my motherland, most unfortunately, persons who will take up one of the Tantras and say that the practice of this Tantra is to be obeyed; he or she who does not do so is no more orthodox in his or her views.(4)

When I see how much the Vamachara [Tantra] has entered our [Bengali] society, I find it a most disgraceful place, with all of its boast of culture. These Vamachara sects are honeycombing our society in Bengal. Those who come out in the daytime and preach most loudly about achara, it is they who carry on the horrible debauchery at night and are backed by the most dreadful books. They are ordered by the books to do these things. You who are of Bengal know of it. The Bengal Shastras are the Vamachara Tantras. They are published by the cart-load, and you poison the minds of your children with them instead of teaching them our Shrutis. Fathers of Calcutta, do you not feel ashamed that such horrible stuff as these Vamachara Tantras, with translations too, should be put into the hands of your boys and girls, and their minds poisoned, and that they should be brought up with the idea that these are the Shastras of the Hindus? If you are ashamed, take them away from your children and let them read the true Shastras - the Vedas, the Gita and the Upanishads.(5)

The Strength-Giving, Practical Upanishads Should Be Worshipped Rather Than the Puranas

I have always found "occultism" injurious and weakening to humanity. What we want is strength. We Indians, more than any other race, want strong and vigorous thought. We have enough of the superfine in all concerns. For centuries we have been stuffed with the mysterious; the result is that our intellectual and spiritual digestion is almost hopelessly impaired, and the race has been dragged down to the depths of hopeless imbecility - never before or since experienced by any other civilized community. There must be freshness and vigor of thought to make a virile race. More than enough to strengthen the whole world exists in the Upanishads. The Advaita is the eternal mine of strength. But it requires to be *applied*. It must first be cleared of the incrustation of scholasticism and then in all its simplicity, beauty and sublimity be taught over the length and breadth of the land, as applied to the minutest detail of daily life. "This is a very large order"; but we must work towards it, nevertheless, as if it would be accomplished tomorrow. Of one thing I am sure - that whoever wants to help his fellow beings through genuine love and unselfishness will work wonders.(6)

The more I read the Upanishads, my friends, my countrymen, the more I weep for you, for therein is the great practical application. - strength, strength for us What we need is strength. Who will give us strength? There are thousands to weaken us, and of stories we have had enough. Every one of our Puranas, if you press it, gives out stories enough to fill three-fourths of the libraries of the world. Everything that can weaken us as a race we have had for the last thousand years. It seems as if during that period the national life had this one end in view, viz. how to make us weaker and weaker till we have become real earthworms, crawling at the feet of everyone who dares to put his foot on us. Therefore, my friends, as one of your blood, as one who lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength, and every time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength.(7)

But nowadays we have put the Puranas on an even higher pedestal than the Vedas! The study of the Vedas has almost disappeared from Bengal. How I wish that day will soon come when in

every home the Vedas will be worshipped together with the shalagrama, the household deity, when the young, the old, and the women will inaugurate the worship of the Veda!(8)

b) *The Degeneration of the Caste System Has Led to India's Downfall*

1. *The Heredity Caste System Must Go, for It has Replaced the Original System Based on Individual Qualities*

From the time of the Upanishads down to the present day, nearly all of our great teachers have wanted to break through the barriers of caste, i.e. caste in its degenerate state, not the original system. What little good you see in the present caste clings to it from the original caste, which was the most glorious social institution.(9)

The jati dharma or dharma enjoined according to the different castes, this swadharma, that is, one's own dharma (the set of duties prescribed for people according to their capacity and position), is the very basis of Vedic religion and Vedic society.... It is the path of welfare for all societies in every land, the ladder to ultimate freedom. With the decay of this jati dharma, this swadharma, has come the downfall of our land. But the jati dharma or swadharma as commonly understood at present by the higher castes is rather a new evil, which has to be guarded against. They think they know everything of jati dharma, but really they know nothing of it. Regarding their own village customs as the eternal customs laid down by the Vedas, and appropriating to themselves all the privileges they are going to their doom! I am not talking of caste as determined by qualitative distinction, but of the hereditary caste system. I admit that the qualitative caste system is the primary one; but the pity is that qualities yield to birth in two or three generations.(10)

There is a certain class of people whose conviction is that, from time eternal, there is a treasure of knowledge which contains the wisdom of *everything* past, present and future. These people hold that it was their own forebears who had the sole privilege of having the custody of this treasure. The ancient sages, the first possessors of it, bequeathed in succession this treasure and its true import to their descendants only. They are, therefore, the only inheritors to it; as such, let the rest of the world worship them.

May we ask these people what they think should be the condition of the other peoples who have not got such forebears? "Their condition is doomed" is the general answer. The more kind-hearted among them are perchance pleased to rejoice, "Well, let them come and serve us. As a reward for such service, they will be born in our caste in the next birth. That is the only hope we can hold out to them." "Well, the moderns are making many new and original discoveries in the field of science and the arts which you neither dreamt of, nor is there any proof that your forebears ever had any knowledge of. What do you say to that?" "Why, certainly our forebears know all these things, the knowledge of which is now unfortunately lost to us. Do you want proof? I can show you one. Look! Here is a secret Sanskrit verse...." Needless to add that the modern party, who believes in direct evidence only, never attaches any seriousness to such replies and proofs.(11)

That we have fallen is the sure sign that the basis of the jati dharma has been tampered with. Therefore, what you call the jati dharma is quite contrary to what we have in fact. First, read your Shastras through and through, and you will easily see that what the Shastras define as caste dharma has disappeared almost everywhere from the land.(12)

The caste system [as practiced] is opposed to the religion of the Vedanta. Caste is a social custom, and all our great teachers have tried to break it down. From Buddhism onwards, every sect has preached against caste and every time it has only riveted the chains. Caste is simply the outgrowth of the political institutions of India; it is a hereditary trade guild. Trade competition with Europe has broken caste more than any teaching.(13)

Although our caste rules have so far changed from the time of Manu still, if he should come to us now, he would call us Hindus. Caste is a social organization and not a religious one. It was the outcome of the natural evolution of our society. It was found necessary and convenient at one time. It has served its purpose. But for it, we would long ago have become Muslims. It is useless now. It may be dispensed with. The Hindus religion no longer require the prop of the caste system.(14)

2. The Ideal of Caste Is to Raise Humanity Slowly and Gently to the Level of the Ideal Spiritual Person

The solution [to the problem of caste] is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher. And that is the line of work that is found in all our books, in spite of what you may hear from some people whose knowledge of their own scriptures and whose capacity to understand the mighty plans of the ancients are only zero. They do not understand; but those do who have brains, who have the intellect to grasp the whole scope of the work. They stand aside and follow the wonderful procession of national life through the ages. They can trace it step by step through all the books, ancient and modern. What is the plan? The ideal at one end is the brahmin and at the other end, the chandala, and the whole work is to raise the chandala to the brahmin. Slowly and slowly you find more and more privileges granted to them. There are books where you read such fierce words as these: "If the shudra hears the Vedas, fill his ears with molten lead; and if he remembers a line, cut his tongue out. If he says to the brahmin, 'You brahmin' cut his tongue out." This is diabolical old barbarism, no doubt - that goes without saying - but do not blame the law-givers, who simply record the customs of the community. Such devils sometimes arose among the ancients. There have been devils everywhere, more or less, in all ages. Accordingly, you will find that later on this tone is modified a little, as for instance: "Do not disturb the shudras, but do not teach them higher things." Then gradually we find in other Smritis, especially those that have full power now, that if the shudras imitate the manners and customs of the brahmins, they do well and ought to be encouraged. Thus it is going on. I have no time to place before you all these workings, not how they can be traced out in detail; but coming to plain facts, we find that all the castes are to rise slowly and slowly. There are thousands of castes, and some are even getting admission into brahminhood - for what prevents any caste from declaring that they are brahmins? Thus caste, with all its rigor, has been created in that manner. Let us suppose that there are castes here with ten thousand people in each. If these put their heads together and said, "We will call ourselves brahmins", nothing can stop them. I have seen it in my own life.

Some castes become strong, and as soon as they all agree, who is to say nay? Because whatever it was, each caste was made exclusive of the other. It did not meddle with others' affairs; even the several divisions of one caste did not meddle with the other divisions. Those powerful epoch-makers, Shankaracharya and others, were the great caste-makers. I cannot tell you all the wonderful things they fabricated, and some of you may resent what I have to say. But in my travels and experiences I have traced them out and have arrived at most wonderful results. They would sometimes get hold of hordes of Baluchis [aboriginals] and at once make them kshatriyas; also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them brahmins forthwith.(15)

Our solution of the caste question is not degrading those who are already high up, is not running amok through food and drink, is not jumping out of our own limits to have more enjoyment; but it comes by every one of us fulfilling the dictates of our Vedantic religion, by our attaining spirituality and by our becoming the ideal brahmin. There is a law laid on each one of you in this land [of India] by your ancestors, whether you are Aryans, non-Aryans, rishis, brahmins, or the very lowest outcasts. The command is the same to you all, that you must make progress without stopping, and that from the highest human being to the lowest pariah every one in this country has to try to become the ideal brahmin. This Vedantic idea is applicable not only here, by over the whole world. Such is our ideal of caste as meant for raising humanity slowly and gently towards the realization of that great ideal of the spiritual person who is non-resisting, calm, steady, worshipful, pure and meditative. In that ideal there is God.(16)

3. If the Brahmins Cannot Live Up to the Vedas Themselves Let Them Accept Others and Build Up a New Aryan Society

Where are the four castes today in this country? Answer me, [brahmins of Bengal]. I do not see the four castes. Just as our Bengali proverb has it: " A headache without a head", so you want to make this varnashrama [caste system] here. There are not [the traditional] four castes here. I see only the brahmin and the shudra. If there are kshatriyas and vaishyas, where are they and why do you brahmins not order them to take the yajnopavita [investiture with the sacred thread] and study the Vedas, as every Hindu ought to do? And if the vaishyas and kshatriyas do not exist, but only the brahmins and shudras, the Shastras say that the brahmin must not live where there are only shudras; so, depart, bag and baggage! Do you know what the Shastras say about people who have been eating mlechchha [non-Hindu] food and living under the government of the mlechchhas, as you have been doing for the past thousand years? Do you know the penance for that? The penance would be burning yourself with your own hands. Do you want to pass as teachers and walk like hypocrites? If you believe in your Shastras, burn yourself first like the one great brahmin who went with Alexander the Great and burnt himself because he thought he had eaten the food of a mlechchha. Do like that, and you will see that the whole nation will be at your feet. You do not believe your own Shastras and yet want to make others believe in them. If you think you are not able to do that in this age, admit your weakness and excuse the weakness of others; take the other castes up, give them a helping hand, let them study the Vedas and become just as good Aryans as any other Aryans in the world, and be you likewise Aryans.(17)

The meaning of the mantras in the shraddha ceremony [for ancestors] is very edifying. The mantras depict the suffering and care undergone by our parents on our behalf. The

performance of it is an honor paid to the memory of the sum total of the spirits of our forebears, whose virtues we inherit. Sraddha has nothing to do with one's salvation. Yet no Hindu who loves his or her religion, his or her country, his or her past and his or her great forebears should give up shraddha. The outward formalities and the feeding of brahmins are not essential. We have no brahmins in these days worthy of being fed on shraddha days. The brahmins fed ought not to be professional eaters, but brahmins who feed disciples *gratis* and teach them true Vedic doctrines. In these days, shraddha may be performed mentally.(18)

c) *Blind Allegiance to Non-Vedic Usages Has Been One of the Main Causes of the Downfall of India*

1. *The Real Worship in India Is to the God of Popular Custom*

The Vedanta was (and is) the boldest system of religion. It stopped nowhere, and it had one advantage: there was no body of priests who sought to suppress every one who tried to tell the truth. There was always absolute religious freedom. In India the bondage of superstitions is a social one;... in the West society is very free. Social matters in India are very strict, but religious opinion is free.(19)

We all find the most contradictory usages prevailing in our [Indian] midst and also religious opinions prevailing in [Indian] society which scarcely have any authority in the scriptures of the Hindus; and in many cases we read in books and see with astonishment, customs of the country that have neither their authority in the Vedas nor in the Smritis nor Puranas, but are simply local. And yet each ignorant villager thinks that if that little local custom dies out, he or she will no more remain a Hindu. In his or her mind Vedantism and these little local customs have been indissolubly identified. In reading the scriptures it is hard for him or her to understand that what he or she is doing has not the sanction of the scriptures, and that the giving up of them will not hurt him or her at all; but, on the contrary, will make him or her a better person. (20)

Unfortunately for India at the present time... a petty village custom seems now the real authority, and not the teaching of the Upanishads. A petty idea current in a wayside village in Bengal seems to have the authority of the Vedas, and even something better. And that word *orthodox* - how wonderful its influence! To the villager, the following of every little bit of the Karma-Kanda is the very height of "orthodoxy" and one who does not do it is told, "Get away, you are no more a Hindu."(21)

Minor social usages will also be recognized and accepted when they are compatible with the spirit of the true scriptures and the conduct and example of the holy sages. But blind allegiance only to usages such as are repugnant to the spirit of the Shastras and the conduct of holy sages has been one of the main causes of the downfall of the Aryan race.(22)

There is the towering temple of the eternal Hindu religion, and how many ways of approaching it! And what can you not find there? From the absolute Brahman of the Vedantin down to Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, Uncle Sun, the rat-riding Ganesha, and the minor deities such as Shashthi and Makal, and so forth. Which is lacking there? And in the Vedas, in the Vedanta and the philosophies, in the Puranas and the Tantras, there are lots of materials, a single sentence

of which is enough to break one's chain of transmigration for ever. And, Oh! The crowd! Millions and millions of people are rushing towards the temple. I, too, had a curiosity to see and join in the rush. But what was this that met my eyes when I reached the spot! Nobody was going inside the temple! By the side of the door there was standing a figure with fifty heads, a hundred arms, two hundred bellies, and five hundred legs; and everyone was rolling at the feet of it. I asked someone the reason and got the reply; "Those deities that you see in the interior, it is worship enough for them to make a short prostration, or throw in a few flowers from a distance. But the real worship must be offered to him who is at the gate; and those Vedas, the Vedanta, the philosophies, the Puranas, and other scriptures that you see - there is no harm if you hear them read now and again; but you must obey the mandate of this one." Then I asked again, "Well, what is the name of this God of gods?" "He is named *Popular Custom* - came the reply.(23)

2. The Identification of Vedanta with Popular Custom in the Common Mind Is Based upon Juggling with the Meaning of the Vedas

There is another difficulty: these scripture of ours have been very vast. We read in the *Mahabhashya of Patanjali*, that great philological work, that the Sama-Veda had one thousand branches. Where are they all? Nobody knows. So with each of the Vedas; the major portion of these books have disappeared, and it is only the minor portion that remains with us. They were all taken charge of by particular families; and either those families died out or were killed under foreign persecution, or somehow became extinct; and with them that branch of the learning of the Vedas they took charge of became extinct also. This fact we ought to remember, as it always forms the sheet-anchor in the hands of those who want to preach anything new or to defend anything, even against the Vedas. Wherever in India there is a discussion between local custom and the Shrutis, and whenever it is pointed out that local custom is against the scriptures, the argument that is forwarded is that it is not, that the customs existed in the branch of the Shrutis which has become extinct, and so has been a recognized one. In the midst of all these varying methods of reading and commenting on our scriptures it is very difficult indeed to find the thread that runs through all of them; for we become convinced at once that there must be some common ground underlying all these varying divisions and subdivisions. There must be a harmony, a common plan, upon which all these little bits of buildings have been constructed, some basis common to this apparently hopeless mass of confusion which we call our religion. Otherwise, it could not have stood so long, it could not have endured so long.(24)

One more idea. There is a peculiar custom in Bengal, which they call *kula-guru*, or hereditary guruship. "My father was your guru, now I shall be your guru. My father was the guru of your father, so I shall be yours." What is a guru? Let us go back to the Shrutis: "They who know the secret of the Vedas" [*Brih. Up.*, 4.3.33 and *Vivekachudamani*, verse 33], not bookworms, nor grammarians, nor pandits in general, but he or she who knows the meaning... We do not want such [pandits]. What can they teach if they have no realizations?(25)

Any number of lies in the name of a religious book are all right. In India, if I want to teach anything new and simply state it on my own authority, as what I think, nobody will come to listen to me; but if I take some passage from the Vedas and juggle with it, and give it the most

impossible meaning, murder everything that is reasonable in it, and bring out my own ideas as the ideas that were meant by the Vedas, all the fools will follow me in a crowd.(26)

I am very sorry to notice in [Bombay] the thorough want of Sanskrit and other learning. The people of this part of the country have for their religion a certain bundle of local superstitions about eating, drinking and breathing, and that is about the whole of their religion.

Poor fellows! Whatever the rascally and wily priests teach them - all sort of mummery and tomfoolery as the very gist of the Vedas and Hinduism (mind you, neither these rascals of priests nor their forebears have so much as *seen* a volume of the Vedas for the last four hundred generations) - they follow, and degrade themselves. Lord help them from the rakshasas (demons) in the shape of the brahmins of the Kali Yuga.(27)

3. Modern Hinduism Has Lost the Spirit of Religion and Become a Religion of "Don't Touchism"

A dreadful slough is in front of you - take care; many fall into it and die. The slough is this, that the present religion of the Hindu is not in the Vedas, nor in the Puranas, nor in bhakti, nor in mukti - religion has entered the cooking-pot. The present religion of the Hindus is neither the path or knowledge nor that of reason - it is "don't touchism". "Don't touch me! Don't touch me!" - that exhausts its description. See that you do not lose your lives in this dire irreligion of "don't touchism"....; it is a form of mental disease.(28)

There is a danger of our religion getting into the kitchen. We are neither Vedantists, most of us now, nor Pauranics, nor Tantrics. We are just "don't touchists". Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot, and our religion is, "Don't touch me, I am holy." If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum. It is a sure sign of softening of the brain when the mind cannot grasp the higher problems of life; all originality is lost, the mind has lost all its strength, its activity, and its power and thought, and just tries to go round and round in the smallest curve it can find. (29)

The Vedas have two parts, mandatory and optional. The mandatory injunctions are eternally binding on us and constitute the Hindu religion. The optional ones are not so. The brahmins at one time ate beef and married shudras. A calf was killed to please the guest. Shudras cooked for brahmins. The food cooked by a male brahmin was considered as polluted food.(30)

In Pilibit in January of 1901, the swami adduced facts and authorities from the Vedas and the Samhitas in proof of his claim [that] even the Vedic rishis ate, and enjoined upon others, to eat beef, the very name of which is not offensive to the ears of orthodox Hindus. In the old Vedic period it was the practice to kill cows in honor of guests and at certain ceremonies and on auspicious occasions, and he supported his remarks by dilating on the evils that had accrued in the degeneracy of the Hindu race through the fanaticism of anti- meat-eating and the deshacharas and lokacharas [local customs] of the so-called orthodoxists.(31)

The Hindu religion no longer requires the prop of the caste system. A brahmin may interdine with anybody, even a pariah. He or she won't thereby lose his or her spirituality. A degree of

spirituality that is destroyed by the touch of a pariah is a very poor quantity. It is almost at the zero point. Spirituality of a brahmin must overflow, blaze and burn, so as to warm into spiritual life not only one pariah, but thousands of pariahs who may touch him or her. The old rishis observed no distinctions or restrictions as regards food. Anyone who feels that his or her spirituality is so flimsy that the sight of a low caste person annihilates it, need not approach a pariah and must keep his precious little to him or herself.(32)

People in India have given up the Vedas and all their philosophy is in the kitchen. The religion of India at the present time is "don't-touchism" - that is, a religion which the English people will never accept.(33)

In modern India the spirit of religion is gone. Only the externals remain. The people are neither Hindus nor Vedantists, they are merely don't-touchists; the kitchen is their temple and cooking pots their devata (object of worship). This state of things must go. The sooner it is given up, the better for our religion. Let the Upanishads shine in their glory and at the same time let not quarrels exist between different sects.(34)

d) Treading on the Necks of the Poor and the Low Has Made the Orthodox Hindus Objects of Indifference and Contempt and Undermined Faith in the Vedic Seers

1. By Despising the Lower Classes and Monopolizing Religious Knowledge for a Very Long Time, the Brahmins Themselves Have Become Beasts of Burden

In this country of ours, the very birthplace of Vedanta, our masses have been hypnotized for ages into [slavery and weakness]. To touch them is pollution, to sit with them is pollution! Hopeless they were born, hopeless they must remain! And the result is that they have been sinking, sinking, sinking, and have come to the last stage to which a human being can come. For what country is there in the world where people have to sleep with the cattle? And for this blame nobody else, do not make the mistake of the ignorant. The effect is here, and the cause is, too. We are to blame. Stand up, be bold, and take the blame on your own shoulders. Do not go about throwing mud at others; for all the faults you suffer from you are the sole and only cause.(35)

Swami Vivekananda: You have been despising the lower classes of the country for a very long time and, as a result, you have now become objects of contempt in the eyes of the world.

[Brahmin] Disciple: When did you find us despising them?

Swami Vivekananda: Why, [the] priest class never let the non-brahmin read the Vedas and Vedanta, and all such weighty Shastras - never touch them, even... They have only kept them down. It is they who have always done like that through selfishness. It was the brahmins who made a monopoly of the religious books and kept the question of sanction and prohibition in their own hands. And, repeatedly calling the other races of India low and vile, they put this belief into their heads that they were really such. If you tell a someone, "You are low, you are vile" in season and out of season, then he or she is bound to believe in course of time that he or she is really so. This is called hypnotism. The non-brahmin classes are now slowly raising

themselves. Their faith in brahminical scriptures and mantras is getting shaken. Through the spread of Western education all the tricks of the brahmins are giving way, like the banks of the Padma [river] in the rainy season.

Disciple: Yes, sir, the stricture of orthodoxy is gradually lessening nowadays.

Swami Vivekananda: It is as it should be. The brahmins, in fact, gradually took a course of gross immorality and oppression. Through selfishness they introduced a large number of strange, non-Vedic, immoral and unreasonable doctrines - simply to keep their own prestige. And the fruits of that they are reaping forthwith.

Disciple: What may those fruits be, sir?

Swami Vivekananda: Don't you perceive them? It is simply due to you [brahmins] having despised the masses of India that you have now been living a life of slavery for the last thousand years; it is therefore that you are objects of hatred in the eyes of foreigners and are looked upon with indifference by your countrymen.(36)

And where are they through whose physical labor only are possible the influence of the brahmin, the prowess of the kshatriya and the fortune of the vaishya? What is their history who, being the real body of society, are designated at all times in all countries as "the base born"? - for whom kind India has prescribed the mild punishments, "Cut out his tongue, chop off his flesh", and others of like nature, for such a grave offense as any attempt on their part to gain a share of the knowledge and wisdom monopolized by the higher classes - those "moving corpses" of India, and the "beasts of burden" of other countries - the shudras; what is their lot in life? What shall I say of India? Let alone her shudra class, her brahmins, to whom belonged the acquisition of real scriptural knowledge are now the foreign professors, her kshatriyas the ruling Englishmen, and vaishya, too - the English, in whose bone and marrow is the instinct of trade - so that only the shudra-ness, the beast-of-burden-ness, is now left with the Indians themselves.(37)

2. Lack of Sympathy Has Hidden the Vedantic Conception of the Dignity of Humanity

Oh, how my heart aches to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up. The poor, the low, the sinner, in India have no friends, no help - they cannot rise, no matter how hard they try. Nay, they sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by cruel society, and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they, too, are human beings. And the result is slavery. Thoughtful people within the last few years have seen it, but unfortunately laid it at the door of the Hindu religion; and to them the only way of bettering is by crushing this grandest religion of the world. Hear me, my friend; I have discovered the secret, through the grace of the Lord. Religion is not at fault. On the contrary, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy, the want of heart...

No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as does Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines of paramarthika and vyavaharika. [supreme truth versus "common life"](38)

I claim that no destruction of religion is necessary to improve Hindu society, and that this state of society exists, not on account of religion, but because religion has not been applied to society as it should have been. This I am ready to prove from our old books, every word of it.(39)

The Shastras start by giving the right to study the Vedas to everybody, without distinction of sex, caste or creed.(40)

Ay, but it was only for the sannyasin - *rahasya*, (esoteric)! The Upanishads were in the hands of the sannyasin; he went into the forest! Shankara was a little kind and said that even grihasthas (householders) may study the Upanishads; it will do them good; it will not hurt them. But still the idea is that the Upanishads talked only of the forest life of the recluse... These conceptions of the Vedanta must come out, must remain, not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but also they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor,, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman, and child, whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be.(41)

3. Under Buddhism and Foreign Invasion Women Were Deprived of Their Vedic Rights

It is very difficult to understand why in [India] so much difference is made between men and women when the Vedas declare that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings.(42)

Q: Are you... entirely satisfied with the position of women [in India]?

Swami Vivekananda: By no means; but our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. Our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.

Q: How do you account for the evil influence which you attribute to Buddhism?

Swami Vivekananda: It came only with the decay of the faith. Every movement triumphs by dint of some unusual characteristic and, when it falls, that point of pride becomes its chief element of weakness. The Lord Buddha - the greatest of men - was a marvelous organizer and carried the world by this means. But his religion was the religion of a monastic order. It had, therefore, the evil effect of making the very robe of the monk honored. He also introduced for the first time the community life of religious houses and thereby necessarily made women inferior to men, since the great abbesses could take no important step without the advice of certain abbots. It ensured its immediate object - the solidarity of the faith. You see, only its far-reaching effects are to be deplored.

Q: But sannyasa is recognized in the Vedas!

Swami Vivekananda: Of course it is, but without making any distinction between men and women (43)

The vaishya and the shudra [when writing letters] should sign themselves as *dasa* and *dasi* [servant, male or female]; but the brahmin and kshatriya should write *deva* and *devi*. [god and goddess]. Moreover, these distinctions of case and the like have been the invention of our modern, sapient brahmins. Who is a servant, and to whom? Everyone is a servant of the Lord Hari. Hence a woman should use her patronymic, that is, the surname of her husband. This is the ancient Vedic custom.(44)

In what scriptures do you find statements that women are not competent for knowledge and devotion? In the period of degradation, when the priests made the other castes incompetent for the study of the Vedas, they deprived women also of their rights.(45)

There is a passage in the later law books that a woman shall not read the Vedas. So it is prohibited to a weak brahmin, even; if a brahmin boy is not strong-minded, the law applies to him also. But that does not show that education is prohibited to them, for the Vedas are not all that the Hindus have. Every other book a woman can read, all the mass of Sanskrit literature, that whole ocean of literature, science, drama, poetry is all for them; they can go there and read that, except the scriptures. In later days the idea was that a woman was not intended to be a priest; what is the use of her studying the Vedas?(46)

[The barbarous custom of] child-marriage was resorted to in northern India to protect the girls from falling into the hands of the ruthless [Muslim] invaders who would carry them off to their harems. (47)

4. Out of a Strong Desire for Progress, the Brahmins Have Taken Up Western Usages and Belittle the Aryan Sages

There is no escaping out of [the endless net of priestly power] now. Tear the net and the priesthood of the priest is shaken to its foundation! There is implanted in everyone, naturally, a strong desire for progress; and those who, finding that the fulfillment of this desire is an impossibility so long as one is trammled in the shackles of priesthood, rend this net and take to the profession of other castes in order to earn money thereby - them, society immediately dispossesses of their priestly rights. Society has no faith in the brahmin-hood of the so-called brahmins who, instead of keeping the shikha [sacred tuft of hair], part their hair; who, giving up their ancient habits and ancestral customs, clothe themselves in semi-European dress and adopt the newly introduced usages from the West in a hybrid fashion. Again, in those parts of India, wherever this newcomer, the English government, is introducing new modes of education and opening up new channels for the coming in of wealth, there hosts of brahmin youths are giving up their hereditary priestly profession and trying to earn their livelihood and become rich by adopting the calling of other castes, with the result that the habits and customs of the priestly class, handed down from our distant forebears, are scattered to the winds and are fast disappearing from the land.(48)

There are people today who, after drinking the cup of Western wisdom, thinks that they know everything. They laugh at the ancient sages. All Hindu thought is to them arrant trash - philosophy mere child's prattle, and religion the superstition of fools. On the other hand there are people - educated, but a sort of monomaniacs, who run to the other extreme and want to explain the omen of this and that. They has philosophical and metaphysical, and Lord knows what other puerile explanations for every superstition that belongs to their particular race, or their peculiar gods, or their peculiar village. Every little village superstition is to them a mandate of the Vedas; and upon the carrying out of it, according to them, depends the national life. You must beware of this. I would rather see every one of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for atheists are alive and you can make something out of them. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon life. Avoid these two.(49)

There are two great obstacles on our path in India - the Scylla of the old orthodoxy, and the Charybdis of modern European civilization. Of those two, I vote for the old orthodoxy and not for the Europeanized system; for the old orthodox people may be ignorant, they may be crude, but they are real human beings, they have faith, they have strength, they stand on their own feet; while Europeanized people have no backbone, they are a mass of heterogeneous ideas picked up at random from every source - and these ideas are unassimilated, undigested, unharmonized. They do not stand on their own feet, and their heads are turning round and round. Where is the motive power of their work? In a few, patronizing pats from the English people. Their schemes of reforms, their vehement vituperations against the evils of certain social customs have, as the mainspring, some European patronage. Why are some of our customs called evil? Because the Europeans say so. That is about the reason they give. I would not submit to that. Stand and die in your own strength; if there is any sin the world, it is weakness. Avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death. These unbalanced creatures are not yet formed into distinct personalities. What are we to call them - men, women, or animals? On the other hand, these old, orthodox people were staunch, and were real human beings.(50)

A pandit asked Swami Vivekananda if there was any harm in giving up sandhyavandanam or prayers performed in the morning, noon and evening, which he had had to do for lack of time. "What!" cried out the swami, almost with ferocity, "Those giants of old, the ancient rishis, who never walked, but strode - the like of whom, if you are to think [of] for a moment, you would be shriveled into a moth - they, sir, had time and you have none!"... When a Westernized Hindu spoke in a belittling manner of the "meaningless teachings" of the Vedic seers, the swami fell upon him with thunderbolt vehemence, crying out, "Man, a little learning has muddled your brain! How dare you criticize your venerable forebears, how dare you bastardize the blood of the rishis in your veins by speaking in such a fashion! Have you tested the science of the rishis? Have you even so much as read the Vedas? There is the challenge thrown by the rishis! If you dare oppose them, take it up, put their teachings to the test, and they shall not be found wanting! What is making this race contemptible is just such intellectual bigotry and lopsidedness as you manifest!"(51)

5. Lack of Faith and Physical Weakness Have Broken the Backbone of India

What do we want in India? If foreigners want [the teachings of the Upanishads] we want them twenty times more. Because, in spite of the greatness of the Upanishads, in spite of our

boasted ancestry of sages, I must tell you that, compared with many other races, we are weak, very weak. First of all is our physical weakness. That physical weakness is the cause of at least one third of our miseries. We are lazy, we cannot work, we cannot combine, we do not love each other; we are intensely selfish, no three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other. That is the state in which we are - hopelessly disorganized mobs, immensely selfish, fighting each other for centuries as to whether a certain mark is to be put on our foreheads this way or that, writing volumes and volumes upon such momentous questions as to whether the look of someone spoils my food or not! This we have been doing for the past few centuries. We cannot expect anything from a race whose whole brain energy has been occupied in such wonderfully beautiful problems and researches! And are we not ashamed of ourselves? Ay, sometimes we are; but though we think these things frivolous, we cannot give them up. We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it.(52)

What we want is... shraddha, [faith]. Unfortunately, it has nearly vanished from India, and that is why we are in our present state. What makes the difference between person and person is the difference in this shraddha, and nothing else. What makes one person great and another weak and low is this shraddha... This shraddha must enter into you. Whatever material power you see manifested by the Western races is the outcome of this shraddha, because they believe in their muscles; and if you believe in your Spirit, how much more will it work? Believe in that infinite Soul, the infinite power which, with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That Atman, which nothing can destroy, is, in Its infinite power and glory, only waiting to be called out. For here is the great difference between all other philosophies and the Indian philosophy, whether dualistic, qualified monistic, or monistic - they all firmly believe that everything is in the Soul itself. It has only to come out and manifest itself. Therefore, this shraddha is what I want, and what all of us here want - this faith in ourselves; and before you is the great task to get that faith. Give up the awful disease that is creeping into our national blood, that idea of ridiculing everything, that loss of seriousness. Give that up. Be strong and have shraddha, and everything else is bound to follow. (53)

Would you believe me, we have less faith than the Englishman or woman - a thousand times less faith! These are plain words, but I say them; I cannot help it. Don't you see how the Englishmen and women, when they catch our ideals, become mad, as it were; and, although they are the ruling class, they come to India to preach our own religion, notwithstanding the jeers and ridicule of their own countrymen? How many of you [Indians] could do that? And why cannot you do it? Do you not know why? You know more than they do; you are more wise than is good for you, that is your difficulty! Simply because your blood is like water, your brain sloughing, your body is weak! You must change the body. Physical weakness is the cause, and nothing else. You have talked of reforms, of ideals, and all these things for the past hundred years, but when it comes to practice you are not to be found anywhere - till you have disgusted the whole world, and the very name of reform is a thing of ridicule! And what is the cause? Do you not know? You know too well. The only cause is that you are weak, you have no faith in yourselves! Centuries and centuries, a thousand years of crushing tyranny of castes and kings and foreigners and your own people have taken out all your strength.... Your backbone is broken, you are like downtrodden worms. Who will give you strength? Let me tell you, strength, strength is what we want. And the

first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads, and believe "I am the Soul", "me the sword cannot cut, nor instruments pierce, me the fire cannot burn, me the air cannot dry; I am the omnipotent, I am the omniscient." [Gita 2.24] So repeat those blessed, saving words. Do not say we are weak; we can do anything and everything. What can we not do? Everything can be done by us. We all have the same, glorious Soul; let us believe in it.(54)

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PART III, SECTION 7: THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE VEDIC MESSAGE IN INDIA

Chapter 20: Saving India through the Spiritual Inheritance of the Vedas

a) We Must Give Up Weakness and Effeminacy and Learn How to Reduce the Doctrines of Vedanta into Practice

1. Chalk Out an Independent Path from the Europeans and Go Back to the Human-Making Upanishads

In Alwar in 1890, following the swami's instructions many young men applied themselves to the study of Sanskrit. At times Swami Vivekananda used to teach them himself. And doing so, he told them, "Study Sanskrit, but along with it study Western science. Learn accuracy, my boys! Study and labor so that the time will come when you can put our history on a scientific basis. For now Indian history is disorganized.

We have no chronological accuracy. The histories of our country by the English writers cannot but be weakening to our minds, for they hold prominently before our view the picture of our downfall. How can foreigners who understand very little of our manners and customs, our religion and philosophy, write faithful and unbiased histories of India? Naturally, many false notions and wrong inferences have found their way into them. But the Europeans have shown us how to proceed in making researches into our ancient history. Now it is for us to chalk out an independent path for ourselves in these departments of learning. Study the Vedas and Puranas and the ancient annals of India, and from these make it your life's sadhana to write accurate, sympathetic, and soul-inspiring histories of the land. Study the life of Shivaaji and you will find him a nation-maker instead of a marauder, as the Europeans represent him. We should not be guided absolutely by the histories produced by European minds. What respect can they have for our culture which they do not understand? In point of fact, we have no connected history from the Vedic times down to a period of a thousand years after Lord Buddha. Of course, now a new era is dawning in this respect. But IT IS FOR INDIANS TO REWRITE INDIAN HISTORY. Therefore, set yourselves to the task of rescuing our lost and hidden treasures from oblivion! Even as one whose child has been lost does not rest until he or she has found it, so do you never cease to labor until you have redeemed the glorious past of India in the consciousness of the people. That will be the true national education; and with its advancement, a true national spirit will be awakened.(1)

You have been told and taught that you can do nothing, and nonentities you are becoming every day. What we want is strength; so believe in yourselves. We have become weak and that is why occultism and mysticism come to us - these creepy things. There may be great truths in them, but they have nearly destroyed us. Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be true men and women. It is a human-making religion that we want. It is human-making theories that we want. It is human-making education all round that we want....

These mysticisms, in spite of some grains of truth in them, are generally weakening. Believe me, I have had a lifelong experience of it; and the one conclusion that I draw is that it is weakening. I have traveled all over India, searched almost every cave here, and lived in the Himalayas. I know people who lived there all their lives. I love my nation - I cannot see you degraded, weakened, any more than you are now. Therefore I am bound, for your sake and for truth's sake, to cry, "Hold!" and to raise my voice against this degradation of my race. Give up these weakening mysticisms and be strong. Go back to your Upanishads - the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy - and part from all these mysterious thing, these weakening things. Take up this philosophy. The greatest things are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.(2)

Cross reference to:

Brih. Up., 4.14.4

2. Bring Life Back into the Country by Putting the Vedas into Practice

Playing on the khol [drum] and kartal and dancing in the frenzy of kirtana has degenerated the whole people [of India]. They are, in the first place, a race of dyspeptics - and, if in addition to this, they dance and jump in that way, how can they bear the strain? In trying to imitate the highest sadhana, the preliminary qualifications for which are absolute purity, they have been swallowed in dire *tamas*. In every district and village you may visit, you will find only the sound of the khol and kartal! Are not drums made in this country? Are not trumpets and kettledrums available in India? Make the boys hear the deep-toned sound of these instruments. Hearing from boyhood the sound of these effeminate forms of music and listening to the kirtana, the country is well nigh converted into a country of women. What more degradation can you expect? Even the poet's imagination fails to draw this picture! The damaru [hour-glass shaped drum] and horn have to be sounded, drums are to be beaten so as to raise the deep and martial notes; and with "Mahvira! Mahavira!" on your lips and shouting, "Hara, hara, vyom, vyom!" the quarters are to be reverberated. The music which awakens only the softer human feelings is to be stopped now for some time. Stopping the light tunes such as *kheal* and *tappa* for some time, the people are to be accustomed to hear the *dhrupad* music. Through the thunder-roll of the dignified Vedic hymns, life is to be brought back into this country. In everything the austere spirit of heroic manhood is to be revived. In following such an ideal lies the good of the people and the country. If you can build your character after such an ideal, then a thousand others will follow. But take care that you do not swerve an inch from the ideal. Never lose heart. In eating,

dressing, or lying, in singing or playing, in enjoyment or disease, always manifest the highest moral courage. Then only will you attain the grace of Mahashakti, the Divine Mother.(3)

There are many things to be done, but means are wanting in this country [India]. We have brains, but no hands. We have the doctrine of the Vedanta, but we have not the power to reduce it into practice. In our books there is the doctrine of universal equality, but in work we make great distinctions. It was in India that unselfish and disinterested work of the most exalted type was preached; but in practice *we* are awfully cruel, awfully heartless - unable to think of anything besides our own mass-of-flesh bodies.(4)

Possessed of a plenitude of rajas, [the Westerners] have now reached the culmination of bhoga, or enjoyment. Do you think that it is not they, but you, who are going to achieve yoga - you who hang about for the sake of your bellies? At the sight of their highly refined enjoyment, the delineation in the *Meghaduta* comes to my mind. [a description of the enjoyments of the Alakapuri by the poet, Kalidasa] And your bhoga consists in lying on a ragged bed in a muggy room multiplying progeny every year like a hog! Begetting a band of famished beggars and slaves! Hence do I say, let people be made energetic and active in nature by the stimulation of rajas.(5)

Cross reference to:

Shwe. Up., 3.8

Mund. Up., 3.1.6

3. Learn to Distinguish What Is Essential and the Power of Thinking and Timely Action Will Come of Itself

This world, if you have eyes to see, is yours - if not, it is mine; do you think that anyone waits for another? The Westerners are devising new means and methods to attract the luxuries and comforts of different parts of the world. They watch the situation with ten eyes and work with two hundred hands, as it were; while we will never do what the authors of our Shastras have not written in books, and thus we are moving in the same old groove, and there is no attempt to seek anything original and new, and the capacity to do that is lost to us now. The whole nation is rending the skies with the cry for food and is dying of starvation. Whose fault is it? Ours! What means are we taking in hand to find a way out of the pitiable situation? Zero! Only making a bigger noise by our big and empty talk! That is all that we are doing. Why not come out of your narrow corner and see, with your eyes open, how the world is moving onwards? Then the mind will open and the power of thinking and timely action will come of itself.

(6)

Every critical student knows that the social laws of India have always been subject to great periodic changes. At their inception, these laws were the embodiment of a gigantic plan which was to unfold itself slowly through time. The great seers of ancient India saw so far ahead of their times that the world has to wait centuries yet to appreciate their wisdom; and it is this very inability on the part of their own descendants to appreciate the full scope of this wonderful plan that is the one and only cause of the degeneration of India.(7)

The more, therefore, the Hindus study the past, the more glorious will be their future; and whoever tries to bring the past to the door of everyone is a great benefactor to this nation. The degeneration of India came, not because the laws and customs of the ancients were bad, but because they were not allowed to be carried to their legitimate conclusions.(8)

Your [Aryan] ancestors gave every liberty to the soul and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage, and society did not grow. The opposite is the case in the West - every liberty to society, none to religion. Now are falling off the shackles from the feet of Eastern society as from those of Western religion.(9)

In plain words, we have first to learn the distinction between the essentials and non-essentials in everything. The essentials are eternal, the non-essentials have value only for a certain time; and, if after a time they are not replaced by something essential, they are positively dangerous. I do not mean that you should stand up and revile all your old customs and institutions. Certainly not; you must not revile even the most evil one of them. Revile none. Even those customs that are now appearing to be positive evils have been positively life-giving in times past; and if we have to remove these, we must not do so with curses, but with blessings and with gratitude for the glorious works these customs have done for the preservation of our race. And we must also remember that the leaders of our societies have never been either generals or kings, but rishis.(10)

b) Let Us Rouse the Austere Spirit of Manhood in India and Adjust to the Needs of the Times

1. First Be Prepared for the Struggle for Existence

Trampled under others' feet, slaving for others, are you human any more? You are not worth a pin's head! In this fertile country with abundant water supply, where nature produces wealth and harvest a thousand times more than in others, you have no food for your stomach, no clothes to cover your body! In this country of abundance, the produce of which has been the cause of the spread of civilization in other countries, you are reduced to such straits! Your condition is even worse than that of a dog. And you glory in your Vedas and Vedanta! A nation that cannot provide for its simple food and clothing, which always depends upon others for its subsistence - what is there for it to vaunt about? Throw your religious observances overboard for the present, and first be prepared for the struggle for existence.(11)

Laziness, meanness and hypocrisy have covered the whole length and breadth of the country. Can an intelligent person look on all this and remain quiet? Does it not bring tears to the eyes? Madras, Bombay, Pujab, Bengal - whichever way I look - I see no signs of life. You are thinking yourselves highly educated. What nonsense have you learned? Getting by heart the thoughts of others in a foreign language and stuffing your brain with them and taking some university degrees, you consider yourselves educated! Fie upon you! Is this education? What is the goal of your education? Either a clerkship, or being a roguish lawyer, or at the most a deputy magistracy, which is another form of clerkship - isn't that all? What good will it do you or the country at large? Open your eyes and see what a piteous cry for food is rising in the land of Bharata [India], proverbial for its wealth! Will your education fulfill this want? Never. With the

help of Western science set yourselves to dig the earth and produce foodstuffs, not by means of servitude to others, but by discovering new avenues to production by your own efforts aided by Western science. Therefore I teach the people of this country to be full of activities, so as to be able to produce food and clothing for themselves. For want of food and clothing, and plunged in anxiety about it, the country has come to ruin - what are you doing to remedy this? Throw aside your scriptures in the Ganga and teach the people first the means of procuring food and clothing, and then you will find time to read to them the scriptures. If their material wants are not removed by the rousing of intense activity, none will listen to words of spirituality. Therefore I say, first rouse the inherent power of the Atman within you; then, rousing the faith of the people in general, in that power, as much as you can, teach them first of all to make provision for food, and then teach them religion. There is no time to sit idle - who knows when death will overtake one?(12)

Cross reference to:

Ka. Up., 1.3.14

2. We Must Revive the Old Laws of the Rishis, Remodeled According to the Times

There is nowhere mention of thread being used [at the time of initiation by the guru] in the Vedas. The modern author of Smritis, Raghunanda Bhattacharya, also puts it thus: "At this stage [in the Vedic ceremony], the sacrificial girdle should be put on." Neither in Gobhila's *Grihya Sutras* do we find any mention of the girdle made of thread. In the Shastras this first Vedic samskara (purification ceremony) before the guru has been called the upanayana; but see to what a sad pass our country has been brought! Straying away from the true path of the Shastras, the country has been overwhelmed with usages and observances originating in particular localities, of popular opinion, or with the [uneducated] womenfolk! That is why I ask you to proceed along the path of the Shastras as in olden times. Have faith within yourselves and thereby bring it back into the country.(13)

Disciple: Then, do not the laws laid down by the rishis rule and guide our present society?

Swami Vivekananda: Vain delusion! Where indeed is that the case nowadays? Nowhere have I found the laws of the rishis current in India even when, during my travels, I searched carefully and thoroughly. The blind and not unoften meaningless customs sanctioned by the people, local prejudices and ideas and the usages and ceremonials prevalent among women, are what really govern society everywhere! How many care to read the Shastras or to lead society according to their ordinances after careful study?

Disciple: What are we to do, then?

Swami Vivekananda: We must revive the old laws of the rishis. We must initiate the whole people into the codes of our old Manu and Yajnavalkya with a few modifications here and there to adjust them to the changed circumstances of the time.(14)

Swami Vivekananda: Where do the tenfold samskaras or purifying ceremonies enjoined by the Shastras obtain still? Well, I have traveled the whole of India and everywhere I have found society to be guided by local usages which are condemned by the Shrutis and Smritis. Popular customs, local usages and observances prevalent among women only - have not these taken the place of the Smritis everywhere? Who obeys, and whom? If you can but spend enough money, the priest-class is ready to write whatever sanctions or prohibitions you want! How many of them care to read the Vedic kalpa (ritual), grihya and Shrauta Sutras? Then, look, here in Bengal the code of Raghunananda is obeyed; a little further on you will find the code of Mitakshara in vogue; while in another part the code of Manu holds sway! You seem to think that the same law holds good everywhere! What I want, therefore, is to introduce the study of the Vedas by stimulating a greater regard for them in the minds of the people, and to pass everywhere the injunctions of the Vedas.

Disciple: Sir, is it possible nowadays to set them going?

Swami Vivekananda: It is true that the ancient Vedic laws will not have a go; but if we introduce additions and alterations in them to suit the needs of the times, codify them, and hold them up as a new model to society, why will they not pass as current?

Disciple: I was under the impression that at least the injunctions of Manu were being obeyed all over India even now.

Swami Vivekananda: Nothing of the kind. Just look to your own province and see how the Vamachara (immoral practices) of the Tantras has entered into your very marrow. Even modern Vaishnavism, which is the skeleton of defunct Buddhism, is saturated with Vamachara! We must stem this tide of Vamachara, which is contrary to the spirit of the Vedas.

Disciple: Sir, is it possible now to cleanse this Augean stable?

Swami Vivekananda: What nonsense you speak, you coward! You have well nigh thrown the country into ruin by crying, "It is impossible! It is impossible! What cannot human effort achieve?"

Disciple: But, sir, such a state of things seems impossible unless sages like Manu and Yajnavalkya are again born in the country.

Swami Vivekananda: Goodness gracious! Was it not purity and unselfish labor that made them Manu and Yajnavalkya, or was it something else? Well, we ourselves can be far greater than even Manu and Yajnavalkya if we want to; why will not our views prevail, then?

Disciple: Sir, it is you who said just now that we must revive the ancient usages and observances in the country. How then can we think lightly of sages like Manu and the rest?

Swami Vivekananda: What an absurd deduction! You altogether miss my point. I have only said that the ancient Vedic customs must be remodeled according to the need of the society and the time and passed under a new form in the land.... You have read the Shastras, and my hope and

faith rest in people like you. Understand my words in their true spirit and apply yourselves to work in their light.

Disciple: But, sir, who will listen to us? Why should our countrymen accept them?

Swami Vivekananda: If you can truly convince them and practice what you preach, they must. If, on the contrary, like cowards you simply utter shlokas like parrots, be mere talkers and quote authority only without showing them in action - then who will care to listen to you?

Disciple: Please give me some advice in brief about social reform.

Swami Vivekananda: Why, I have given you advice enough: now put at least something into practice. Let the world see that your reading of the scriptures and listening to me has been a success. The codes of Manu and lots of other books that you have read - what is their basis and underlying purpose? Keeping that basis intact, compile in the manner of the ancient rishis their essential truths and supplement them with thoughts that are suited to the times; only take care that all races and all sects throughout India be really benefited by following these rules. Just write out a Smṛti like that: I shall revise it.(15)

3. Let Us Return to the Vital Orthodoxy of Old, at the Same Time Broadening Society That the whole World May Become True Brahmins

You are great Vedantists, you are very orthodox, are you not? You are great Hindus and very orthodox. Ay, what I want is to make you more orthodox. The more orthodox you are, the more sensible; and the more you think of modern orthodoxy, the more foolish you are. Go back to your old [Vedic] orthodoxy, for in those days every sound that came from these books, every pulsation, was out of a strong, steady, and sincere heart; every note was true. After that came degradation in art, in science, in religion, in everything - national degradation. We have no time to discuss the causes, but all the books written about that period breathe of the pestilence, the national decay; instead of vigor, only wails and cries. Go back, go back to the old days when there was strength and vitality. Be strong one more, drink deep of this fountain of yore, and that is the only condition of life in India.(16)

India is full of many races and religions, indigenous and of foreign importation. The Aryan religion and ideas have not yet found their way into most of them. Therefore we shall avert this great danger by first Aryanizing India and giving her Aryan rights, and by inviting all without distinction to the Aryan scriptures and modes of spiritual practice. For this reason we must first of all accord full rights to the Aryan religion to those castes which have slightly fallen away from it for want of the necessary samskaras (purificatory rites) by giving them the samskaras again. People feel interest in things to which they have a right. Otherwise, the non-brahmin castes will discard the Aryan religion on the ground that it is the special monopoly of the brahmins. Similarly, we must broaden Hindu society by giving samskaras to all classes down to the chandalas and alien races such as the mlechchhas as well.

But we must proceed slowly in this. For the present we should give samskaras to those who, qualified according to the Shastras, are devoid of the necessary samskara through their

ignorance. In this way there shall be an extensive preaching of the scriptures and religion, and numerous preachers thereof.

The ideal of this world is that state when this whole world will again be brahmin by nature. When there will be no necessity of the shudra, vaishya and kshatriya powers; when spiritual force will completely triumph over material force; when disease and grief will no more overtake the human body; when the sense-organs will no more be able to go against the mind; when the application of brute force will be completely effaced from people's memory, like a dream of primeval days; when love will be the only motive power in all actions on this earth - then only the whole of humankind will be endowed with brahminical qualities and attain brahminhood. Then only the distinction of caste will be at an end, ushering in the Satya-Yuga (Golden Age) visualized by the ancient rishis. We must adopt only that kind of caste division which gradually leads to this goal. That division into caste which is the best way to the abolition of caste should be most cordially welcomed.(17)

Your history, literature, mythology, and all other Shastras are simply frightening people. They are only telling them, "You will go to hell and you are doomed!" Therefore this lethargy has crept into the very vitals of India. Hence we must explain to people in simple words the highest ideals of the Vedas and Vedanta. Through the imparting of moral principles, good behavior, and education we must make the chandala come up to the level of the brahmin. Come, write out all these things [in the *Udbodhan*, the Bengalis journal of the Ramakrishna Order].. and awaken everyone, young and old, men and women. then only shall I know that your study of the Vedas and Vedanta has been a success.(18)

c) The Life-Saving Education for India

1. We Must Replace Superstition with Human-Making Education Based on the Teachings of the Vedas

We must have a hold on the spiritual and secular education of the nation. Do you understand that? You must dream it, you must talk of it, you must think it, and you must work it out. Till then there is no salvation for the race. The education that you are getting now has some good points, but it has a tremendous disadvantage which is so great that all the good things are weighed down. In the first place, it is not a human-making education; it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education, or any training that is based on negation, is worse than death. Children are taken to school and the first thing they learn is that their fathers are fools, the second thing is that their grandfathers are lunatic, and the third thing is that their teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies! By the time they are sixteen they are a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless. And the result is that fifty years of such education has not produced one original person in the three presidencies. Everyone of originality that has been produced has been educated elsewhere, not in this country; or they have gone to the old universities once more to cleanse themselves of superstitions. Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, human-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than someone who has got by heart a whole library. "The ass carrying its load of sandalwood

knows only the weight and not the value of the sandalwood." If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world and the encyclopedias are rishis. The ideal, therefore, is that we must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines, through national methods as far as practicable.(19)

Cross reference to:

Ka. Up., 1.1.5

2. Young People Should Learn from All Renouncing Teachers the Highest Spiritual Truths Coupled with Modern Science

In India they tell me that I should not teach Advaita Vedanta to people at large. But I say that I can make even a child understand it. You cannot begin too early to teach the highest spiritual truths.(20)

Disciple: Talking with you and listening to your realizations, I feel no necessity for the study of the scriptures.

Swami Vivekananda: No! Scriptures have to be studied also. For the attainment of jnana, study of scriptures is essential. I shall soon open classes in the Math for them. The Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita and *Bhagavata* should be studied in the classes and I shall teach Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*. [Sanskrit grammar].(21)

[My idea of education for our Indian children] is guru-griha-vasa - living with the guru... in the same way as of old. But with this education has to be combined modern Western science. Both of these are necessary... The present university system is almost wholly one of defects. Why, it is nothing but a perfect machine for turning out clerks. I would thank my stars if that were all. But no! See how people are becoming destitute of shraddha and faith. They assert that the Gita is only an interpolation, and that the Vedas are but rustic songs! They like to master every detail concerning things and nations outside of India, but if you ask them, they do not know even the names of their own forebears up to the seventh generation, what to speak of the fourteenth!... A nation that has no history of its own has nothing in this world. Do you believe that one who has such faith and pride as to feel: "I come of noble descent" can ever turn out to be bad? How could that be? That faith in him or herself would curb his or her actions and feelings; so much so that he or she would rather die than commit wrong. So, a national history keeps a nation well-restrained and does not allow it to sink so low.... Those who have eyes to see find a luminous history in India, and on the strength of that they know the nation is still alive. But that history has to be rewritten. It should be restated and suited to the understanding and ways of thinking which our people have acquired in the present age through Western education....

To bring this about, the old institution of "living with the guru" and similar systems of imparting education are needed. What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also shraddha and faith in one's own self. Another thing that we want

is the abolition of that system which aims at educating our boys and girls in the same manner as that of the man who battered his ass, being advised that it could thereby be turned into a horse. (22)

One should live from his very childhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire and should have before him or her a living example of the highest teaching. Mere reading that it is a sin to tell a lie will be of no use. Every boy and girl should be trained to practice absolute brahmacharya; and then, and only then, faith - shraddha - will come. Otherwise, why will not one who has no shraddha speak an untruth? In our country, the imparting of knowledge has always been through men and women of renunciation. Later, the pandits, by monopolizing all knowledge and restricting it to the tol [village school], have only brought the country to the brink of ruin. India had all good prospects so long as men and women of renunciation used to impart knowledge.(23)

3. Monasteries Must Provide, on a Broad Modern Basis, the Vedic Facilities for the Development of the Knowledge of Brahman

An attempt is being made [at Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order] to educate a number of young men according to the principle of students living in touch with the guru; these young sannyasins [will] carry on the propoganda, both in and out of India.(24)

It is my wish to convert [Belur] Math into a chief center of spiritual practices and the culture of knowledge. The power that will have its rise from here will flood the whole world and turn the course of people's lives into different channels. From this place will spring forth ideals which will be the harmony of knowledge, devotion, yoga and work. At a nod from the men of this Math a life-giving impetus will in time be given to the remotest corners of the globe, while all true seekers after spirituality will in course of time assemble here. A thousand thoughts like this are arising in my mind.

Yonder plot of land on the south side of the Math will be the center of learning where grammar, philosophy, science, literature, rhetoric, the Shrutis, bhakti scriptures and English will be taught. This Temple of Learning will be fashioned after the tols of the old days. Boys who are brahmacharins from their childhood will live there and study the scriptures. Their food and clothing and all will be supplied from the Math. After a course of five years' training these brahmacharins may, if they like, go back to their homes and lead householders' lives; or they may embrace monastic life with the sanction of the venerable superiors of the Math. The authorities of the Math will have the power to turn out at once any of these bramacharins who will be found refractory or of bad character. Teaching will be imparted here irrespective of caste or creed, and those who have objections to that will not be admitted. But those who would like to observe their particular caste rites should make separate arrangements for their food, etc. They will merely attend the classes along with the rest. The Math authorities shall keep a vigilant watch over the character of these also. None but those who are trained here shall be eligible for sannyas. Won't it be nice when, by degrees, the Math will begin to work like this?

Disciple: Then you want to reintroduce into the country the ancient institution of living a brahmacharya life in the house of the guru?

Swami Vivekananda: Exactly. The modern system of education gives no facility for the development of the knowledge of Brahman. We must found brahmacharya homes as in times of old. But now we must lay their foundations on a broad basis, that is to say, we must introduce a good deal of change into it to suit the requirements of the times....

That piece of land to the south of the Math we must also purchase in time. There we shall start an annasatra - a feeding house. There arrangements will be made for serving really indigent people in the spirit of God. The feeding home will be named after Sri Ramakrishna. Its scope will first be determined by the amount of funds. For that matter, we may start it with two or three inmates. We must train energetic brahmacharins to conduct this home. They will have to collect funds for its maintenance - ay, even by begging. The Math will not be allowed to give any pecuniary help in this matter. The brahmacharins themselves shall have to raise funds for it. Only after completing their five years' training in this House of Service will they be allowed to join the Temple of Learning branch. After training for ten years - five in the Feeding Home and five in the Temple of Learning - they will be allowed to enter the life of sannyasa, having initiation from the Math authorities - provided, of course, that they have a mind to become sannyasins and the Math authorities consider them fit for sannyas and are willing to admit them into it. But the head of the Math will be free to confer sannyas on any exceptionally meritorious brahmacharin at any time in defiance of this rule. The ordinary brahmacharins, however, will have to qualify themselves for sannyas by degrees, as I have just said....

Disciple: Sir, what will be the object of starting three such sections in the Math?

Swami Vivekananda: Don't you understand me? First of all comes the gift of food; next is the gift of learning, and the highest of all is the gift of knowledge. We must harmonize these three ideals in the Math. By continually practicing the gift of food the brahmacharins will have the idea of practical work for the sake of others and that of serving all beings in the spirit of the Lord firmly impressed on their minds. This will gradually purify their minds and lead to the manifestation of sattvika (pure and unselfish) ideas. And having this, the brahmacharins will in time acquire the fitness to attain the knowledge of Brahman and become eligible for sannyas.

Disciple: Sir, if, as you say, the gift of spiritual knowledge is the highest, why then start sections for the gift of food and the gift of learning?

Swami Vivekananda: Don't you understand this point, even now? Listen, if in these days of scarce food you can, for the disinterested service of others, get together a few morsels of food by begging or by any other means and give them to the poor and suffering, that will not only be doing good to yourself and the world, but you will at the same time get everybody's sympathy for this noble work. Worldly-minded people, tied down to lust and wealth, will have faith in you for this labor of love and come forward to help you. You will attract a thousand times as many people by this unasked-for gift of food as you will by the gift of learning or of (spiritual) knowledge. In no other work will you get so much public sympathy as you will in this. In a truly noble work, not to speak of people, even God befriends the doer. When people have been thus attracted you will be able to stimulate the desire for learning and spirituality in them. Therefore, the gift of food comes first.(25)

4. The Manifestation of Brahman in Women through Vedic Methods of Education

When women give up the world and join [the Ramakrishna Order] they are no longer considered either men or women; they have no sex. The whole question of high or low caste, man or woman, dies out entirely.(26)

[In educating the girls of India], in the worship of the gods, you must of course use images. But you can change these. Kali need not always be in one position. Encourage your girls to think in new ways of picturing Her. Have a hundred different conceptions of Saraswati. Let them draw and model and paint their own ideas.

In the chapel the pitcher on the lowest step of the altar must always be full of water, and the lights in great Tamil butter-lamps must always be burning. If, in addition, the maintenance of perpetual adoration could be organized, nothing could be more in accord with Hindu feeling.

But the ceremonies employed themselves must be Vedic. There must be a Vedic altar on which at the hour of worship to light the Vedic fire. And the children must be present to share in the service of oblation. This is a rite which would claim the respect of the whole of India.

Gather all sorts of animals about you. The cow makes a fine beginning. But you will also have dogs and cats and birds, and others. Let the children have a time for going to feed and look after these.

Then there is the sacrifice of learning. That is the most beautiful of all. Do you know that every book is holy in India? Not the Vedas alone, but the English and Muslim also. All are sacred.

Revive the old arts. Teach your girls fruit-modeling with hardened milk. Give them artistic cooking and sewing. Let them learn painting, photography, the cutting of designs in paper, and gold and silver filigree and embroidery. See that everyone knows something by which she can earn a living in case of need.

And never forget humanity! The idea of a human-worship exists in nucleus in India, but it has never been sufficiently specialized. Let your students develop it. Make poetry, make art, of it. Yet, a daily worship at the feet of beggars, after bathing and before the meal, would be a wonderful practical training of the heart and hand together. On some days, again, the worship might be of children, of your own pupils. Or you might borrow babies and nurse and feed them.(27)

That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever in future. The principal reason why your [Indian] race has so much degenerated is that you have no respect for these living images of Shakti [divine feminine Power].... There is no hope of rising for that family or country where there is no estimation of women, where they live in sadness. For this reason they have to be raised first, and an ideal Math has to be started for them.... For the worship of these family goddesses, in order to manifest the Brahman within the, I shall establish the women's Math....

On the other side of the Ganga a big plot of land shall be acquired where unmarried girls or brahmacharini widows will live; devout married women will also be allowed to stay now and then. Men will have no concern with this Math. The elderly sadhus [monks] of the Math will manage the affairs of the Math from a distance. There shall be a girls' school attached to the women's Math where religious scriptures, literature, Sanskrit grammar and even some amount of English should be taught. Other matters, such as sewing, culinary art, rules of domestic work and upbringing of children will also be taught, while japa, worship, meditation, etc. shall form an indispensable part of the teaching. Those who will be able to live there permanently, renouncing home and family ties, will be provided with food and clothing from this Math. Those who will not be able to do that will be allowed to study in this Math as day-scholars. With the permission of the head of the Math, the latter will even be allowed to stay in the Math occasionally and during such stay will be maintained by the Math. The older brahmacharinis will take charge of the training of the girl students in brahmacharya. After five or six years' training in this Math, the guardians of the girls may marry them. If deemed fit for yoga and religious life, with the permission of their guardians they will be allowed to stay in this Math, taking the vow of celibacy. These celibate nuns will in time be the teachers and preachers of the Math. In villages and towns they will open centers and strive for the spread of female education. Through such devout preachers of character there will be the real spread of female education in the country. So long as the students remain in association with this Math, they must observe brahmacharya as the basic idea of the Math.

Spirituality, sacrifice and self-control will be the motto of all the pupils of this Math, and service or seva-dharma the vow of their life. In view of such ideal lives, who will not respect and have faith in them? If the life of the women of India be molded in such a fashion, then only will there be the reappearance of such ideal characters as Sita, Savitri, and Gargi. To what straits the strictures of local usages have reduced some of the women of our country, rendering them lifeless and inert, you could only understand if you visited Western countries. You [men] alone are responsible for this miserable condition of the women, and it rests with you to raise them again. Therefore I say, set to work. What will it do to memorize a few religious books like the Vedas, and so on?(28)

5. Rouse India with the Lion-Roar of Non-Dualism

Going round the whole world, I find that the people of [India] are immersed in great tamas (inactivity) compared with the people of other countries. On the outside there is a simulation of the sattvika (calm and balanced); but inside, downright inertness like that of stocks and stones. What work will be done in the world by such people? How long can such an inactive, lazy and sensual people live in the world? First travel in Western countries, then contradict my words. How much enterprise and devotion to work, how much enthusiasm and manifestation of rajas there are in the lives of Western people! While, in our country it is as if the blood has congealed in the heart so that it cannot circulate in the veins - it is as if paralysis has overtaken the body and it has become languid. So my idea is first to make the people active by developing their rajas, and thus make them fit for the struggle for existence.... First make the people of the country stand on their feet by rousing their inner power, first let them learn to have good food and clothes and plenty of enjoyment - then tell them how to be free from this bondage of enjoyment.(29)

Why do you not set about propagating Vedanta in your part of the country? [There, in East Bengal], Tantricism prevails to a fearful extent. Rouse and agitate the country with the lion-roar of Advaitavada [non-dualism]. First open a Sanskrit school there and teach the Upanishads and the *Brahma-Sutras*. Teach the boys the system of brahmacharya. I have heard that in your country there is much logic-chopping of the Nyaya school. What is there it that? Only *vyapti* (pervasiveness) and *anumana* (inference) - these subjects the pandits of the Nyaya school discuss for months! What does it help towards the knowledge of the Atman?... Open a chatushpathi (indigenous school) in which the scriptures will be studied and also the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. In this way you will advance your own good as well as the good of the people, and your fame will endure.(30)

Cross Reference to:

Ka. Up., 1.3.14

Swe. Up., 2.5

6. The Modern Methods of Teaching Vedanta

In the books of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar [a distinguished Bengali educator and philanthropist] for little boys you read: "God is without form and of the essence of pure knowledge", "Subal is a good boy", and so on. That won't do. We must compose some books in Bengali as also in English with short stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Upanishads, etc. in very easy and simple language and these are to be give to our little boys to read.(31)

April 4, 1895: My idea is for... a society in Madras where people would be taught the Vedas and Vedanta, with the commentaries.(32)

1894: The work should be in the line of preaching and serving at the present time. Choose a place of meeting where you can assemble every week, holding a service and reading the Upanishads with the commentaries, and slowly go on learning and working. Everything will come to you if you put your shoulders to the wheel....

If you could start a magazine on Vedantic lines, it would further our object. Be positive; do not criticize others. Give you message, teach what you have to teach, and there stop. The Lord knows the rest....

Expand your hearts and hopes as wide as this world. Study Sanskrit, especially the three bhashyas (commentaries) on the Vedanta. Be ready, for I have many plans for the future. Try to be a magnetic speaker. Electrify the people. Everything will come to you if you have faith.... In time all of you will do great things at which the world will wonder. Take heart and work. Show me something you have done. Show me a temple, a press, a paper, a home for me. Electrify people. Raise funds and preach. Be true to your mission.(33)

January 3, 1895: The work has begun well in India and it should not only be kept up but pushed on with the greatest vigor. Now or never is the time. After taking a far and wide view of things

my mind has now been concentrated on the following plan: first, it would be well to open a theological college in Madras and then gradually extend its scope to give a thorough education to young men in the Vedas and the different bhashyas and philosophies, including a knowledge of the other religions of the world. At the same time a paper in English and the vernacular should be started as an organ of the college.(34)

d) The Time Has Come for India to Teach the Life-Giving Message of the Upanishads to the Waiting World

For a complete civilization the world is waiting, waiting for the treasures to come out of India, waiting for the marvelous spiritual inheritance of the race which, through decades of degradation and misery, the nation has still clutched to her breast. The world is waiting for that treasure; little do you know how much hunger and thirst there is outside of India for these wonderful treasures of our forebears. We talk here, we quarrel with each other, we laugh at and ridicule everything sacred until it has become almost a national vice to ridicule everything holy. Little do we understand the heart-pangs of millions, waiting outside the walls, stretching forth their hands for a little sip of that nectar which our forebears have preserved in this land of India. Therefore we must go out, exchange our spirituality for anything they have to give us; for the marvels of the region of the spirit we will exchange the marvels of the region of matter. We will not be students always, but teachers also. There cannot be friendship without equality, and there cannot be equality when one party is always the teacher and the other party sits always at his or her feet. If you want to become equal with the English or Americans, you will have to teach as well as learn, and you have plenty yet to teach to the world for centuries to come. This has to be done. Fire and enthusiasm must be in our blood.(35)

None will be able to resist truth and love and sincerity. Are you sincere? Unselfish, even unto death? And loving? Then fear not, not even death. Onward, my lads! The whole world requires light. It is expectant! India alone has that light - not in magic, mummeries, and charlatanism, but in the teachings of the glories of the spirit of real religion - of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes unto the present day. Now the time has come. Have faith that you are all, my brave lads, born to do great things! Let not the barks of puppies frighten you - no, not even the thunderbolts of heaven - but stand up and work!(36)

Back to the Upanishads! Back to the strengthening, life-giving teachings of the Upanishads! They who think they are weak, are weak; and they who believe that they are strong, are already invincible! "Arise, awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!" [*Ka. Up.*, 1.3.14](37)

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PART III, SECTION 8: VEDANTA ARRIVES IN THE WEST

Chapter 21: The Development of Vedic Ideals through the Meeting of East and West

a) Let Us Take an Impartial View of the Distinct Parts Played in the Civilization of the World by the Greeks and Indo-Aryans

Two curious nations there have been, sprung of the same race but placed in different circumstances and environments, working out the problems of life each in its own particular way. I mean the ancient Hindu and the ancient Greek. The Indian Aryans - bounded on the north by the snowcaps of the Himalayas with freshwater rivers like rolling oceans surrounding them on the plains, with eternal forests which to them seemed to be the end of the world - turned their vision inward; and, given the natural instinct, the superfine brain of the Aryans, with this sublime scenery surrounding them, the natural result was that they became introspective. The analysis of their own minds was the great theme of the Indo-Aryans. On the other hand, with the Greek, who arrived at a part of the earth which was more beautiful than sublime - the beautiful islands of the Greek archipelago, nature all around them generous, yet simple - their minds naturally went outside.(1)

[The Indian Aryans' chief aim was to evolve the infinite coiled up in the frame we call human]; another branch of the Aryans went into the smaller and more picturesque country of Greece, where the climate and natural conditions were more favorable [than India's]; so their activity turned outward and they developed the external arts and outward liberty. The Greek sought political liberty. The Hindu has always sought spiritual liberty. Both are one-sided. The Indians care not enough for national protection or patriotism; they will defend only their religion; while with the Greek and in Europe (where the Greek civilization finds its continuation) the country comes first. To care only for spiritual liberty and not for social liberty is a defect; but the opposite is a still greater defect. Liberty of both body and soul is to be striven for.(2)

The study of the Greeks was of the outer infinite, while that of the [Indo]-Aryans was the inner infinite; one studied the macrocosm, the other the microcosm. Each had its distinct part to play in the civilization of the world. Not that one was required to borrow from the other; but if they compared notes they would both be gainers.(3)

To us at the present time, perhaps, has been given the privilege of standing aside from both these aspects and taking an impartial view of the whole. (4)

Cross reference to:

Brihad. Up., 2.4.10

Cha. Up., 3.14.1

b) *Whenever Great Conquering Nations Arise Indian Thought Enters the Veins of Every Race*

1. *We Can Find Traces of Indian Thought in the Greek Systems*

Three-quarters of the wealth of the world has come out of India, and does [so] even now. The commerce of India has been the turning-point, the pivot, of the history of the world. Whatever nation got it became powerful and civilized. The Greeks got it and became the mighty Greeks; the Romans got it and became the mighty Romans. Even in the days of the Phoenicians it was so. After the fall of Rome the Genoese and the Venetians got it. And then the Arabs rose and created a wall between Venice and India; and in the struggle to find a new way there, America was discovered. That is how America was discovered; and the original people of America were called Indians, or "Injuns", for that reason. Even the Dutch got it - and the barbarians - and the English; and they became the most powerful nation on earth. And the next nations that gets it will immediately be the most powerful.(5)

Thoughts, like merchandise, can only run through channels made by somebody. Roads have to be made before even though can travel from one place to another; and whenever in the history of the world a great conquering nation has arisen, linking the different parts of the world together, then has poured through these channels the thought of India and thus entered into the veins of every race. There are evidences accumulating every day that before even the Buddhists were born, Indian thought penetrated the world. Before Buddhism Vedanta had penetrated into China, into Persia and the islands of the Eastern Archipelago. Again, when the mighty mind of the Greek had linked the different parts of the Eastern world together, there came Indian thought.(6)

The Egyptians and the Babylonians... are not Aryans. They are separate races and their civilizations antedate all the European civilization. But with the exception of the ancient Egyptians they were almost coeval [with the Aryans]; in some accounts, they were even earlier. Yet in Egyptian literature there are certain things to be accounted for - the introduction of the Indian lotus on old temples - the lotus *Gangetic*. It is well known that this grows only in India. Then there are the references to the land of Punt. Although very great attempts have been made to fix the land of Punt on the Arabs, it is very uncertain. And then there are the references to the monkeys and sandalwood of southern India - only to be found there.(7)

From the ocean of Vedanta waves of light from time to time have been going westward and eastward. In days of yore it traveled westward and gave its impetus to the minds of the Greeks, either in Athens, or in Alexandria, or in Antioch. The Sankhya system must clearly have

made its mark on the minds of the ancient Greeks; and the Sankhya and all other systems in India had that one authority, the Upanishads, the Vedanta.(8)

Pythagoras is said to have been the first Greek who taught the doctrine of palingenesis [reincarnation] among the Hellenes. As an Aryan race, already burning their dead and believing in the doctrine of an individual soul, it was easy for the Greeks to accept the doctrine of reincarnation through the Pythagorean teachings. According to Apuleius, Pythagoras had come to India, where he had been instructed by the brahmins.(9)

It is very probable that Hindu philosophy had some influence on the stoic philosophy of the Greeks through the Alexandrians. There is some suspicion of Pythagoras' being influenced by Sankhya thought.(10)

In Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and the Egyptian Neo-Platonists we can find traces of Indian thought.(11)

2. Although the Christians Will Not Study the Vedas, the Christian Teachings and Rituals Are Almost All Aryan in Origin

Almost all Christianity is Aryan, I believe... Indian and Egyptian ideas met at Alexandria and went forth to the world, tintured with Judaism and Hellenism, as Christianity.(12)

Christianity, with all its boasted civilization, is but a collection of little bits of Indian thought. Ours is the religion of which Buddhism, with all its greatness, is a rebel child, and of which Christianity is a very patchy imitation.(13)

It is said in many books that God created the universe out of the Word. Shabdabrahman, in Sanskrit, is the Christian theory of the Word. An old Indian theory, it was taken to Alexandria by Indian preachers and was planted there. Thus the idea of the Word and the Incarnation became fixed there.(14)

Vedic ritual has its mass, the offering of food to God - your Blessed Sacrament, our prasad. Only it is offered sitting, not kneeling, as is common in hot countries. They kneel in Tibet. Then, too, Vedic ritual has its lights, incense, music.... Even the tonsure existed in India, in the shaven head. I have seen a picture of Justinian receiving the law from two monks, in which the monks' heads are entirely shaven. The monk and nun both existed in pre-Buddhist Hinduism. Europe gets her orders from the Thebaid. [The school of Thebes, in Egypt, which must have been influenced by Vedantic/Buddhist thought].(15)

The teachings of the Vedas, with which every Hindu is familiar, is identical with the teachings of Christ.(16)

Even Christians cannot understand their New Testament without understanding the Vedanta. The Vedanta is the rationale of all religions. Without the Vedanta every religion is a superstition; with it, everything becomes religion.(17)

A friend has criticized the use of European terms of philosophy and religion in my addresses [in the West]. I would have been very glad to use Sanskrit terms; it would have been much more easy, as being the only perfect vehicle of religious thought. But the friend forgot that I was addressing an audience of Western people; and, although a certain India missionary declared that the Hindus had forgotten the meaning of their Sanskrit books and that it was the missionaries who had unearthed the meaning, I could not find one in that large concourse of missionaries who could understand a line of Sanskrit - and yet some of them read learned papers criticizing the Vedas and all the sacred sources of the Hindu religion!(18)

c) The Modern Meeting of the Ancient Greek with the Ancient Hindu

1. The Great Good of the English Conquest of India Is the Universalizing of the Primary Concepts of Vedanta

From India have sprung all the analytical sciences, and from Greece all the sciences of generalization. The Hindu mind went on in its own direction and produced the most marvelous results. Even at the present day the logical capacity of the Hindus and the tremendous power which the Indian brain still possesses are beyond compare. We all know that Indian boys pitched against the boys of any other country always triumph. At the same time, when the national vigor went - perhaps one or two centuries before the Muslim conquest of India - this national faculty became so much exaggerated that it degraded itself; and we find some of this degradation in everything in India - in art, in music, in sciences, in everything. In art, no more was there a broad conception, no more the symmetry of form and sublimity of conception, but the tremendous attempt at the ornate and florid style had arisen. The originality of the race seems to have been lost.... So, if you analyze the Hindu idealistic conceptions, you will find the same attempt at ornate figures and loss of originality. And even in religion - India's special field - there came the most horrible degradations. What can you expect of a race which, for hundreds of years, was busy discussing such momentous problems as whether we should drink a glass of water with the right hand or the left? What more degradation can there be than that the greatest minds of the country have been discussing the kitchen for several hundreds of years, discussing whether I may touch you, or you me, and what is the penance for this touching! The themes of Vedanta, the most sublime and glorious conceptions of God and soul ever preached on earth, were half-lost, buried in the forests, preserved by a few sannyasins, while the rest of the nation discussed the momentous questions of touching each other, dress and food. The Muslim conquest gave India many good things, no doubt... but, at the same time, it could not bring vigor into the race. Then, for good or evil, the English conquest of India took place. Of course, every conquest is bad, for conquest is an evil, foreign government is an evil, no doubt; but even through evil good sometimes comes; and the great good of the English conquest is this: England - nay, the whole of Europe - has to thank Greece for its civilization. It is Greece that speaks through everything in Europe. Every building, every piece of furniture, has the impress of Greece upon it; European science and art are nothing but Grecian. Today the ancient Greek is meeting the ancient Hindu on the soil of India. Thus, slowly and silently, the heaven has come; the broadening, the life-giving, and the revivalist movements that we see all around us in India has been worked out by these forces together. A broader and more generous conception of life is before us; and, although at first we have been deluded a little and wanted to narrow things down, we are finding today that these generous impulses which are at work, these broader

conceptions of life, are the logical interpretation of what is in our ancient books. They are the carrying out, to rigorously logical effect, of the primary conceptions of our own ancestors. To become broad, to go out, amalgamate, to universalize, is the end of our aims. And all the time the Indian Aryans have been making themselves smaller and smaller and dissociating themselves, contrary to the plans laid down in their scriptures.(19)

2. Over the English Highways Indian Thought Is Again Conquering the World

This most ancient philosophy of Vedanta has, through its influence, directly inspired Buddhism, the first missionary religion of the world; and indirectly, it has also influenced Christianity, through the Alexandrians, the Gnostics, and the European philosophers of the Middle Ages.(20)

One of these cycles [of Indian thought working upon the world] has again arrived. There is the tremendous power of England which has linked the different parts of the world together. English roads are not only no more content, like Roman roads, to run over land; they have ploughed the deep in all directions. From ocean to ocean run the roads of England. Every part of the world has been linked to every other part, and electricity has played a most marvelous part as the new messenger. Under all these circumstances we find India again reviving and ready to give her own quota to the progress and civilization of the world. And that I have been forced by nature, as it were, to go over and preach to America and England is the result. Every one of us Indians ought to have seen that the time has arrived. Everything looks propitious; and Indian thought, philosophical and spiritual, must once more go over and conquer the world.(21)

India's work is spiritual and cannot be done with blasts of war-trumpets or the march of cohorts. Her influence has always fallen upon the world like that of the gentle dew, unheard and scarcely marked, yet bringing into bloom the fairest flowers of the earth. This influence, being in its nature gentle, would have to wait for a fortunate combination of circumstances to go out of the country to other lands, though it never ceased to work within the limits of its native land. As such, every educated person knows that, whenever the empire-building Tartar, or Persian, or Greek, or Arab brought India into contact with the outside world, a mass of spiritual influence immediately flooded the world from there. The very same circumstances have presented themselves once more before us. The English high roads over land and sea and the wonderful power manifested by the inhabitants of that little island have once more brought India into contact with the rest of the world, and the same work has already begun. Mark my words, this is but the small beginning; big things are to follow.(22)

d) Western Study of the Indian Tradition

1. The Pioneering Study of Sanskrit Texts by Western Scholars

About a century ago there was an English judge in Bengal, Sir William Jones. In India, you know, there are Muslims and Hindus. The Hindus were the original people and the Muslims came and conquered them and ruled over them for seven hundred years. There have been many other conquests in India; and, whenever there is a new conquest, the criminal laws of the country are changed. The criminal law is always that of the conquering nation, but the civil law remains the same. So when the English conquered India they changed the criminal law, but the civil law

remained. The judges, however, were Englishmen and did not know the language of the country in which the civil laws were written, and so they had to take the help of interpreters, lawyers of India, and so on. And when any question about Indian law arose these scholars would be referred to.

One of these judges, Sir William Jones, was a very ripe scholar and he wanted to go to the fountainhead himself, to take up the language himself and study it instead of relying upon these interpreters who, for instance, might be bribed to give any verdict. So he began to study the law of the *Gentoos*, as the Hindus were called. *Gentoo* is probably a form of the word *gentile*, used by the Portuguese and Spaniards - or the word "heathen" as you call it now. When the judge began to translate some of the books into English he found that it was very hard to translate them correctly into English at first hand. What was his surprise when he found that if he translated them first into Latin and next into English, it was much easier. Then he found in translating that a large number of Sanskrit words were almost the same as Latin. It was he who introduced the study of Sanskrit to the Europeans. Then, as the Germans were rising up in scholarship - as well as the French - they took up the language and began to study it.

With their tremendous power of analysis the Germans found that there is a similarity between Sanskrit and all the European languages. Among the ancient languages Greek was the nearest to it in resemblance. Later it was found that there is a language called Lithuanian, spoken... on the shores of the Baltic - an independent kingdom at that time and unconnected with Russia. The language of the Lithuanians is strikingly similar to Sanskrit. Some of the Lithuanian sentences are less changed from Sanskrit forms than the northern Indian languages. Thus it was found that there is an intimate connection between all the various languages spoken in Europe and the two Asiatic languages - Persian and Sanskrit. Many theories are built upon it as to how this connection came. Theories were built up every day and every day smashed. There is no knowing where they are going to stop.

Then came the theory that there was one race in ancient times who called themselves Aryans. They found in Sanskrit literature that there was a people who spoke Sanskrit and called themselves Aryans, and this is mentioned also in Persian literature. Thus they founded the theory that there was in ancient times a nation who called themselves Aryans and who spoke Sanskrit and lived in Central Asia. This nation, they said, broke into several branches and migrated to Europe and Persia; and wherever they went they took their own languages. German, Greek and French are but the remnants of an old tongue, and Sanskrit is the most highly developed of these languages.

These are theories and have not been proved yet; they are mere conjectures and guesses. Many difficulties come in the way - for instance, how the Indians are dark and the Europeans are fair. Even within the same nations speaking these languages - in England itself - there are many with yellow hair and many with black. Thus there are many questions which have not yet been settled.

But this is certain, that all the nations of Europe except the Basques, the Hungarians, and the [Finns] - excepting these, all the Europeans, all the northern Indians and the Persians speak branches of the same language. Vast masses of literature are existing in all these Aryan

tongues: in Greek and Latin, in modern European languages - German, English, French - in ancient Persian, in modern Persian and in Sanskrit.

But in the first place, Sanskrit literature alone is a very big mass. Although perhaps three-fourths of it has been destroyed and lost through successive invasions yet, I think, the sum total of the amount of literature in Sanskrit would outbalance in number of books any three or four European languages taken together. No one knows how many books there yet are and where they are, because it is the most ancient of the Aryan languages.(23)

The Vedas were written in a peculiar, archaic Sanskrit and for a long time - even today - it is thought by many European antiquarians that these Vedas were not written, but were handed down from father to son, learned by rote and thus preserved. Within the last few years opinion is veering round and they are beginning to think that they must have been written in most ancient times.

Of course, they will have to make theories in this way. Theory after theory will have to be built up and destroyed until we reach truth. This is quite natural. but when the subject is Indian or Egyptian, the Christian philosophers rush in to make theories; while, if the subject is nearer home, they think twice first. That is why they fail so much and have to keep on making fresh theories every five years. but this much is true: that this mass of literature, whether written or not, was conveyed; and not only that, but is at the present day conveyed by word of mouth. This is thought to be holy.(24)

2. The Reactionary Western Orientalists Read Greek Influence into Everything Indian

The earliest schools of Sanskritists in Europe entered into the study of Sanskrit with more imagination than critical ability. They knew a little, expected much from that little, and often tried to make too much of what little they knew. In those days, even such vagaries as the estimation of *Shakuntala* as forming the high-water mark of Indian philosophy were not altogether unknown! These were naturally followed by a reactionary band of superficial critics, more than real scholars of any kind, who knew little or nothing of Sanskrit, expected nothing from Sanskrit studies, and ridiculed everything from the East. While criticizing the unsound imaginativeness of the early school (to whom everything in Indian literature was rose and musk) these, in their turn, went into speculations which, to say the least, were equally unsound and indeed very venturesome. And their boldness was very naturally helped by the fact that these over-hasty and unsympathetic scholars and critics were addressing an audience whose entire qualification for pronouncing any judgement on the matter was their absolute ignorance of Sanskrit. What a medley of results from such critical scholarship! Suddenly, one fine morning, the poor Hindus woke up to find that everything that was theirs was gone: one strange race had snatched away from them their arts, another their architecture, a third, whatever there was of their ancient sciences; why, even their religion was not their own! Yes - that, too, had migrated into India in the wake of a Pehlevi [Persian] cross of stone! After a feverish period of such treading-on-each-others'-toes of original research, a better state of things has dawned. It has now been found out that mere adventure without some amount of the capital of real and ripe scholarship produces nothing but ridiculous failure, even in the business of Oriental research,

and that the traditions of India are not to be rejected with supercilious contempt, as there is really in them more than most people ever dream of.(25)

Professor Max Muller says in one of his books that, whatever similarities there may be between the Greeks and Hindus, unless it be demonstrated that some Greek knew Sanskrit, it cannot be concluded that ancient India helped ancient Greece in any way. But it is curious to observe that some Western savants, finding several terms of Indian astronomy similar to those of Greek astronomy, and coming to know that the Greeks founded a small kingdom on the borders of India, can clearly read the help of Greece on everything Indian - on Indian literature, Indian astronomy, Indian arithmetic. Not only so; one has been bold enough to go so far as to declare that all Indian sciences as a rule are but echoes of the Greek!

On a single Sanskrit shloka - "The Yavanas [Ionians or Greeks] are mlechchhas [non-Vedantins]; in them is this science established, (therefore) even they deserve worship like rishis"... how much the Westerners have indulged their unrestrained imagination! But it remains to be shown how the above shloka goes to prove that the Aryans were taught by the mlechchhas. The meaning may be that the learning of the mlechchha disciples of the Aryan teachers is praised here, only to encourage the mlechchhas in their pursuit of the Aryan science!

Secondly, when the germ of every Aryan science is found in the Vedas and every step of any of those sciences can be traced with exactness from the Vedic to the present day, what is the necessity of forcing the far-fetched suggestion of Greek influence on them?...

Again, every Greek-like work of Aryan astronomy can be easily derived from Sanskrit roots. I cannot understand what right the Western scholars have to trace those words to a Greek source, thus ignoring their direct etymology.

In the same manner, if on finding the mention of the word *yavanika* (curtain) in the drama of Kalidasa and other Indian poets, the Yavanika [Ionian or Greek] influence on the whole of the dramatic literature of the time is ascertained, then one should first stop to compare whether the Aryan dramas are at all like the Greek. Those who have studied the mode of action and the style of the dramas of both languages must admit that any such likeness, if found, is only the fancy of the obstinate dreamer and never has any real existence as a matter of fact. Where is the Greek chorus? The Greek *yavanika* is on one side of the stage, the Indo-Aryan diametrically on the other. The characteristic manner of expression of the Greek drama is one thing, that of the Indo-Aryan quite another. There is not the least likeness between the Indo-Aryan and the Greek dramas; rather, the dramas of Shakespeare resemble to a great extent the dramas of India. So the conclusion can also be drawn that Shakespeare is indebted to Kalidasa and other ancient Indian dramatists for all his writings, and that the whole Western literature is only an imitation of the Indian!

Lastly, turning Professor Max Muller's own premises against him, it may as well be said that, until it is demonstrated that some Hindu knew Greek at some time, one ought not even to talk of Greek influence.

Likewise, to see Greek influence on Indian sculpture is also entirely unfounded.(26)

People, in writing about these ancient books and dates is first of all prejudiced by their earlier education, then by their religion, then by their nationality. If Muslims write about the Hindus, anything that does not glorify their own religion they very scrupulously push to one side. So with the Christians - you can see that with your own [American] writers. In the last ten years your literature has become more respectable. So long as they [the Christians] had full play, they wrote in English and were safe from Hindu criticism. But, within the last twenty years, the Hindus have begun writing in English, so they are more careful. And you will find that the tone has quite changed within the last ten or twenty years.

Another curiosity about the Sanskrit literature is that is, like any other language, has undergone many changes. Taking all the literature in these various Aryan languages - the Greek or the Latin or all these others - we find that all the European branches were of very recent date. The Greek came much later - a mere child in comparison with the Egyptian or the Babylonian.(27)

3. Dry Western Scholars Do Not Understand a Single Thing about Indian Scriptures

I have no faith in the theories advanced by Western savants with regard to the Vedas. They are today fixing the antiquity of the Vedas at a certain period, and again tomorrow upsetting it and bringing it one thousand years forward, and so on.(28)

In translating the [Vedic] Suktas [hymns], pay particular attention to the bhashyakaras (commentators) and pay no attention whatever to the orientalisists. They do not understand a single thing about our Shastras. It is not given to dry philologists to understand philosophy or religion... For instance, the word *anidavatam* in the Rig Veda was translated as, "He lived without breathing." [Rig Veda, 10.129.2] Now, here the reference is really to the chief prana and *avatam* has the root meaning for the unmoved - that is, without vibration. It describes the state in which the universal cosmic energy, or prana, remains before the kalpa (cycle of creation) begins - vide the bhashyakaras. Explain according to our [Indian] sages and not according to the European so-called scholars. What do they know?(29)

There are two Sanskrit words - *pratika* and *pratima*. *Pratika* means coming towards, nearing. In all countries, you find various grades of worship. In the USA, for instance, there are people who worship images of saints and there are people who worship certain forms and symbols. Then there are people who worship different beings who are higher than humans, and their number is increasing every day - worshippers of departed spirits. I read that there are something like eight million of them in the USA. Then there are other people who worship certain beings of a higher grade - the angels, the gods, and so forth. Bhakti-yoga does not condemn any of these various grades, but they are all classed under one name - *pratika*. These people are not worshipping God, but *pratikas*, something which is near, a step towards God. This *pratika* worship cannot lead us to salvation and freedom; it can only give us certain particular things for which we worship them. For instance, if someone worships his or her departed ancestors or departed friends, he or she may get certain powers or certain information from them. Any particular gift that is got from these objects of worship is called *vidya*, particular knowledge; but freedom, the highest aim, comes only by worship of God Him or Herself. Some orientalisists think, in expounding the Vedas, that even the personal God is a *pratika*. The personal God may

be a pratika, but the pratikas are neither the personal nor the impersonal God. They cannot be worshipped as God. So it would be a great mistake if people thought that by worshipping these different pratikas, either as angels, or ancestors, or mahatmas (holy men and women, saints, etc.) or departed spirits, they could ever reach to freedom. At best they can only reach to certain powers, but God alone can make us free.(30)

It is a significant fact that spiritual giants have been produced only in those systems of religion where there is an exuberant growth of rich mythology and ritualism. The dry, fanatical forms of religion which attempt to eradicate all that is poetical, all that is beautiful and sublime, all that gives a firm grasp to the infant mind tottering in its Godward way - the forms which attempt to break down the very ridge-poles of the spiritual roof, and in their ignorant and superstitious conceptions of truth try to drive away all that is life-giving, all that furnishes the formative material to the spiritual plant growing in the human soul - such forms of religion too soon find that all that is left to them is but an empty shell, a contentless frame of words and sophistry with perhaps a little flavor of a kind of social scavenging or the so-called spirit of reform.

The vast mass of those whose religion is like that are conscious or unconscious materialists - the end and the aim of their lives here and hereafter being enjoyment, which indeed is to them the alpha and omega of human life, and which is their ishtapurta [merit of works stored up in heaven]; work like street-cleaning and scavenging, intended for the material comfort of humanity is, according to them, the be-all and end-all of human existence; and the sooner the followers of this curious mixture of ignorance and fanaticism come out in their true colors and join, as they well deserve to do, the ranks of atheists and materialists, the better it will be for the world. One ounce of the practice of righteousness and of spiritual self-realization outweighs tons and tons of frothy talk and nonsensical statements. Show us one, but one, gigantic spiritual genius growing out of this dry dust of ignorance and fanaticism; and if you cannot, close your mouth, open the windows of your hearts to see the clear light of truth, and sit like children at the feet of those who what they are talking about - the sages of India. Let us then listen attentively to what they say.(31)

e) The Permeation of the West by Vedantic Thought Met Fear of the Unknowable, Adherence to the Finite, and Mystery-Mongering

1. The Revolutionary Changes in World Thought Due to Vedanta

Schopenhauer, the great German sage, foretold that "The world is about to see a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of the Greek literature", and today his predictions are coming to pass. Those who keep their eyes open, those who understand the workings in the minds of different nations of the West, those who are thinkers and study the different nations, will find the immense change that has been produced in the tone, the procedure, the methods, and in the literature of the world by this slow, never-ceasing permeation of Indian thought.(32)

Influencing German thought, Vedanta has produced almost a revolution in the regions of philosophy and psychology.(33)

At different periods Spain, Germany, and other European countries were greatly influenced by Indian thought. The Indian prince, Dara-Shuko, translated the Upanishads into Persian, and a Latin translation of the same was seen by Schopenhauer, whose philosophy was molded by these. Next to him, the philosophy of Kant also shows traces of the teachings of the Upanishads.(34)

2. Kant Rediscovered the Groundwork of Thought Which Was Long Ago Taught by the Vedas

The philosophy of Vedanta teaches that there are two worlds: the external or sensory, and the internal or subjective - the thought-world.

It posits three fundamental concepts - time, space, and causation. From these is constituted maya, the essential groundwork of human thought, not the product of thought. This same conclusion was arrived at a later date by the great German philosopher, Kant.(35)

What is true of the external must also apply to the internal world. Mind also wants to know itself, but this Self can only be known through the medium of the mind and is, like the wall, unknown. This Self we may call *y*, and the statement would then be: *y* + mind is the inner self. Kant was the first to arrive at this analysis of the mind, but it was long ago stated in the Vedas.(36)

Kant's great achievement was the discovery that "time, space and causation are modes of thought", but Vedanta taught this ages ago and called it *maya*.(37)

Those of you who are acquainted with Western philosophy will find something very similar [to the theory of maya] in Kant. But I must warn you, those of you who have studied Professor Max Muller's writings on Kant, that there is one idea most misleading. It was Shankara who first found out the identity of space, time and causation with maya; and I had the great good fortune to find one or two passages in Shankara's commentaries and send them to my friend the professor. So even that idea was... in India.(38)

Kant has proved beyond all doubt that we cannot penetrate beyond the tremendous dead wall called reason. But that is the very first idea upon which all Indian thought takes its stand, and dares to seek - and succeeds in finding - something higher than reason, where alone the explanation of the present state is to be found. This is the value of the study of something that will take us beyond the world. "Thou art our Father, and wilt take us to the other shore of this ocean of ignorance." [*Prash. Up.*,6.8] That is the science of religion, nothing else.(39)

3. The Vedantic Ideas Which Have Crept into Philosophy and Literature in the West Have Been Rationalized and Relativized.

There is no book of philosophy written today in which something of... Vedantism is not touched upon - even the works of Herbert Spencer contain it.(40)

What is Spencer's *unknowable*? It is the Indian *maya*. Western philosophers are afraid of the unknowable, but Indian philosophers have taken a big jump into the unknown and they have conquered.

Western philosophers are like vultures soaring high in the sky, but all the while with their eyes fixed on the carrion beneath. They cannot cross the unknown, and they therefore turn back and worship the almighty dollar.(41)

Indian Vedantic... ideas have crept into the great French poets, such as Victor Hugo and Lamartine and others, and the great German poets such as Goethe, Schiller and the rest. The influence of Vedanta on European poetry and philosophy is very great. Every good poet is a Vedantin, I find; and whoever writes some philosophical treatise has to draw upon Vedanta in some shape or other. Only some of them do not care to admit this indebtedness and want to establish their complete originality - Herbert Spencer and others, for instance. But the majority do openly acknowledge it. And how can they help it, in these days of telegraphs and railways and newspapers?(42)

Attempts have been made in Germany [by Hegel] to build a system of philosophy on the basis that the Infinite has become the finite. Such attempts are also made in England [by Herbert Spencer]. And the analysis of the position of these philosophers is this: that the Infinite is trying to express itself in the universe, and that there will come a time when the Infinite will succeed in doing so. It is all very well, and we have used the words *Infinite* and *manifestation* and *expression* and so on; but philosophers naturally ask for a logical fundamental basis for the statement that the finite can fully express the Infinite.(43)

[Again], at the beginning of this century, Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, studying from a not very clear translation of the Vedas made from an old translation into Persian and thence by a young Frenchman [Duperron] into Latin, says, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, and it will be the solace of my death."(44)

[But] Schopenhauer stands on reason only and rationalizes the Vedas.(45)

I think Schopenhauer's philosophy makes a mistake in its interpretation of the Vedanta, for it seeks to make the will everything. Schopenhauer makes the will stand in the place of the Absolute. But the Absolute cannot be presented as will, for will is something changeable and phenomenal, and over the line drawn above space, time and causation [between pp. 256-257] there is no change, no motion; it is only below the line that external motion and internal motion (called thought) begin. There can be no will on the other side; and will, therefore, cannot be the cause of this universe. Coming nearer, we see in our own bodies that will is not the cause of every movement. I move this chair; my will is the cause of the movement, and this will becomes manifested as muscular motion at the other end. But the same power that moves the chair is moving the heart, the lungs, and so on - but not through will. Given that the power is the same, it only becomes will when it rises to the plane of consciousness, and to call it *will* before it has risen to this plane is a misnomer. This makes a good deal of confusion in Schopenhauer's philosophy. (46)

Just as you find the attempts of Hegel and Schopenhauer in German philosophy, so you will find the very same ideas brought forward in ancient India. Fortunately for the Indians, Hegelianism was nipped in the bud and not allowed to sprout and cast its baneful shoots over their motherland. Hegel's one idea is that the one, the absolute, is only chaos, and that the individualized form is the greater: the world is greater than the non-world, samsara is greater than salvation. That is the one idea; and the more you plunge into this samsara, the more your soul is covered with the workings of life, the better you are. They say: do you not see how we build houses, cleanse the streets, enjoy the senses? Ay, behind that they hide rancor, misery, horror - behind every bit of that enjoyment.(47)

Cross reference to:

Isha peace chant

4. *The Theosophical Society Weakened the Indians by Giving Them back Their Superstitions*

I disagree with all those [the Theosophists] who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt, it is easy to feel an interest in India that is purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. My hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new state of things must be a *growth* from within. (48)

I am perfectly aware that, although some truth underlies the mass of "mystical" thought which has burst upon the Western world of late, it is for the most part full of motives unworthy or insane. For this reason, I have never had anything to do with these phases of religion, either in India or elsewhere, and "mystics" as a class are not very favorable to me....

I quite agree that only the Advaita philosophy can save humankind, either in the East or West, from "devil worship" and kindred superstitions, giving tone and strength to the very nature of humanity. India herself requires this, quite as much or ever more than the West....

It is the patient upbuilding of character, the intense struggle to *realize* the truth, which will tell in the future of humanity.(49)

Brave, bold men - these are what we want. What we want is vigor in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel, not softening, namby-pamby ideas. Avoid all these. Avoid all mystery. There is no mystery in religion. Is there any mystery in Vedanta, or the Vedas, or in the Samhita, or in the Puranas? What secret societies did the sages of yore establish to preach their religion? What sleight-of-hand tricks are recorded as having been used by them to bring their grand truths to humanity? Mystery-mongering and superstition are always signs of weakness. These are always the signs of degradation and death. Therefore, beware of them. Be strong, stand on your own feet. Great things there are, most marvelous things. We may call them supernatural things so far as our ideas of nature go, but not one of these things is a "mystery". It was never preached on the soil of India that the truths of religion were mysteries, or that they were the property of secret societies sitting on the

snowtops of the Himalayas. I have been in the Himalayas.... I am a sannyasin, and I have been for the last fourteen years on foot. These mysterious societies do not exist anywhere. Do not run after these superstitions. Better for you... that you become rank atheists, because you would have strength; but these are degradation and death. Shame on humanity that strong people should spend their time on these superstitions, spend all their time in inventing allegories to explain the most rotten superstitions in the world. Be bold; do not try to explain everything that way. The fact is that the Indians have many superstitions, many bad spots and sores on their body - these have to be excised, cut off, and destroyed - but these do not destroy their religion, their national life, their spirituality. Every principle of religion is safe; and the sooner these black spots are purged away, the better the principles will shine, the more gloriously. Stick to them.(50)

f) *A New Type of Reverential, Sympathetic and Learned Sanskrit Scholar*

1. *Max Muller, the Perfect Vedantist*

There is now happily coming into existence in Europe a new type of Sanskrit scholar, reverential, sympathetic, and learned - reverential, because they are a better stamp of people, and sympathetic because they are learned. And the link which connects the new portion of the chain with the old one is, of course, our Max Muller. The Hindus certainly owe more to him than to any other Sanskrit scholar of the West.(51)

Among the Sanskrit scholars of the West, Professor Max Muller takes the lead.(52)

Professor Max Muller is a perfect Vedantist and has done splendid work in Vedantism.(53)

I wish I had half of [Max Muller's] love for India and Vedanta. At the same time he is a friend of yoga too, and believes in it. Only he has no patience with humbugs.(54)

Although [before 1895] Professor Max Muller in all his writings on the Hindu religion added at last a derogatory remark, he had to see the truth in the long run. [In his book on *Vedantism*] you will find him swallowing the whole of it - *reincarnation* and all.(55)

The old man took in Vedanta, bones and all, and boldly came out.(56)

[As of March, 1899], the Rig Veda Samhita, the whole of which no one could even get at before, is now very neatly printed and made accessible to the public, thanks to the munificent generosity of the East India Company and to the Professor's prodigious labors extending over years. The alphabetical characters of most of the manuscripts, collected from many parts of India, are of various forms, and many words in them are inaccurate. We cannot easily comprehend how difficult it is for a foreigner, however learned he or she may be, to find out the accuracy or inaccuracy of these Sanskrit characters, and more especially to make out clearly the meaning of an extremely condensed and complicated commentary. In the life of Professor Max Muller, the publication of the Rig Veda is a great event.

Besides this, he has been dwelling, as it were, and spending his whole lifetime amidst ancient Sanskrit literature; but notwithstanding this, it does not imply that in the Professor's imagination India is still echoing as of old with Vedic hymns, with her sky clouded with sacrificial smoke, with many a Vashistha, Vishvamitra, Janaka and Yajnavalkya, with every home blooming with a Gargi or a Maitreyi, and herself guided by the Vedic rules or canons of the *Grihya-Sutra*.

The Professor, with his ever-watchful eyes, keeps himself well-informed of what new events are occurring in the out-of-the-way corners of modern India, half-dead as she is, trodden down by the feet of the foreigner professing an alien religion, and all but bereft of her ancient manners, rites and customs. As the Professor's feet never touched the shores of India, many Anglo-Indians there show an unmixed contempt for his opinions of the customs, manners, and codes of morality of the Indian people. But they ought to know that, even after their lifelong stay - or even if they were brought up in India - except any particular information they may obtain about that stratum of society with which they come into direct contact, the Anglo-Indian authorities have to remain quite ignorant in respect of other classes of people; and the more so when, of this vast society divided into so many castes, it is very hard even among themselves for one caste to know the manners and peculiarities of the other....

One wonders at Professor Max Muller's knowledge of the social customs and codes of law, as well as the contemporaneous occurrences in the various provinces of present-day India; this is borne out by our personal experiences.

In particular, the Professor observes with a keen eye what new waves of religion are rising in different parts of India, and spares no pains in letting the Western world not remain in the dark about them. The Brahmo Samaj, guided by Devendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen, the Arya Samaj, established by Dayananda Saraswati, and the Theosophical movement - all have come under the praise or censure of his pen.(57)

2. The Melody of Vedanta Was Caught by Max Muller, the Re-embodiment of the Vedic Sage Sayana

I am simply astonished when I think of the gigantic task which Max Muller, in his enthusiasm, undertook as a young man and brought to a successful conclusion in his old age. Think of this man, without any help, poring over old manuscripts hardly legible to the Hindus themselves, and in a language to acquire which takes a lifetime, even in India - without even the help of any needy pandit whose "brains could be picked" (as the Americans say) for ten shillings a month, and with a mere mention of his name in the introduction to some book of "very new researches" - think of this man, spending days and sometimes months, in elucidating the correct reading and meaning of a word or a sentence in the commentary of Sayana (as he himself has told me) and in the end succeeding in making an easy road through the forest of Vedic literature for all the others to go along; think of him and his work, and then say what he really is to the Indians! Of course, we need not all agree with him in all that he says in his many writings; certainly such an agreement is impossible. But agreement or no agreement, the fact remains that this one man has done a thousand times more for the preservation, spreading and appreciation of the

literature of our Indian forebears than any of us can ever hope to do, and he has done it all with a heart which is full of the sweet balm of love and veneration.(58)

I am not aware whether Europe can point out another well-wisher of India who feels more for India's well-being than Professor Max Muller. Not only is Max Muller a well-wisher of India, but he has also a strong faith in Indian philosophy and Indian religion. That Advaitism is the highest discovery in the domain of religion the Professor has many times publicly admitted. That doctrine of reincarnation, which is a dread to the Christians who have identified their souls with their bodies, he firmly believes in because of his having found conclusive proof in his own personal experience. And what is more, perhaps, his previous birth was in India; and lest by coming to India, the old frame may break down under the violent rush of a suddenly aroused mass of past recollections - is the fear in his mind that now stands foremost in the way of his visiting India.(59)

My impression is that it is Sayana who is born again as Max Muller to revive his own commentary on the Vedas. I have had this notion for long. It became confirmed in my mind, it seems, after I saw Max Muller. Even in India you do not find a scholar so persevering and so firmly grounded in the Vedas and Vedanta.... And what great hospitality towards me when I was his guest! Seeing the old man and his lady, it seemed to me that they were living their home life like another Vashistha and Arundhati! At the time of parting with me, tears came into the eyes of the old man.

Disciple: But, sir, if Sayana himself became Max Muller, then why was he born a mlechchha instead of being born in the sacred land of India?

Swami Vivekananda: The feeling and distinction that I am an Aryan and the other is a mlechchha comes from ignorance. What are varnashrama and caste divisions to one who is the commentator of the Vedas, the shining embodiment of knowledge? To him they are wholly meaningless, and he can assume human birth wherever he likes to do good to humankind. Specially if he did not choose to be born in a land which excelled both in learning and in wealth, where would he secure the large expenses to publish such stupendous volumes? Didn't you hear that the East India Company spent nine lakhs of rupees in cash to have the Rig Veda published? Even this money was not enough. Hundreds of Vedic pandits had to be employed in India on monthly stipends. Has anybody seen in this age, in India, such profound yearning for knowledge, such prodigious investment of money, for the sake of light and learning? Max Muller himself has written in his preface that for twenty-five years he prepared only the manuscripts. Then the printing took another twenty years! It is not possible for an ordinary man to drudge for over forty-five years of his life with one publication. Just think of it! Is it an idle fancy of mine to say that he is Sayana himself? (60)

My visit [to Max Muller] was really a revelation to me. That nice little house in its setting of a beautiful garden, the silver-headed sage, with a calm face and benign, and a forehead as smooth as a child's in spite of seventy winters, and every line in that face speaking of a deep-seated mine of spirituality somewhere behind; that noble wife, the helpmate of his life through his long and arduous task of exciting interest, overriding opposition and contempt, and at last creating a respect for the thought of the sages of ancient India - the trees, the flowers, the calmness,

and the clear sky - all these sent me back in imagination to the glorious days of ancient India, the days of our brahmarshis and rajarshis, the days of the great vanaprasthas, the days of Arundhatis and Vashishthas.

It was neither the philologist nor the scholar that I saw, but a soul that is every day realizing its oneness with Brahman, a heart that is every moment expanding to reach oneness with the Universal. Where others lose themselves in the desert of dry details, he has struck the wellspring of life. Indeed his heartbeats have caught the rhythm of the Upanishads: "Know your Self, and leave off all other talk." [*Mund. Up.*, 2.2.5]

Although a world-moving scholar and philosopher, his learning and philosophy have only led him higher and higher to the realization of the Spirit, his lower knowledge has indeed helped him to reach the higher knowledge. This is real learning. "Knowledge gives humility". Of what use is knowledge if it does not show us the way to the Highest?

And what love he bears towards India! I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland! Endued with an extraordinary, and at the same time intensely active mind, he has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more, and watched the sharp interchange of light and shade in the interminable forest of Sanskrit literature with deep interest and heartfelt love, till they have all sunk into his very soul and colored his whole being.

Max Muller is a Vedantist of Vedantists. He has, indeed, caught the real soul of the melody of the Vedanta in the midst of all its setting of harmonies and discord - the one light that lightens the sects and creeds of this world, the Vedanta, the one principle of which all religions are only applications.(61)

3. Paul Deussen has Boldly Declared the Metaphysical Depths of the Upanishads before the Whole World

If Max Muller is thus the old pioneer of the new movement, Paul Deussen is certainly one of its younger advance-guard. Philological interest had long hidden from view the gems of thought and spirituality to be found in the mine of our ancient scriptures. Max Muller brought out a few of them and exhibited them to the public gaze, compelling attention to them by means of his authority as the foremost philologist. Deussen, unhampered by any philological leanings and possessing the training of a philosopher singularly well versed in the speculations of ancient Greece and modern Germany, took up the cue and plunged boldly into the metaphysical depths of the Upanishads, found them to be fully satisfying and then equally boldly declared the fact before the whole world.(62)

In Europe it is the interest in comparative philology that attracts scholars to the study of Sanskrit, though there are people like Paul Deussen who take interest in philosophy for its own sake.(63)

Doctor Deussen is what I should call a "warring Advaitist" - no compromise with anything else. *Ishwara* is his bugbear. He would have none of it, if he could.(64)

Deussen is certainly the freest among scholars in the expression of his opinion about the Vedanta. He never stops to think about the "what would they say" of the vast majority of scholars. We indeed require bold men and women in this world to tell us bold words about truth; and nowhere is this more true now than in Europe where, through the fear of social opinion and such other causes, there has been enough, in all conscience, of the white-washing and apologizing attitude among scholars towards creeds and customs which, in all probability, not many among them really believe in. The greater the glory, therefore, of Max Muller and Deussen for their bold and open advocacy of truth! May they be as bold in showing to Indians their defects, the later corruptions in Indian thought-systems, especially in their application to their social needs!(65)

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