

THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONFLICT BETWEEN SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
AND BHAKTIVEDĀNTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA IN THE LIGHT OF
THE HISTORY OF THE VEDĀNTA TRADITION

by

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DECLARATION

This dissertation has not been submitted
for a degree at any other University

...*J. G. Desai*.....
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INTRODUCTION

AIM AND GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Today, the world-wide proliferation of predominantly idealistic Hindu or Vedāntic philosophico-religious movements is a phenomenon which has become the subject of much scholarly investigation and study. Indeed, these movements have had a great impact on modern Indian culture, especially in the fields of philosophy and religion. Furthermore the Indian renaissance which followed in the wake of these movements served as a stimulus for India's political struggle against British rule. Also, both the Hindu as well as the Buddhist movements determine, to some extent, the nature of inter-religious and inter-philosophical dialogue in a world rapidly becoming an interplay and fusion of national cultures.

In this study the term Hindu is used interchangeably with the term Vedānta, depending on the point of emphasis in a specific context. In the Indian thought tradition Vedānta constitutes that philosophico-religious system which serves as the basis for modern Hinduism.

THE SITUATION IN GENERAL

In India

These Hindu movements were produced as a direct response to the challenge of Western religious and secular institutions introduced by the British during their conquest of India. The resurgence of

the Hindu spirit is not a novel phenomenon of recent Indian history. When the Indian tradition was threatened by that of alien Islam, especially during the centuries of Mughal rule, from the middle of the fourteenth to the early nineteenth, it responded by giving rise to syncretistic devotional theism. However, Hinduism which is based essentially on the principles of Vedānta philosophy, reflects the spirit of Western civilization only in externals, being confined in the main to organizational structures.

In the West

The spread of Vedānta to the West has led to the formation of denominations and study societies there in the attempt by Vedāntic thinkers to attract a Western following. Also, the study of Indology, including that of the Vedānta, in academic circles has been largely the result of the scholarly spirit. These factors have stimulated inter-cultural dialogue. Indological studies in the West have been gaining increasing popularity as integral elements of the humanities.

In South Africa

Vedāntic movements have reinforced an actually existing local Indian tradition. Notable among these, the Hare Krishna and the Ramakrishna movements, associated with the names of Swami Prabhupāda and Swami Vivekananda respectively, while appealing especially to the Hindus, have also attracted members from the different population groups.

Movements such as these reinforce the Hindus' personal commitment to doctrine and practice. Furthermore because they exert a strong

influence over vital aspects of Indian culture, these movements need to be thoroughly researched. This study which looks into the cardinal principles of Vedānta, is undertaken with this end in view. The following are the chief reasons for the study of the doctrines of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Prabhupāda: Not only have these two modern exponents of Vedānta made a remarkable impact on the cultural destiny of modern India, but they have also made an important contribution to the history of religio-philosophical ideas in the world. They belong to the long history of Indian idealism to which they have brought fresh insights.

Indian idealism as a whole is a vast subject. This study, however, directs its attention only to the more salient aspects of the Vedāntic tradition and is therefore obliged to excise even the history of Buddhist idealism despite the fact that Buddhism has made valuable contributions in its interaction with Vedānta and other systems.

METHOD

It is necessary here to mention a problem connected with the study of Indological subjects. Regarding the approach to them in general and modern Indian thought in particular, the current situation is largely determined by two radical approaches: the pro-Marxist and the pro-Vedāntic. Since this issue warrants a fairly detailed treatment it will be discussed in Chapter One.

This study aims at finding an academically valid position independent of these approaches. For the sake of impartiality and objectivity it

is best to avoid a sentimental or arbitrary predisposition to Vedānta or opposition to it. Therefore the adoption of what might be called the historico-hermeneutical method as an alternative aims at the following objectives: Firstly, to see in the relevant research material the systematic presentation of the theoretically established world-views which appear in the basic framework of Vedānta. The Vedāntic tradition, determined by various tenets, has been subject to sequential processes of doctrinal modifications and adjustments which have occurred in accordance with changes in historical circumstances and human conditions. Secondly, to show how Vedānta has always closely interacted with life, theory with practice. The human significance of the theoretical world-views is clearly seen in their ethical and soteriological aspects.

Thirdly, in order to highlight this theory-practice interaction as it can be observed in Vedāntic legacy, especially in the systems of Vivekananda and Prabhupāda.

BASIC VEDĀNTIC TEXTS

In order to explore the gradual evolution of Vedāntic principles it is important to outline the contents of the triple texts from which they mainly derive. The threefold canon comprising the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad-gītā and the Brahma-sūtras, known as the Prasthāna-traya, has been definitive to all phases of Vedāntic development. However, the main determinants of Vedāntic doctrines stem from the fountain-head of the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads, constituting the knowledge portions of the vast corpus of the authoritative Vedic texts

known as 'sruti revelation, have served as the main inspiration for the ideas of the Brahma-sūtras and the Bhagavad-gītā. Also, since the present in India, i.e., the neo-Vedāntic movements - is so indissolubly connected with the past, it is all the more reason to discuss the canonical doctrines.

It is interesting to note how nascent Vedāntic ideas become transformed from the canonical works to their later mature stage when they are cast into a truly philosophical mould. The Vedānta then becomes self-critical and attains supernal heights in the hands of the great medieval dialecticians, 'Saṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. Madhva is left out of the discussion for the reason that Prabhupāda's main thought depends not on him but on Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja and Prabhupāda who frequently champion the cause of theism also make use of extra-canonical texts such as the Purāṇas, especially the Bhāgavata, which concern themselves with the religion of God. On the side of monistic idealism, Vivekananda's monism depends on a great deal on that of 'Saṅkara. 'Saṅkara and Rāmānuja were the first great Vedāntic system-builders. Therefore a presentation of their systems is crucial to any understanding of Vivekananda and Prabhupāda; in fact it is crucial to the whole of the medieval and modern Vedāntic movement.

VEDĀNTA AND OTHER SYSTEMS

Vedānta developed alongside other philosophical systems. Buddhism, Jainism, Cārvāka and Lokāyata materialism, Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsā were all rivals of Vedānta. Of these Buddhism has

persisted the longest, though its force has been largely spent in India today; while the others gradually lost their importance in the mainstream of philosophical activity. Except for Buddhism and Jainism, the other systems never amounted to anything near mass movements and when they had exhausted their vigour and originality they stagnated scholastically and declined. On the other hand the widespread success of Vedānta was due mainly to its able thinkers as well as to its appeal to human sentiments and religious aspirations. Thus it survived the contingencies of India's intellectual and spiritual culture.

Vedānta had to answer for itself in a challenging philosophico-religious climate in which a whole host of speculative ideas of all kinds vied with each other for possession of the national mind. However, the development of theism as evidenced in popular Vaiṣṇavism, 'Saivism and 'Śāktaism is not the concern of this study; nor also is the history of the dialectical encounters among the philosophical systems. The reason for this is the fact that my main burden lies in the exploration of only those essential elements presented by the Vedāntic thinkers who feature in this work. While there has been a reconciliation with theism within Vedānta, the method employed in its justification has been largely the work of the philosophical processes. In the case of Rāmaṇuja, for instance, despite his strong theistic leanings, the rational criterion is unmistakable. Even though Swami Prabhupāda offers little rational proof for his ontological position, yet it cannot be said that his system is purely theological and not at all philosophical.



Paradoxically internal differences, instead of vitiating the expansion of Vedānta rather gave it an onward thrust. For example, Rāmānuja's vitriolic against 'Saṅkara' and that among their respective followers only served to perpetuate the acrimonious debate, a process that is visible in the differences between Vivekananda and Prabhupāda.

REALISM AND IDEALISM IN VEDĀNTA : THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR ETHICS

Vedānta has been predominantly an idealistic system but that did not prevent it from accommodating realistic elements in its infrastructure.

This was important for ethics and soteriology. Pragmatism in ethics, despite soteriological goals, never gave way to a negative interpretation of the reality of the world. The world was never flatly denied because the thinkers did not lose sight of its empirical significance. This is particularly true in the cases of 'Saṅkara' and Swami Vivekananda. The internal gravity of the metaphysics of their monistic idealism could have easily led them into the position of solipsism. But they affirmed the reality of the world through their use of the ingenious device of the theory of māyā. [There is no difficulty with Rāmānuja since for him the world is materially real inasmuch as the Absolute is spiritually real.] The same is true for Prabhupāda. This dissertation takes note of how for Vedānta the day is won via a provision of realistic metaphysics as a basis for ethical action. It also takes note of how pragmatic interests - the value of ethics for social action - have transformed the outlook for modern Indian ethics. Neo-Vedāntic organizations have had to adjust to the many practical needs of a more complex and mobile social order of the

twentieth century. The shift in emphasis from the medieval to the modern era has been from individual to social ethics. Therefore it is not surprising that Vedāntic movements today preach social gospels.

SOME IMPORTANT ISSUES

To what extent were philosophical insights affected by the revealed texts, whether they became servile to scriptural doctrine or operated independently of it is indicated in the course of this research. A brief explanation of the concepts 'sruti' and Hinduism as well as their relation to Vedānta are also discussed. Discussions of other incidental and integral themes such as those concerned with the nature and content of Indian philosophy as well as the relation of philosophy to religion in India, are also attempted. They provide a general background to Vedāntic study. Moreover in view of the overall structure of my work I discuss the aforementioned major topics in the following order for chronological reasons:

The Formative period (C.800 B.C. to end of pre-Christian era)

This period saw the development of Vedāntic idealism in the era of the early Upaniṣads and Vedāntic theism in the era of the Middle Upaniṣads and of the Bhagavad-gītā.

The Systematization period (From the early Christian era to 1200 A.D.)

In this period Śaṅkara developed his theory of monism and Rāmānuja formulated Viśiṣṭādvaita theism. Also this period saw the composition of the Brahma-sūtras as well as the climax of the idealistic-realistic conflict in Indian thought.

The modern period (1757 onwards).

In this period India felt the effects of Western modernism largely as a legacy of British rule. An important feature of the nineteenth century was the remarkable rise of neo-Hinduistic movements and notably the revival of Advaita idealism in Swami Vivekananda's thought. In the twentieth century Swami Prabhupāda revived and vigorously championed the cause of Vedāntic theism. The evaluation of important elements in the history of Vedānta is undertaken in the conclusion. It is hoped that this presentation of the entire subject matter and its evaluation would be received in the spirit in which they are attempted. While there is always the danger that the subjective element has a way of inveigling upon one's impartiality, I wish to repeat that in my attempt which is of an academic nature, I try to be as honest and objective as possible. No offence is intended against those who might interpret the long Vedāntic legacy differently.

CHAPTER 1

1. Chapter one contains a discussion of those major issues which are important for a proper understanding of Vedānta tradition. First, I shall deal with the following topics which provide a brief general background of the Indian philosophico-religious tradition.

- 1.1 AN INDOLOGICAL PROBLEM

- 1.2 THE NATURE AND CONTENT OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

- 1.3 THE RELATION OF PHILOSOPHY TO RELIGION IN INDIAN THOUGHT

- 1.4 VEDĀNTA AND HINDUISM

Second, it considers the essentials of two major canonical texts the formative period - the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad-gītā. These texts and the Brahma-sūtras were the main determinants in the systematic formulation of Vedāntic doctrines. The sūtras belong properly to the period of systematization and so will be discussed in the chapter dealing with that period.

- 1.5 THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

- 1.5.1 THE EARLY AND MIDDLE UPANISADS

- 1.5.2 THE ERA OF THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

Though the middle Upanisads were composed later than the early, the contents of both will be discussed under the same sub-heading.

1.1 AN INDOLOGICAL PROBLEM

In view of the several ideological approaches to Indology it is necessary to examine two of them briefly since these two, representing extreme viewpoints, make the study of Indology problematic. These two approaches, the Marxist-inclined and the pro-Vedāntic, are motivated by their apologetic interests which are discernible in their attempts to present the history of Vedānta. Pro-Marxist Indologists express a thoroughly polemical attitude against Vedāntic idealism. In radical opposition to what they call the bourgeois Indology which emphasizes the idealistic metaphysical traditions of Indian philosophy, the Marxist Indologists aim at projecting the dialectics of historical materialism into the evolution of Indian thought. On this basis they see as the value of the study of the history of Indian philosophy a

"pedagogical, educational one, in so far as it has a culturally enlightening effect. Certainly the uncovering of the law of development in India will enrich the historical materialism and thereby the dialectical (method)." 1

The other approach is characterized by an excessively sympathetic treatment of Vedānta. Both these positions display a strong subjective element and the Marxist Indologists particularly have little self-criticism. Neo-Hinduistic movements, among them those founded by Swami Vivekananda and Swami Prabhupāda exemplify a strong missionary spirit. Many modern scholars such as Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Radhakrishnan have had much influence in broadcasting Vedāntic ideas in academic circles around the world. For the pro-

Vedāntic philosophers and scholars the metaphysics and ethics of Vedānta are the real solution and panacea for the maladies of modern man. Their analysis of the malady is spiritual in nature and their corrective is the prescription of spiritual practices, since they trace universal tension and conflict to the lack of the spiritual note. In this regard their sincere conviction and commitment are unmistakable. They may not agree on the specific school in Vedānta, but they all agree on the question of the efficacy of mystic religion as the via media into the mystery of life and man's final destiny. Radhakrishnan's view is typical of these sentiments:

"To be inspired in our thoughts by divine knowledge... to mould our emotions into harmony with divine bliss, to get at the great self of truth, goodness and beauty... to raise our whole being and life to the divine status, is the ultimate purpose and meaning of human living." 2

Radhakrishnan states that there are systems of Hindu thought which regard "salvation as the attainment of the true status of the individual" and that this

"distinctiveness of Hindu religion was observed even by the ancients. Philostratus puts in the mouth of Appolonius of Tyana these words: 'All wish to live in the nearness of God, but only the Hindus bring this to pass'." 3

Mysticism, as the personal endeavour to possess the truth of things, a cardinal feature of Vedāntic idealism, is the emphatic message of modern Indian idealists. They find that the universe strains after the consummation of the spiritual destiny of the human race. D.S. Sarma quotes with approbation the conviction of Tagore in this regard:

"The Infinite for its self-expression comes down into the manifoldness of the Finite; and the Finite for its self-realisation must rise into the unity of the Infinite. Then only is the cycle of Truth complete." 4

It is this philosophical interpretation of reality that enables the modern Indian thinker and his Western counterpart to band together into circles of followers or disciples. However, a negative consequence of this phenomenon tends to obscure the perspective of historical development of ideas, and becomes a factor which renders critical encounter between Indian and Western philosophy difficult.

Many Western thinkers are suspicious of mass religious movements in general, thinking that the world is already overrun by messiahs and soothsayers. The suspicion deepens when religion, which has as its avowed purpose redemption, is presented ostensibly in the guise of philosophy. Such a charge cannot be sustained against those Indian apologists who present their views in a scientific or rational way. Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, and Tagore, for instance, whatever fault we might find in their writings, belong to this class. Rather, their scientific approach to the problem of religion - though a certain tendency to subjectivism cannot be ruled out - is ill-favoured by the dogmatic theologian⁵ and the scientific rationalist, both of whom can be vehement and dogmatic in defense of their respective beliefs. A.K. Sinha observes that the natural and applied sciences' strict application of the criteria of logic and the scientific method have resulted in a one-dimensional conception of human nature, reducing it to the merely empirical.⁶

Some current Hindu movements also aver that the West is solely materialistic and so spiritually destitute, while India is essentially spiritual. H.T. Dave an apologist for the Swaminarayan movement writes:

"The glory of India is in... her spiritual heritage" and that India is a "holy land". 7

Such an assertion overlooks the obvious facts of history, both of the West and India, that both the so-called materialistic and spiritual values have existed side by side in the two traditions and have produced persons of exalted character whose contributions to cultural standards have been of universal significance. It is true that in Indian thought the conception of soteriology, espousing the ideal of human perfectibility, has lent credence to the view that Indian culture is spiritual. But to claim that spirituality is the sole monopoly of India and that it has been the only creative urge in Indian history is an unwarranted assumption. The one-sided emphasis of soteriology and the lack of sound epistemology and logic in many Hindu movements, creates the impression of the illusion that the philosophies of India are religious per se. This leads to under-valuing on the observers' part of those elements of classical Indian thought which qualified it as philosophical.

1.2 THE NATURE AND CONTENT OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Because of a close connexion between reason and faith, between philosophy and religion in most Indian systems, Indian philosophy has been dismissed by some Western thinkers as "mythological and ethical" merely, as incomplete systems "pervaded with faith".

These are the opinions of Thilly and Wood as cited by Puligandla.⁸

Such a charge betrays either monumental ignorance, indifference or prejudice. If the dictum that philosophy is love of knowledge is true, then it is hard to understand why the Indian systems may be dismissed as less than philosophy. Indian thought has always pre-occupied itself with such fundamental questions as the true nature of man and his world, the meaning of life and his final destiny. It is interesting to note that the word 'mīmāṃsā', which is adopted by the Vedānta tradition, is a desiderative noun derived from the Sanskrit root 'man' to think, to consider, to cognize, precisely corresponding in meaning to the Greek word 'philosophia', love of wisdom. India has grappled with these questions in a great variety of ways, with the utmost devotion to truth and has followed the argument, wherever it led. Thus, in time, doctrines as far-ranging as atheistic materialism, Buddhist agnosticism, non-theistic Sāṃkhyan dualism, spiritual monism and many other idealistic and realistic doctrines, including a great variety of theistic doctrines were produced.

An opposite opinion from that of those such as Thilly and Wood is presented by Ninian Smart for whom the "metaphysical and epistemological topics" of Indian thought "show most clearly the philosophical dimensions of the main systems" and though "the main determinants of the metaphysical systems have been religious" it "does not at all entail that the arguments used in elaborating and defending them are mere window-dressing," or that they lack "subtlety and intrinsic interest."⁹

Such philosophical diversity, as already stated, can hardly be dismissed as myth and fancy. It was the primacy of reason that generally sustained the Indian cultural experiment. Religion too

played a vital role. But its relation to philosophy has been such that even religious issues have been subjected to rational scrutiny. While many descriptions of rapturous and ecstatic states, a witness to the trans-empirical consciousness, are reported by mystics, the bulk of Indian texts pays scant attention to them. Even the classical Yoga system and its commentators are more interested in the analysis of psychological states uncovered in the mystic exercise than in descriptions of the trans-empirical states.

The reason that Indian culture has valued the role of the critical intelligence is that reason is an integral part of human nature and before the acceptance of any doctrine, it, at least, must be satisfied. Karel Werner has rightly said that,

"There has been an advantage in the development of Indian thought, namely this, that philosophy has never become subservient to religious dogma, and religious thought has never ignored the results of philosophical investigation." 10

Thus religion, like philosophy, was hardly uncritical of itself. The fundamental problems had been debated from the metaphysical, epistemological, psychological and ethical perspectives, called by some the "synthetic outlook of Indian philosophy."¹¹

1.3 THE RELATION OF PHILOSOPHY TO RELIGION IN INDIAN THOUGHT

The search in India for the knowledge of the true nature of reality or of truth had its rise not only in curiosity but also in the observation of the "presence of moral and physical evil in life."¹² All except the

materialists sought a solution to the problem of the universality of suffering and death. Reason, while recognizing the problem, recognized also its own limitations in the matter of the problem's final overthrow. It was recognized that the solution lay outside reason's sphere. The conception of human nature as circumscribed wholly within the limits of spatio-temporal categories, as believed by the Cārvāka materialists, was considered inadequate by every other system, since then liberation would not be possible. Man would be perpetually liable to sorrow and error. As Das Gupta points out, it is for this reason that

"When the Indians... sought for and believed that somewhere a peaceful goal could be found, they generally hit upon the self of man." 13

The self was conceived differently in the different systems. In the Sāṃkhya it is of the nature of pure consciousness and in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika it is qualityless and unconscious. They, like Rāmānuja, conceive the self plurally, while the Advaita regards it as unitary. The Buddhists have no notion of a permanent entity but yet set themselves a transcendental final goal in Nirvāṇa. Intuitive knowledge preceded by rigorous moral preparation, devotion to God (in theistic systems), constant reflective analysis and meditation, is held to give an immediate insight into the nature of the transcendental self and of the universe. Perfect freedom follows. Reason is not expendable in the process. By analysing and classifying perceptual data, reason understands their nature and is aware of them as part of the mutable phenomenal series. It can judge whether knowledge of the sense-manifold is symbolic, mediate and objective. As an aid to the morally disciplined will, reason is a valuable tool for the

concentrating mind. In this integrated process, in the concerted drive to apprehend reality, reason plays a major role. Together the will, creative imagination and reason are believed to lead to intuition with its apprehension of the immediacy of supersensory knowledge.¹⁴

1.4 VEDĀNTA AND HINDUISM

1.4.1 Hinduism

Any discussion of Vedānta necessitates an explanation of the phenomenon of Hinduism, the religion to which the large majority of Indians subscribe. Besides its reference to religion the word Hinduism means much more, and it eludes precise definition. It has been identified with religion, philosophy, caste, temple, worship of God and gods through images, a search for truth, yoga, mysticism, asceticism and with a way of life. These descriptions are correct in what they affirm but wrong in what they deny since the several aspects individually do not fulfil the whole of the Hindu tradition.¹⁵ Hinduism is essentially a religio-philosophical system which forms the basis and presupposition of Indian culture and civilisation. The term Hinduism itself has never occurred within the Indian tradition. The name Hinduism owes its origin to the river Sindhu (Indus).¹⁶

The ancient Persians mispronounced Sindhu, calling it Hindu and were the first to refer to all those living on the Indian side of the river as "Hindus", a usage later adopted by the Greek, (C.480 B.C.)

and Muslim (C.800 A.D.) Mogul invaders. Originally then, "Hindus" referred to those people living in a well-defined geographical area and as such meant not a credal but a territorial sense. It was the British who eventually made current the general religious significance of the term "Hindus" from the time of their conquest of India.

A multiplicity of religious and philosophical disciplines evolved in time within Hinduism which kept up a surprising continuity with the old Vedic cultural spirit. In the process Hinduism suffered many changes in its long career. No doctrine or its related practice is held to be solely authoritative as all doctrines are held to be legitimate on account of their appeal to various classes of people. The Hindu tradition has legitimized them all. What is important is that individual systems and sects within the tradition have continually claimed exclusive finality for their own tenets which, from the overall perspective of Hinduism, are inadmissible as absolute expressions of the truths of Hinduism. The plurality of doctrines comprises both theistic creeds and philosophical systems. While no Hindu theistic system is free from philosophical presuppositions there are some systems which are entirely philosophical. The chief sects are the Vaiṣṇava, (which has the largest following) Śaiva and the Śākta based upon the popular gods Viṣṇu, Śiva and the mother goddess Śakti respectively. The main philosophical systems are the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the Mīmāṃsa and the Vedānta. The last two are based on 'sruti textual exegesis. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, while paying only lip service to the 'sruti in order to appease the Brahminical orthodoxy, derive their tenets on the grounds



of independent reasoning.¹⁷ They are classified as orthodox and they disputed not only each other's doctrines but also those of the heterodox schools. The heterodox schools such as Buddhism, Jainism and Cārvāka materialism were heterodox by virtue of the fact that they did not admit the authority of 'sruti.

Vedānta is today favoured by most Indian intellectuals. Many Hindus advocate that the term Hinduism should be replaced by the term Vedānta. The problem with this view is that while the Vedānta is Hinduism's philosophical foundation it can by no means be identified with the vast corpus of religious beliefs and their attendant rituals. The basis of a thing is not the same as the thing itself. For Hinduism embraces a wide variety of metaphysical doctrines ranging from the Vedic Aryan to the non-Vedic legacies.

Vedic monotheism which was an advance on the polymorphic pantheon soon yielded to the early Upaniṣadic notion of reality as the impersonal absolute. Down the ages many interpreters of Vedānta have subscribed to this metaphysical view. Again, there have been the theistically inclined who have regarded the Absolute as supreme personality, a view which occurs in the middle Upaniṣads. Thus the tension in modern Hinduism centres around these metaphysical doctrines and is amply illustrated in the systems of Vivekananda and Prabhupāda.

The Vedic legacy (which includes the Upaniṣadic) as the great achievement of the Aryan genius was soon exposed to the diverse belief systems and practices of the native inhabitants - an experience which was inevitable

in the Aryan cultural and political expansion in the sub-continent. The forceful thrust of the Aryan conquest was tempered by the leavening influence of the highly civilized Dravidians who, among all the native tribes, made a contribution to culture which was second only to that of the Aryan.

The essentially theistic culture of the Dravidians fashioned for Hinduism the twin concepts of image worship and temple construction. Besides, it evolved its own main language of Tamil with its own alphabet. However, Aryan Sanskrit became a unifying factor as it became the chief vehicle of communication, especially in the political literary, philosophical and religious spheres. In the emerging social order many gods of local origin, including the mother goddess 'Sakti, probably a deity of fertility religion, became absorbed in the mainstream of Vedic culture. The Aryan response was to bring the aboriginal deities into a meaningful relation with its own thought tradition. D.D. Kosambi writes:

"Not only Krishna, but the Buddha himself and some totemic deities including the primeval Fish, Tortoise and Boar were made into incarnations of Vishnu... Hanuman a peculiar god of the peasantry... becomes the faithful companion servant of Rama. The importance of the process, however, should not be underestimated. The worship of these newly absorbed primitive deities was part of the mechanism of acculturation, a clear give and take." 18

The epics of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata as well as the Puranic texts record the development of Vaiṣṇavite and 'Saivite theism. The classical metaphysical justification of theism and that of the incarnation concept are recorded in the Gītā which has enjoyed the

greatest popularity. Besides the apotheosis of and devotion to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa there was also alongside them the steady growth in the popularity of the great god Śiva.

Hinduism has thus become a curious amalgam of high metaphysical notions blended with endless strains and hues of primitive religions. The Aryan ascendancy in the process is undeniable. Throughout the history of Hinduism the spirit of reform, largely the work of the philosophico-religious tradition, which entailed harmonization and accommodation, continued, though at times static and at other times at a steady pace. However, Vedāntic scholars derive their tenets from the triple canon, and have scant regard for pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic literature and in the case of many of them even for the secondary texts of the epics and the Purāṇas.

Where the secondary texts are used it is usually with the view to illustrate some doctrinal viewpoint. However, in the cases of Rāmānuja and Prabhupāda it seems that the reverse is true despite the fact that Rāmānuja has commented elaborately on the primary texts. It is Prabhupāda who leans almost entirely on the secondary textual material. This point will be discussed more fully in those chapters which deal with the systems of the medieval and modern thinkers.

1.4.2 Vedānta

The term Vedānta indicates both the Upaniṣads and the medieval system of that name, the greatest exponents of which were Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva, the first two having been more famous and influential than the last. However, because Śaṅkara's influence has been so widespread that even today the Vedānta is held to be synonymous with his Advaita.¹⁹ Rāmānuja's school of qualified monism is the Viśiṣṭādvaita and Madhva's dualism is the Dvaita Vedānta.

The Upaniṣads are central to the evolution of Vedānta and have had an indirect influence on the development of other systems as well. From their inception (c. 700 B.C.) they have invited comment and criticism and today, their study is undertaken in many parts of the world. Whereas the non-Vedāntic systems have treated them with a certain indifference, many recent movements such as the Arya Samaj and the Radha Saomi Satsang have totally excised them from their exegesis of the Vedic texts. But, for the Hindu heritage as a whole, the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-sūtras and the Bhagavad-gītā remain the absolute canon for the Vedānta tradition. The Gītā, though a secondary text, could not be ignored by the commentators because of the universality of its appeal in Hinduism.

The pre-eminence of the Upaniṣadic texts can be gauged from the fact that the Sūtras and the Gītā are dependent on them for their basic ideas. Although the Upaniṣads came later in the Vedic age, they were yet conferred the distinction of inclusion as part of the Vedic canon. But the Sūtras and the Gītā were not so favoured.

1.4.3 'sruti and smṛti

It is necessary to comment on the concepts 'sruti and smṛti because they are important to the tradition. Also Vivekananda and Prabhupāda understand quite different things regarding them. Śaṅkara in accord with the orthodox classification, makes out that 'sruti denotes the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, but the Gītā, Purāṇas, the epics and the sūtras, are smṛti. Usually, the theists tend to extend the 'sruti list to include the secondary literature such as the Gītā, the epics and the Purāṇas. Here, Rāmānuja and Prabhupāda are good examples. 'Sruti texts in the tradition are primary and smṛti texts secondary. Vivekananda who is a monist like Śaṅkara concurs with him on this point.

1.4.4 'sruti

Many modern scholars do not regard the Vedas (i.e., pre-Upaniṣadic) as supernaturally inspired. They see in them man's early attempt to come to terms with the concrete reality of a sense-bound world and what life for man in his actual earthly setting means. They see Vedic man as offering sacrifices to the gods for earthly advantages, attended by chants and incantations as an expression of their simple faith. The Indian orthodox tradition up to the Upaniṣadic era regarded the Vedas as authoritative and sacred. But when the Upaniṣads also gained the status of authority, it clearly showed that the tradition, for long inflexible, was expanding.

However, this expansion was gradual as the old ideas did not yield easily. Around 1 000 B.C. when aging men retired into the forests



for contemplation and study, much discussion about the nature of the gods and the efficacy of sacrifices took place. Faith in the gods became suspect and soon monotheism emerged at the tail end of the Rg-Vedic period (c. 1200-1000 B.C.). Skepticism, which heralded the birth of philosophy, can be noted in such passages as "of whom they ask, where is he? Of him indeed they also say, he is not." (concerning Indra). "What God shall we honour by means of sacrifice?"²⁰ A good example of the monotheistic development is: "To what is one, the poets give many a name. They call it Agni, Yama, Mātarīśva."²¹

These trends in the Rg-Veda helped the spirit of philosophy to flower in the Upaniṣads. As far as orthodoxy's fortunes were concerned the position of the Brahmin priests who emphasised the mechanical spirit of the ritualistic creed was jeopardised. Their sensual greed and crass materialism became out of joint in the new climate ushered in by the nascent philosophical spirit of the Upaniṣadic thinkers. Culturally the two were worlds apart. The mystique of the sacrificial ritual rested in the priestly claim that the Brahmin alone could divine the power of the ritual - a power that could be wrested for worldly or other-worldly ends for the sake of their votaries.

The emergent Upaniṣadic ideas with their scientific spirit of enquiry reached a great new height in the Vedic age and evolved a new world-view, a new ethic and new soteriological goals. They were gradually replacing the older Vedic view of the gods and the sacrifices. The

Upaniṣads rejected the belief in heaven as a permanent dwelling-place for the soul after death. R.E. Hume writes:

"No longer is worship or sacrifice or good conduct the requisite of religion in this life, or of salvation in the next. Knowledge secures the latter and disapproves of the former." 22

Metaphysical knowledge of the self's identity with the ultimate reality, Brahman, confers salvation.²³ What Hume means is the worship and good conduct by themselves are not adequate to liberate the individual.

The revolutionary ideas of the Upaniṣads were a watershed for the cultural destiny of India.²⁴ But the Vedas as a canon of authority did not cease to exist, nor did ritualistic religion. People at large continued the ritualistic practices.

The Mīmāṃsā, a classical system of Vedic orthodoxy par excellence, has continued to hold that the Upaniṣads are not part of the true canon. The Mīmāṃsā regards the Veda as the natural self-manifestation of truth emerging from the ontological structure of being, a position opposed to a modern trend and even an earlier one, that the Vedic authority rests in divine revelation. To the later Nyāya the Vedas are a revelation of the word of God, while post-classical Sāṃkhya conceives them as the repository of super-sensory knowledge revealed to the ṛṣis through their intuitive or super-natural power, a view the Vedāntins also favour. Man is therefore a self-choosing agent and not one arbitrarily chosen from above. The human initiative in the supernatural revelation is the distinguishing characteristic of philosophy of religion in India.

Among those texts that played a vital role in the history of Vedānta were the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Brahma-sūtras. A brief survey of them will now be undertaken. It is also necessary to look at an important issue concerning the tension between idealism and realism in Indian thought, if for no other reason than for the fact that Vedānta is essentially idealistic.

1.5 THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

1.5.1 The doctrine of the Upaniṣads

In these texts there are materialistic and realistic cosmologies besides the predominant idealistic ones. Our interest lies mainly with the texts' idealistic character in order to understand later Vedānta.

1.5.1.1 Metaphysics

There is sufficient textual evidence to show that the Upaniṣads teach esoteric science. The Chāndogya, for instance, refers to the "hidden teachings" (Guhya Ādeśa).²⁵ The Taittiriya refers to the mystic utterances of bhur, bhuvas, suvar and mahas.²⁶ Om is a mystic formula often invoked. In fact the Upaniṣadic authors' search for the true nature of the universe, which would at the same time furnish the clue to the mystery of man himself, was itself esoteric. Rational enquiry together with meditation, ethics and, in the case of the theistic Upaniṣads, worship of God were important integral elements

in the process. Also its spirit of enquiry is demonstrated in; "What is the cause? Whence are we born?" "By whom willed and directed does the mind light on its objects?"²⁷ The thinkers addressed the problem of metaphysics via the triple formula: 'sravaṇa, the presentation of ontological propositions, manana the logical reflection on them; and nididhyāsana the meditative intuition to ascertain their intrinsic validity. Theories of reality attained through speculation and intuition were subject to discussion and sought to be explicated in logical terms.

The chief metaphysical doctrine is that ultimate reality is the unchangeable absolute, a recurring theme. Gārgi, a woman disputant, questions Yājñavalkya, one of the leading figures in the Upaniṣads: "Across what is space woven like warp and woof?" If his answer involved a positive description of some entity as the ground, then an infinite series would be started to show the ground of that ground. So he declared an ultimate ground of which nothing could be predicated, that it is the "Imperishable, neither gross, nor fine, short nor long, without smell, without eyes, mind, radiance...."²⁸ The logical indemonstrability of the ultimate is again brought out in the celebrated reply to a question from Yājñavalkya's wife:

"For where there is duality, as it were, there one smells another, hears another, understands another. But where, verily, everything has become the Self, then by what and whom should one smell another? By what should one know that by which all this is known? By what, my dear, should one know the knower?" 29

Thus, when the Absolute is described as the Imperishable, the indeterminate or in the paradox "greater than the greatest and smaller than the smallest", or in other negative descriptions such as "not this", "not this" we have here the reflection of the philosophical mood of the early Upaniṣads. The nature of the universe from the cosmic point of view is the absolute (Brahman). When the same is looked at as the deepest self in man it is called Atman. Such a doctrine must have been startling for the times, as E. Frauwallner points out:

"...this knowledge produced an amazing effect. The old thinkers became as if intoxicated as this thought flashed upon them with direct suddenness." 30

Thus a radical revision of man's essential self took place. Man now saw his true self as deathless and timeless. He could now be immensely confident of a higher destiny, his life being endowed with supernal purpose. The import for self-culture and metaphysics was incalculable. The gods and even God receded into the background. Also, attention now shifted from outside man to his inward self. Thus, in a very real sense, man became "the measure of all things." In some intellectual circles, theism underwent an upheaval. It is not known to what extent theistic or polytheistic religion, at the popular level, suffered as a result. In any case the masses must have continued in the old way, since at the time of the middle Upaniṣads, theism received unexpected support from the intellectual elite.

1.5.1.2 Creation

What is the relation between the world and the Absolute, between changing forms and descriptionless reality? The Upaniṣads do not offer a logical answer though they are not silent on the issue.

Concerning a descriptionless Brahman descriptions of this relation as causal agency are necessarily ruled out. The negative accounts of Brahman are to show its total otherness to the world. Sometimes attempts are made to establish the link between the two. Brahman is Satyasya-Satyam, the secret source and ground of the universe.

Yājñavalkya holds that from Brahman proceeds the Vedas, all sciences, grammar, food and all worlds.³¹ Brahman manifests the universe.³²

The Mundaka favours the theory of emanation and not creation.³³

The Praśna mentions God's desire as the principle of the world's origin. God's austerity produces matter and life. Some texts distinguish between two Brahman, the unqualified higher and the qualified lower.³⁴ The latter answers to God, Īśvara, whose status is inferior to the absolute and His tenure insecure. The lower is the formed, mortal and the moving.³⁵ Bhṛgu's quest after reality leads him to identify in succession the different principles of matter such as perceptual consciousness and intelligence with ultimate reality.³⁶ Each time as he holds a particular principle as ultimate, he realises his fallacy. Thus he finally comes to the conclusion that Brahman is unalloyed bliss. Prajāpati's³⁷ instruction to Indra regarding the true nature of man and the instruction of Varuṇa to Bhṛgu reveal the notion of the Ātman as the true subject self of man.

Generally, throughout the Upaniṣads Brahman refers to the cosmic reality and Ātman to the eternal self of man. The analytical and rational nature of the method employed shows how seriously the thinkers regarded the quest after truth. For the Taittirīya the progressive series in the world manifestation is ether, air, fire, water, earth, herbs, food and man.

1.5.1.3 Theistic conceptions

While some early Upaniṣads believe in the evolution of the lower principle of God who is Himself evolved out of Brahman, the middle Upaniṣads such as the Svetāśvatara and the Īśa regard the ultimate cause, God, as the universal immanent ground of the universe. God and the world form the one whole. The analogies compare the world to a rotating wheel and a flowing stream.³⁸ For the Īśa there is an essential unity of God and the world:

"All this, whatever moves in the moving world,
is enveloped by God." 39

Das Gupta states correctly that:

"...theism in its true sense was never prominent
in the Upaniṣads and this acknowledgement of a
supreme Lord was... an offshoot of the exalted
position of the Ātman as the supreme principle." 40

He adduces support from the Kausitaki:

"He is the protector of the universe, he is the
master of the world and the Lord of all; he is
my soul (Ātman)." 41

The relation of the world to its cause is still a problem in Eastern and Western philosophy. From the above discussion it is noticeable

that the predominant note of the Upaniṣads is idealistic though realistic tendencies concerning the nature of the world are not absent. Theism which is a notable feature of the middle Upaniṣads favours as a rule a realistic interpretation of the world. The early Upaniṣads contain a strong sense of the world's unreality - a natural outcome of their teaching of the transcendent Brahman as sole reality. These diverse unsystematized ideas provided grist to the mills of future Vedāntins who conceived the relation of the universe to ultimate reality each in his own way.⁴²

1.5.1.4 The status of the world

The texts bring out the phenomenality of the world. It is transient, an emanation; it has dependent status. Its reality is admitted as it is a datum of the senses. Its existence alongside Brahman puzzled the early thinkers who, states Das Gupta,

"...had not probably any conscious purpose of according a relative reality to the phenomenal world, but in spite of regarding Brahman as the highest reality they could not ignore the claims of the exterior world, and had to accord a reality to it." 43

The notion of the seeming unreality of the universe, of which Yājñavalkya is the main exponent, is mainly in the early texts.

But all thinkers believe that the world can be transcended, either by knowledge of Brahman, Jñāna, as in Yājñavalkya or by a vision of God as in Svetāśvatara.

1.5.1.5 Ethics

The Kaṭha Upaniṣad advocates the pursuit of the path of good (Śreyas) as opposed to the path of pleasures (Preyas). Preyas leads to moral obloquy, finally exhausting the senses.⁴⁴ Yogic postures, austerity, celibacy, self-control, humility and speaking the truth strengthen the will, help concentration and lead to tranquility. They are a pre-condition for liberation.⁴⁵ Sometimes the Upaniṣads are criticised for being negative and otherworldly. This is true for some of them only. Yājñavalkya had already possessed Brahman-Jñāna⁴⁶ before departing from married life. That the Upaniṣadic ethics is not averse to earthly values is shown in several instances when cows and gold were the prizes offered in kings' courts to the victors of philosophical debates.⁴⁷ The Mundaka distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge, the knowledge of secular sciences and of Brahman.⁴⁸

For Yājñavalkya the hallmark of true humility is the ingenuousness of a child. The Chāndogya rejects excessive attachment to wealth and pleasures when it derides the priests who are likened to greedy dogs.⁴⁹ The Praśna admits the legitimacy of sexual desire when it interprets chastity as lawful sexual contact by night but not by day.⁵⁰ For it, chastity is not abstinence but regulated sexual activity. The Aitareya also makes explicit reference to sex.⁵¹ The Bṛhadāraṇyaka advocates self-control, charity and compassion.⁵² All these instances are hardly expressive of moral negativity; rather they indicate the opposite. The seriousness with which the Upaniṣadic era regarded social duties and obligations can be seen from the following exhortations of its teachers to students departing from the forest

hermitages:

"Let there be no neglect of study and teaching, welfare, prosperity, duties to gods and fathers.... Give in faith, give in plenty, give with modesty and sympathy... (and when) in doubt on moral issues seek the advice of competent persons who are righteous in their conduct." 53

Some texts have stressed prosperity and fame.⁵⁴ The Īśa recommends a life of a hundred years, but to be lived in detachment.⁵⁵

Thus there is no conflict between transcendental ends and earthly ends. They do warn, however, against the self-sufficiency of worldliness to the exclusion of a higher calling. Generally a balanced view of human aspirations is taken.

1.5.1.6 Karma and rebirth

The ethical presupposition that one life is too brief to achieve the final goal of liberation is for the first time introduced by the Upaniṣads into the history of the world's thought. The proclamation of this hypothesis was a turning-point in Indian philosophy. When karma is thought of as that cosmic power which rewards or punishes individuals in accordance with their actions, it only means that it is a human abstraction, an interpretation of the universal law, impersonal and inexorable, connoted in juridicial terms. The law of karma connotes the law of compensation whereby specific actions have their corresponding reactions. But man experiences his circumstances in happiness and sorrow and regards them as consequences of karma. Thus karma is a human interpretation since, in the words of Alfred Adler:

"...reality is experienced through the meaning we give it, not in itself, but as something interpreted." 56

For the Upaniṣadic seers karma is an impersonal cosmic law of cause and effect matching results to their deeds, whether in this or a future life. Karma is deed, action. Its genesis betrays the assumption that if the cosmos is ordered in terms of natural laws then there must be law in the moral realm also. Evil conduct disrupts the harmony of the law. Moral harmony which is grounded in the universal will makes for individual good and social stability. Actions mould character, for "according as one acts... so he becomes. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil."⁵⁷ In the analogy of a caterpillar moving from a blade of grass to another, a text states that "the self, having left this body behind it unconscious, takes hold of another body."⁵⁸

1.5.1.7 Liberation

Avidyā or Ajñāna is a cosmic principle of ignorance. Ignorance is not absence of knowledge but false knowledge as it makes us perceive the many in place of the spiritual reality. Man can break away from Avidyā(ignorance) through Vidyā (insight) and thus break the bonds of Karma and prevent further rebirth.⁵⁹

The Upaniṣads teach two doctrines on the state of release: "when a seer sees the creator of golden hue..., shaking off good and evil..., he attains supreme equality with the Lord."⁶⁰ The soul attains to the likeness of God. Clearly, identity with God is not here intended.

The Prasna describes the state in which identity of personality is lost:

"As... rivers reaching the ocean, disappear... even so of this seer, these sixteen parts... on reaching the person, disappear, their name-shape broken up, and are called simply the person. That one is without parts, immortal." 61

Thus the texts show two possibilities: one, personal immortality (theism) and the other where personality vanishes (monism). The experience is likened to a sudden flash of lightning or the flash of the indragopa insect (glow-worm). The Kena talks of the winking of the eye and the lightning flash.⁶² This shows the intuitive nature of the experience:

"The Self, though hidden in all beings, does not shine forth but can be seen by those subtle seers, through their sharp and subtle intelligence." 63

The very fact that the Upanisads entertain lengthy discussions of such momentous issues shows their earnest scientific spirit.

1.5.2 THE ERA OF THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

A discussion of the essential ideas of the Bhagavad-Gītā is important for many reasons. It has enjoyed more widespread popularity than any other scripture in India.⁶⁴ It has generally inspired the laity as well as leaders of religious and political movements down the ages. In recent times the Gītā played a prominent part among texts that

influenced the socio-religious programmes of Vivekananda, Prabhupāda, Aurobindo, Tilak and Gandhi. Today a great deal of interest in the Gītā is being shown even in the West.⁶⁵

The Gītā is hardly a coherent metaphysical system but it represents a tradition in spiritual religion largely influenced by Upaniṣadic idealism and theism. Though it abounds in metaphysics, its primary concern is with moral conduct connected with man's final destiny - that is, with soteriology. As such its theism takes on a greater significance since the relation between man and God is crucial to its soteriological scheme. A special meaning further attaches to this context with the Gītā's introduction of the novel concept of the Avatāra, the incarnation of Viṣṇu the Supreme Being, in the form of the human Kṛṣṇa.

Because of this accident of the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu, Vaiṣṇava movements have claimed the Gītā as their primary text and its concept of God as the highest in theism. The essential metaphysics of the Gītā are based on the early Upaniṣads. What it adds is the notion of the repeated incarnations of God as well as the fervent devotion to and adoration of God. The uniqueness of the Gītā lies in its being a compendium of various elements. If these elements were combined in a haphazard way the Gītā would have no claim to our attention. It commends itself because it harmonizes and reconciles the following currents of thought: the sacrificial cult of the Brahmanas, the worship of the Absolute, the theism of the Bhāgavata religion, Sāṃkhya dualism and Yoga concentration.⁶⁶

The Upaniṣads give us distinct views in metaphysics such as the naive cosmogonic speculations including water, air, fire, space and breath; the concepts of the Absolute and the personal God. The main reason for this is that the Upaniṣads are the products of various persons but the Gītā in the redaction known to us appears to be the work of a single thinker. The Gītā refines and reconciles the heterogeneous elements of the Upaniṣads.

1.5.2.1 Metaphysics

An element in the "spontaneous syncretism"⁶⁷ of the Gītā, the Sāṃkhya current of thought, is modified in it. Sāṃkhya thought as it appears in the classical system of Īśvarakṛṣṇa⁶⁸ is not the same in the Gītā. Classical Sāṃkhya is a thorough-going dualism between spirit selves, the Puruṣas, and matter, Prakṛti. But in the Gītā this dualism is subordinated to the principle of God. God is the supreme, Uttama Puruṣa. The highest impersonal reality is not absent though, and in fact in several places, the Absolute is said to be difficult to attain.⁶⁹

Its ethics and metaphysics have the one aim of securing the spiritual experience of union with the divine. But the spiritual ideal might only be embraced if one has first a sound knowledge of metaphysics. Prakṛti has three constituents: sattva, rajas, and tamas in the Sāṃkhya tradition; and in the Gītā it is not conceived differently.⁷⁰ In the Sāṃkhya, the many differentiated products of the world evolve out of various combinations of the three constituents, the guṇas,

which connote both physical and psychological senses.⁷¹ Physically, sattva signifies what is fine and light; rajas, whatever is active; and tamas, what is stolid and offers resistance.⁷² Psychologically sattva signifies pleasure; rajas pain and tamas delusion. The dualism between spirit selves and matter is resolved in the Gītā which derives both of them from God. God, (Īśvara), as the source of selves and matter is immanent in the world and He also transcends it.⁷³ Thus God is both the material and efficient cause of the world. The universe is strung on God like gems on a string.⁷⁴ He is its origin as well as its dissolution.⁷⁵ The forms of Prakṛti are earth, water, air, fire, ether mind, intellect and ego-sense.⁷⁶ This eight-fold division is the lower nature of God.⁷⁷ The souls represent His higher nature.⁷⁸

1.5.2.2 Ultimate reality

While God is Creator, sustainer and dissolver, there is yet a sense in which a higher principle, His innermost core, transcends His nature. Brahman (the Absolute) is the indestructible; the Supreme essence is called the Self;⁷⁹ while God is superior to the world, the Absolute is superior to Him. It is the Imperishable and the Supreme Status, the highest abode from which those who attain it return not.⁸⁰ The Absolute is the impersonal Tat (that), the essence of all. Its subtlety and ineffability is brought out by opposite or contrary description; it is near as well as far away.⁸¹ At times Brahman and the Personal God are described as one.⁸² The identification is deliberate since what is beyond human comprehension is the ineffable and the immortal and the same is the source of creation.

The relation between the finite cosmos and the infinite is problematical; it defies man's understanding. But if the source of all is higher than all, and if it is the ultimate reality of which no predication is possible, then it is no contradiction if that which is attributeless and qualityless is yet endowed with the agency to create or manifest the world. At least this is the view of the *Gītā*. The text offers no rational proof for its metaphysical position on account of its insistence on the religious life which when deepened will culminate in intuitive knowledge.⁸³ The immanent Lord, though transcendent, is yet divided among creatures.⁸⁴ The whole creation is said to be a part of Brahman, an Aṃsa.⁸⁵

1.5.2.3 The individual

Human beings are complex personalities with elements of matter, life, mind, intelligence and soul. When persons identify themselves with their psycho-physical nature they are said to be in ignorance, Avidyā.⁸⁶ Avidyā leads to blind attachment to lust, anger and greed.⁸⁷ This makes man forgetful of his spiritual nature and of God as master of creation.⁸⁸ Desires make man succumb to the world process denoted by Samsāra and to the law of Karma, the causal law which, when not transcended, leads to continual birth and death.⁸⁹

1.5.2.4 Ethics and soteriology

While *Gītā* ethics is grounded in metaphysics, the essential ethical practices are denoted by the four paths to liberation which are the

yogas of Jñāna (knowledge), Karma (works), Bhakti (devotion), and Dhyāna (contemplation). The practice of these paths undertaken either singly or simultaneously eventually enables man to liberate himself from worldly bondage which is not final or unconditional. Intuitive knowledge of the Absolute is a way of "deliverance from old age and death."⁹⁰ The state of liberation also consists in reaching God, the divine Person.⁹¹ Since God's abode is also the Absolute, the ultimate goal of release for man is the Absolute.⁹²

The path of knowledge entails intelligent discrimination between the realms of matter and spirit until the Absolute is reached.⁹³ A strong will and determination to succeed is presupposed in this path as in the others. The Bhaktas through self-surrender to God and intense love and adoration of Him attempt to realise their ideal of union with God. While the Jñāni's ideal negates all multiplicity, the Bhakta embraces duality, the wish to retain one's individuality from God being of paramount concern.

The ethical imperative necessitates constant warfare against greed, sensuality, conceit, anger, hatred and self-aggrandisement.⁹⁴

Positively, all aspirants for liberation should cultivate humility, love, charity, forbearance, compassion as well as the will to work for the common weal.⁹⁵ Individual perfection and commitment to the social cause are not antithetical in the Gītā. But an exception is made in the case of the yogi who by natural disposition withdraws from the world and seeks shelter in lonely haunts,⁹⁶ practising the "firm vow of celibacy."⁹⁷

While allowance is made for such an extreme ascetic type, the general tenor of the *Gītā* envisions corporate community effort.⁹⁸ Even for the ascetic, moderation in sleep, recreation and diet is recommended. Also, he is to "rejoice in the welfare of all creatures."⁹⁹ Thus the emphasis is in a life of action (Karma) with the attitude of dedication of works to God (Bhakti). The liberated have the task of instructing others.¹⁰⁰ The ideal of true activity is exemplified by honoured mention of King Janaka who attained the soteriological goal while yet discharging the duties of state.¹⁰¹ Kṛṣṇa quotes his own example as Lord of creation continually upholding the world to prevent it from total collapse.¹⁰² Similarly, human duty rests in maintaining the social order, Lokasamgraha.¹⁰³ Moral responsibility and service dedicated to transcendent ends make for order, root out anti-social instincts, and furthers the spiritual quest.¹⁰⁴

Social responsibility is opposed to self-will and selfishness as these do violence to justice and truth. While the main *Gītā* position in metaphysics is a realistic one, that is, souls, matter and God are real, there is also a sense of the unreality of the world. In some passages God is said to be only seemingly divided among beings, being Himself indivisible in nature.¹⁰⁵

End Notes : Chapter One

I have used both the translations of S. Radhakrishnan of 1974 and of R.E. Hume of 1954 throughout the work as far as the Upaniṣads are concerned. Hereafter where Hume's translation is used REH will follow and where Radhakrishnan's translation is used RAD will follow.

For references from the Bhagavad-gītā I have used S. Radhakrishnan's translation of 1970. Hereafter this work will be referred to as R.B.G. throughout the work.

Some Upaniṣads have been abbreviated as follows:

<u>Brhadāranyaka</u>	-	Brhad.
<u>Chāndogya</u>	-	Chānd.
<u>Īśa</u>	-	Īś.
<u>Katha</u>	-	Kat.
<u>Kena</u>	-	Ken.
<u>Mundaka</u>	-	Mun.
<u>Prāsna</u>	-	Prās.
<u>Śvetaśvatara</u>	-	Śvet.
<u>Taittirīya</u>	-	Taitt.

End Notes : Chapter One

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2. Radhakrishnan, S. Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p.57.
3. *ibid.*
4. Hinduism Through The Ages, p.177.
5. Means, P. The Mystical Maze, pp.22-23.
6. Sinha, A.K. Vedanta and Modern Science, pp.44-48.
7. Dave, H.T. Life and Philosophy of Shree Swaminarayan, p.23.
8. Puligandla, R. Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy, p.16.
9. Smart, N. Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, p.16.
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11. Chatterjee, S. and Datta, D. An Introduction To Indian Philosophy, p.3.
12. Hiriyanna, M. Outlines of Indian Philosophy, p.18.
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17. Chatterjee and Datta, op. cit., pp.8-9.
18. Kosambi, D.D. The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India, p.74.
19. Das Gupta, op. cit., p.42.
20. Radhakrishnan, S. The Principal Upanisads, p.34.
21. *ibid.*, p.40.
22. Hume, R.E. The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, p.53.
23. *ibid.*, Brhad. 4.4.7, p.141.
24. R.E.H., op. cit., p.3.
25. *ibid.*, 3.5.(1-2), p.204.
26. *ibid.*, 1.5.1, p.278.
27. RAD op. cit., Ken 1. p.581.
28. *ibid.*, Brhad. III. 8.9, p.232.
29. REH, op. cit., Brhad. 4.5.15
30. Frauwallner, E. History of Indian Philosophy, vol. 1, p.55.
31. RAD op. cit., Brhad. IV. 5.11, p.284.
32. *ibid.*, Brhad. III. 9.(1-11)
33. *ibid.*, I.1.7, p.673.
34. *ibid.*, Pras, V.2. p.664.
35. *ibid.*, Brhad. II. 3. (1-2), p.193.
36. *ibid.*, Taitt. III. 1.1.-III. 6.1, pp.553-557.
37. *ibid.*, Chand. VIII. 7.1 - VIII. 12.6, pp.501-507.
38. *ibid.*, Svet. I. (4-6), p.713.
39. *ibid.*, Is. I.
40. Das Gupta, op.cit., p.50.
41. *ibid.*
42. *ibid.*
43. *ibid.*, p.51.
44. RAD, op.cit., I. 1. (26-27), p.605.
45. *ibid.*, Taitt. I. 9.1 p.536.
46. *ibid.*, Brhad. II. 4.(1-14), pp.195-201.

47. *ibid.*, Brhad. III. 1, p.211.
48. *ibid.*, Chānd. VII. 1. (2-3), pp.468-469.
49. *ibid.*, I. 12. 5, p.358.
50. *ibid.*, I. 13, p. 655.
51. *ibid.*, II. 1.2, p.521.
52. *ibid.*, V 2.3, p.290
53. *ibid.*, Taitt. I. 11. 1, p.537.
54. *ibid.*, Taitt. III. 6.1, p.557.
55. *ibid.*, I. 2, p.569.
56. Adler, A. What Life Should Mean To You, p.9.
57. RAD., op. cit., Brhad., IV. 4.5, p.272.
58. *ibid.*, Brhad., IV. 4.3, p.271.
59. *ibid.*, Svet. III. 7, p.727; I. 11., p.716.
Prasna I. 10, p.654.
60. *ibid.*, Mūn III. 1.3, p.680.
61. *ibid.*, VI. 5, p.667.
62. *ibid.*, IV. 4, p.591.
63. *ibid.*, Kat, I. 3.12, p.627.
64. Radhakrishnan, S. The BHAGAVAD-GITA, p.11.
65. *ibid.*
66. *ibid.*, p.13.
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70. *ibid.*, XIV 5, p.316.
71. Larson, G.J. Classical Sāṃkhya, pp.175-177.
72. Bhattacharyya, H. (ed.), The Cultural Heritage of India, vol. III, p.42.
73. RBG, op. cit., VII. 13, p.217; IX. 5, p.239.
74. *ibid.*, VII. 7, p.215.
75. *ibid.*, VII. 6, p.215.
76. *ibid.*, VII. 4, p.213.
77. *ibid.*, VII. 5, p.214.
78. *ibid.*, XV. 7, p.328.
79. *ibid.*, VIII. 3, p.227.
80. *ibid.*, VIII. 21, p.234.
81. *ibid.*, XIII. 15-16, p.307.
82. *ibid.*, XI. 18, p.275; X. 12, p.260.
83. *ibid.*, VII. 19, p.220; VIII. 10-17, pp.231-233.
84. *ibid.*, XIII. 16, p.307.
85. *ibid.*, X. 42, p.268.
86. *ibid.*, III. 27-29, pp.143-144; VII. 14, p.218;
VII. 27, p.224.
87. *ibid.*, III. 37-39, p.148; II.63, p.126.
88. *ibid.*, VII. 24-25, p.223.
89. *ibid.*, XVI. 19, p.339.
90. *ibid.*, VII. 29, p.225; IV. 9, p.156.
91. *ibid.*, VIII. 8, p.230.
92. *ibid.*, VIII. 21, p.234.
93. *ibid.*, XIII. 1-11, pp.300-305.
94. *ibid.*, XVI. 1-24, pp.334-341.
95. *ibid.*, III. 19-21, pp.138-140; XII. 4, p.292.

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| 96. <i>ibid.</i> , | VI. 8-28, pp.191-203. |
| 97. <i>ibid.</i> , | VI. 14. p.197. |
| 98. <i>ibid.</i> , | IV. 34, p.169. |
| 99. <i>ibid.</i> , | XII. 4, p.292. |
| 100. <i>ibid.</i> , | IV. 34, p.169. |
| 101. <i>ibid.</i> , | III. 20, p. 139. |
| 102. <i>ibid.</i> , | III. 24, p.141. |
| 103. <i>ibid.</i> , | III. 20, p.139. |
| 104. <i>ibid.</i> , | XVI. 21-24, pp.340-341. |
| 105. <i>ibid.</i> , | XIII. 16-17, p.307. |

CHAPTER 2

In Chapter two Vedānta is seen in the context of the overall idealistic-realistic conflict in which all the Indian systems engaged. While the Vedānta was split internally, with each of the Vedāntic thinkers striving to gain the upper hand, it not only had to assert itself against other forms of idealism but also had to refute the positions of the realistic schools.

2. IDEALISM-REALISM CONFLICT IN INDIAN THOUGHT

According to Indian idealism the phenomenal world has no material basis, the contention being that the physicality or materiality sense-perception ascribes to things does not in fact constitute their true reality. Thus while idealism is critical of the epistemological function of the mind to yield ineluctable veridical knowledge of matter, some idealistic theories postulate a non-material substance such as a universal mind or spirit as the world's ground. Other forms of idealism conceive objects as creations or projections of the subjective consciousness of the finite mind, signifying, in contradistinction to the first class, that the universe is substanceless, i.e., without substance as ground or a unitary principle.¹

Vedānta furnishes examples of the first and Buddhism of the latter; they are the only two systems in India that have produced radical idealism, buttressed by the most impressive and cogent arguments. Various vital differences between both systems, as also among idealists within the same system, denote the seriousness with which they addressed ideological issues.

Divergent metaphysical doctrines ranging from materialistic to spiritual monism, produced under conditions of polemical exchanges, indicate the enthusiasm philosophers displayed when pursuing the nature of truth in India. In attempting to discern truth the critical intelligence figured prominently. Metaphysical problems were looked

at ontologically, ethically, logically and even intuitively. Intuition played a greater role in idealistic systems than in the others. The vital urge in idealism is a kind of life or experience that would make the mystery of the universe intelligible. Intuition is said to yield an ideal kind of knowledge, the solution to the true destiny of man.²

The Vedānta in all its phases represents this ideal positively, as the deliverances of intuitive immediacy give Brahman-knowledge or the Absolute conceived as a positive principle. On the negative side Buddhism reflects transcendence conceptualised as nirvāṇa, an ineffable state where even the phenomenal determinations are eclipsed, where even the human personality ceases to exist.³ But this notion of world-transcendence is universal as it is embryonic to all systems, with the notable exception of the Cārvāka and Lokāyata materialists. This means that the world-process, samsāra,⁴ as it is constituted for the mind-body complex must eventually terminate - that is, this present world-order. All systems share the notion of ever-recurring world-cycles, or yugas.

Transcendence is interpreted variegatedly by the systems in consonance with their individual metaphysics. For instance, in those systems where the subject's self or soul is held to be distinct from mind-consciousness such as in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realism and in Sāṃkhyan dualism, the primacy and ultimacy of spirit is unmistakable.

Freedom is for the soul, not matter; in fact it is freedom from matter. The doctrine of liberation (variously called mokṣa, mukti, nirvāṇa, apavarga, etc.) has in all systems, theistic philosophies not excepted, the one pervasive characteristic - that of individual anthropocentrism. Man remains the centre of philosophical concern. The Indian tradition has had an unshakable conviction in the individual's ability to liberate himself. The process involves the total personality.⁵

It is curious that individualistic ethics is largely a phenomenon of the philosophical legacy, since dialectical methodology, analysis and discriminative knowledge - and the meditative and moral disciplines advocated by the science of yoga - are standards suited to the solitary person. Religion, however, favours as a rule group or social participation.

Soteriological ethics, although it carries the criticism that ultimately it is negative withdrawal from the world, yet reflects the essentially practical nature of Indian thought. In the philosophical enterprise every effort is made to get at the truth of things in so many ways - epistemological, logical, etc. But when this discursive methodology is exhausted, and the mystery unresolved, the ethical value implicit in the pursuit of truth strains to win an insight through intuition. Pratyakṣa or perceptual knowledge and jñāna or bodhi, enlightenment, are the two sides of a single movement.

Meditative intuition is generally opposed to the religion of God. Therefore it is noteworthy that theism has little room in most of India's philosophies. But where theism does occur - barring Vedānta - it is not surprising that God hangs loosely there, the concept being superfluous to the internal consistency of such systems. God's inclusion was necessitated by certain teleological concerns, but mainly by the ubiquitous prevalence of theistic religion which had its first and greatest impact on Vedānta. In fact, the doctrine of God is necessary to the central thesis of the Viśiṣṭādvaita and the Dvaita Vedānta. Examples of systems where the inclusion of God is for extraneous reasons are the Yoga and the Nyāya - Vaiśeṣika. Religion is not blind dogma in India. Reason is presupposed in it. Indian religion understood as mystical experience offers a dimension to philosophy, which far from rendering it unphilosophical, is said to be rather an excellence of it.⁶

In idealism the two extreme examples on diametrically opposite sides of the scale are Vijñānavāda Buddhism and the Advaita of Śaṅkara. While Vijñānavāda takes its cue from the Buddha's doctrine of momentariness and impermanence, [the Advaita draws its main inspiration from the fountainhead of the Upaniṣads]. The former denies the existence of the perceivability of extra-mental phenomena; [the latter while not rejecting the extra-mental cognition of objects, yet holds that it is the Absolute that appears as the world's multiplicity. Thus for Śaṅkara knowledge is of things and they have objective validity. What is perceived is real for the perceiving mind - and it is only in this sense that his epistemological theory is a realist one. But when both the perceiving subject, the mind and the perceptible object, are



said to be part of the process of world-illusion, māyā, or Brahman's appearances, then their absolute claim for the status of indubitable reality is undermined. Their dependent status abrogates this claim certainly, but at the same time it does not dismiss the world as a baseless fiction, or a total non-entity.] Vijñānavāda declares only successive streams of ideas of the subjective consciousness as constituents of phenomena as its central thesis.

2.1 Realism

Ideologically, the sharpest cleavage is between idealism and realism.

Śāṅkara's monism and Vijñānavāda mentalism appeared as anathema to the realism of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the materialists as the latter felt that idealism compromised the reality of the natural world.

Furthermore, for realism, the idealistic conception about the ultimate image of man is unacceptable as he is reduced to nothingness, as in Advaita nothing that could be called man or human survives in liberation, even though he gains the status of the Absolute in the transfigured experience. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika soteriology also envisages a depersonalised self outside space-time, but the soul retains its identity, even though it may not be covered in fleshly raiment.

Perhaps more repugnant to realism is the Buddhist Nirvāṇa, as nothing can be predicated of it, and so of man. The metaphysical implications of man's nature endows him with the dubious distinction of a mixture of existence and non-existence, depending on the epistemological

perspective in the Advaita. From the level of the senses he is, from the level of Brahman he is not. And the objection to Vijñānavāda is understandable because man is reduced to a stream of ideas. Realism's point of departure lies in its metaphysics of the absolute reality of things and persons. Matter is a compound of the substances earth, water, air, fire, ether, time and space. Man's nature includes mind and soul. Earth, water, air and fire are in the form of atoms, partless and eternal. Qualities are related to substances which are their substrata. The world is a unified system of substances and qualities and their mutual relations. [For realistic schools the world has a real basis independent of the percipient. Things are real as objects of perception to a knowing mind.] The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view of objects as conglomerations of invisible atoms, impressive as it is, is, however, vitiated by a fundamental flaw which rival systems, idealistic as well as realistic, were quick to point out. The flaw lies in the observation that as single atoms, invisible and dimensionless, they cannot establish the infrastructure of the world which has obvious dimensions. The hypothesis in realism concerning the notion of the attributes of the eternal soul - such as pleasure, pain, volition, etc., - which cease to exist in liberation, is a weak one for realism. Also, in order that liberation might be possible, the attributes are considered as adventitious.

2.2 Materialism

Completely antithetical to idealism is materialism which rejects every hypothesis of transcendence whether of soul or God. All is matter, and so even consciousness is its by-product. As perception is the only valid means of knowledge, mediate knowledge is veridical knowledge about real objects. Because classical materialism advocated the extinction of the personality at death, it lost universal credibility. It suffered much at the hands of both the philosophies of Buddhism and of Vedānta with the consequence that their further contribution to philosophy was arrested. As a school of thought materialism became extinct a long time ago.

2.3 Dualism

The theory of ontological dualism is best represented by the idealistic school of Sāṃkhya. For it the "entire universe comprises, and is explicable in terms of, two distinct and mutually exclusive principles," ⁷ homogeneous matter (prakṛti) and heterogeneous souls (puruṣas). The radical difference that Sāṃkhya's dualism constitutes from Śaṅkara's absolute as sole reality is obvious. Even on the question of spirit the two part company as Sāṃkhya espouses a pluralistic notion of spirit, the existence of many souls in as many bodies. Souls are eternal and of the nature of consciousness which is not the same as mind-consciousness since mind and spirit are radically different. The mind-body complex belongs to the side of matter.

Sāṃkhya's teleology, however, resembles spiritual idealism as it is intelligible on the grounds of the soul's ultimate release from the trammels of matter. Through the proximity of the puruṣas to prakṛti the variegated world panorama evolves. The puruṣas pay a dear price for this act of co-operation because, in exchange for the advantage of the many experiences prakṛti vouchsafes them, they lose their freedom temporarily. But the puruṣas regain the lost ground-bondage being only illusory - when they are freed by the discrimination of, and insight into, the distinction between themselves and prakṛti, the function that the intellect performs as its last act.

Thus in spite of its strict realism, it is clear that for the system spiritual values are of overriding concern, matter serving the ends of puruṣas - puruṣārtha. Human existence is paradoxical in classical Sāṃkhya. Its doctrine of the universality of suffering, one which it shares with the equally pessimistic Buddhists, should make the world the last place for the souls to be in. And yet initial involvement in the world, life after life, is made a pre-condition for ultimate release.

This background sketch to the nature of the schism between idealism and realism is important in understanding the conflict between Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja and between Vivekananda and Prabhupāda. All of them espouse in varying degrees elements of realism, though they remain predominantly idealistic. Though Vivekananda concurs with Śāṅkara in essentials, yet in his system there is an emphatic realistic reconstruction concerning the status of the world.

Consequently Vivekananda's ethics also undergoes revision. [Rāmānuja's idealism is a compromise between dualism of the Sāṃkhyan type and spiritual absolutism but he gravitates emphatically towards theism. In fact it is on the nature of reality (of the transcendent, the world and man) and liberation that he differs from Śaṅkara on account of his theistic proclivity.]

Rāmānuja's system has influenced for long the world of Indian theism. His thought was so decisive in theological determinations that theism would never have been the same had he not intervened. [Thus monism and the qualified version of it in Rāmānuja, and Madhva's dualism, helped crystallise many movements in which spiritual metaphysics predominated. Theism tempered the Indian philosophical climate, especially the Vedānta. Theism has had a disastrous consequence on the fortunes of heterodox Buddhism and Jainism and the orthodox Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā. The Sāṃkhya was absorbed by the Vedānta. The yoga system did not survive in its classical mould and its methodology underwent changes according to the ideologies with which it was associated.]

End Notes : Chapter Two

Idealism-Realism Conflict In Indian Thought

1. Koller, J.M., The Indian Way, pp.275-278.
2. *ibid.*, p.9.
3. Sangharakshita, B., A Survey of Buddhism, pp.64-82.
As an apologist of the Buddhist faith Sangharakshita argues for the positive aspect of nirvāṇa, that it is not a state of utter nihilism.
4. Koller, J.M., *op. cit.*, p.58.
5. Inge, W.R., (ed.), Radhakrishnan: Comparative Studies in Philosophy.
E.A. Burtt, writing in the above work, states that reason and "unstable emotions" cannot give us truth - "the psychological and metaphysical truth that really matters. Instead of pausing with the results of analysis we are pressing on to a daring and total synthesis." - pp.40-41.
6. Koller, J.M., *op.cit.*, p.263.
7. Banerjee, N.V., The Spirit of Indian Philosophy, p.174.

CHAPTER 3

In Chapter Three a brief survey of the essential ideas of the Vedānta Sūtras is undertaken in order to show how the sūtras continued the Upaniṣadic legacy.

3. THE VEDĀNTA SŪTRAS

3.1 THE SŪTRA TRADITION IN PHILOSOPHY

Before philosophical ideas became systematised a great deal of oral discussion about them must have taken place. In order to keep alive its main tenets, each school reduced them to mnemonic codes called sūtras, literally threads. The sūtras "could never have been meant to be taken by themselves; some sort of oral exegesis must always have accompanied them. This points to the propagation of the doctrines among specific circles and also to a continuity of tradition. The sūtrakāras are in most cases the final redactors rather than the authors of the systems."¹

3.2 THE BRAHMA-SŪTRAS

The Vedānta-sūtras deal with the doctrines of the Upaniṣads. They are also called Brahma-sūtras as they deal with Brahman, the ground of the world. When they are called Śārīraka-sūtras they refer to the nature and destiny of the embodied soul.

The author of this text is Bādarāyaṇa "whom Indian tradition identifies with Vyāsa, the arranger or compiler of the Veda."²

Because of their aphoristic style the Brahma-sūtras are open to endless suggestions and the great Vedāntic commentators could interpret them freely in order to accommodate their own standpoints.

The sūtras are divided into four Chapters, each having four parts.

The first chapter deals with the theme that Brahman is the highest reality. Its aim is harmonization of the different views about Brahman in the Upaniṣads. The relation between the Absolute and the world and man, as well as statements on their nature are the contents of the first chapter.

In the second the origin and dissolution of the world are discussed. The world depends on God and would eventually be reabsorbed into Him. Vyāsa also gives an account of the nature of the soul, its attributes, its deeds, its relation to Brahman and to its body. In the third chapter the nature of ultimate release is discussed, as well as the theory of rebirth. The fourth deals with the status of the released soul, and the fruits of the knowledge of the Absolute.

In the second chapter the views of rival schools such as those of Sāṃkhya-yoga, of Vaiśeṣika, of the realistic and idealistic Buddhist schools and of Jainism are rejected. In the third chapter the Cārvāka position is refuted.

Bādarāyaṇa accepts the authority of the śruti, the Upaniṣads, and by smṛti he means the Gītā, the Mahābhārata and the Code of Manu.³ Smṛti depends on śruti. Bādarāyaṇa accepts the necessity of reasoning but reasoning should be in conformity with the śruti. For him the authority of the śruti must not be called into question.

End Notes : Chapter Three

The Vedānta Sūtras

1. Bhattacharyya, H. (ed.), The Cultural Heritage of India, vol. III, p.32.
2. Mahadevan, T.M.P., Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya of Śri Śankarācārya, p.5.
3. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, vol. II, p.436.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter Four looks briefly at the main reflections of Śaṅkara who systematically formulated the essentials of idealistic monism, a tradition which has been perpetuated since his time.

4. SAṆKARA'S ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

In view of the realist-idealist conflict it is clear that 'Saṅkara's theory of the world does not grant the status of indubitable reality to it since for him Brahman alone is reality. But there could be a suggestion here that the world is totally non-existent and as such it is meaningless to make even an enquiry into its nature. Ordinarily the world is too palpable a fact to warrant any notion that it is a baseless fiction. Nowhere in his system does 'Saṅkara express such a negative view. For him the world does not suffer ontological destitution simply because it is not absolutely real.¹

The negative interpretations of his theory of māyā by hostile critics both in India and outside have made current this myth. It shows that the critics are hardly equal to the task of adequately grasping 'Saṅkara's thought.² 'Saṅkara drew a distinction between sense-cognised objects and illusory ones; the latter he argues are in a class apart from the totally unreal like the son of a barren woman or a hare's horns.³

In his comprehensive metaphysics the māyā theory connotes the relation between the finite world of space-time and the transcendent absolute. Simultaneously it offers an explanation of the nature of the world, of man, of the absolute and the significance for man that derives from it.

'Saṅkara, to whom credit is due for the definitive and classical formulation of the māyā hypothesis, begins his inquiry into the nature of the absolute (Brahman) while commenting on the Brahma-sūtras.⁴

While such metaphysical curiosity is motivated by the philosophical interest, for Śaṅkara it has more importance than this scientific dimension of dialectics. For him the quest for the nature of reality is at the same time the quest for the true nature of man.⁵ Following the Vedānta tradition, whose cause he was promoting and defending against rival traditions,⁶ Śaṅkara maintained that the primary purpose in an investigation into metaphysics leads inevitably to seek out the integral identity of man with Brahman via the process of intuitive experience.⁷ For him the intellectual dimension in which analytical reason discriminates between the truly real and the apparent world plays a decisive role. This is accompanied by moral discipline and steady concentration.⁸ And then comes the self-certifying knowledge of the inner self (Ātman) which is at the same time Brahman, the self of the universe.⁷

At the outset, Śaṅkara admits the logical indemonstrability of the absolute and its relation to the world. So he accepts as evidence the statement of śruti that Brahman as supreme spiritual reality exists as the ground of all. At this point, namely, that no further proof was required since faith in the śruti canon was adequate, he might have stopped. But in spite of the norm, namely faith in śruti, it was difficult to understand why several orthodox systems attained incongruous results,⁹ results which were hardly intended by the śruti authors. This anomalous position shows that such systems had evolved through independent thinking though claiming to ground their support in śruti.¹⁰

The break with the 'sruti denoted by heretical Buddhism, Jainism and Lokāyata materialism was also determined by the demands of logic.¹¹ The problem for 'Sāṅkara was two-fold: firstly, it was necessary for Vedānta to employ reason to establish metaphysical positions, especially since reason was the universally accredited criterion to resolve philosophical issues; secondly, he had to determine whether the knowledge portion (jñāna kāṇḍa) of 'sruti did in fact adopt the criterion of reason. 'Sāṅkara shows that the 'sruti did accept reason.¹² The Buddhist process theories of the ceaseless momentary flux of all things dialectically denied the self in man and anywhere else.¹³ Thus their ontological position differed radically from that of the Vedānta and so it was incumbent on 'Sāṅkara to demonstrate the existence of the true self. [His starting point in his theory of the world was to see whether the world would furnish a clue to the existence of the absolute self.]

4.1 THE CLUE FROM 'SRUTI

If Brahman is the only reality then the world's existence has somehow to be justified. Those passages in the Upaniṣads which presented a dilemma, if taken at face value would contradict one another. In some passages both Brahman and the world are said to exist,¹⁴ while again in others the reality of the latter is denied.¹⁵ This impasse was to be explicated by 'Sāṅkara who cited those texts that talk of the disappearance of the world in Brahman knowledge.¹⁶ Hence the world enjoys only a conditioned existence, thus affording the clue that only the non-eternal can disappear. The ontological perspective of the sole reality of Brahman is derived only at the level of the

transcendent through intuition.¹⁷ But philosophy proceeds on the basis of the sense-manifold and as such any theory of the Absolute presupposes a real existence of the world - real, that is, to the senses. [If scripture demonstrates the reality of the absolute, our experience convinces us of the world. Initially 'Sāṅkara asks us to hold fast to both ends, Brahman and the world. It is only later that he is led to deny the world's independent reality by examining the relation of the world to the Absolute.¹⁸] Even Yājñavalkya's theory of the Absolute points to the existence of the world first and then to negative descriptions of Brahman as "not this, not this, (neti, neti)."

4.2 CAUSALITY OF THE WORLD

'Sāṅkara attempts to explain his metaphysics on the basis of his theory of causation. There is common cause between him and the Sāṅkhya since both hold that an effect is ontologically non-different from its material cause.¹⁹ For example, the material substance in clay jars is the same as that in clay or the substance in gold ornaments is the same as that in a lump of gold.²⁰ This theory is called satkāryavāda. But he criticises the Sāṅkhya version of this theory when the latter holds that though the effect exists previously in its material cause there is a real change of the material into the effect, as the material assumes a new form.²¹ 'Sāṅkara objects to this real change (Pariṇāmavāda) theory on the grounds that the new form which was not there before comes into existence. This means that nothing which did not exist previously can come into existence.²² While he does not deny that the effect has a new form, revealed in perception, he does deny that



change in form signifies a change in reality. Parināmavāda is valid only if a form had a reality of its own. But Saṅkara contends that the form is but a state of the material or substance, having no independent existence.

"A thing does not become different just because of the appearance of some peculiarity; for Devadutta, even though noticed in different attitudes when he has his hands and feet contracted or extended, does not cease to be the identical person."²³ [Saṅkara's vivartavāda theory rests on his fundamental thesis that forms or qualities cannot possess their own reality since their reality depends upon their substances. Thus for him all changes in form are only apparent and not real.²⁴]

The difficulty in the doctrine of the independent existence of forms or qualities apart from their substances lies in the fact that we would require a third entity to relate these two. If this is so then a fourth entity would be required to relate the third to their first two. The only way out of this impasse of anavasthā is to regard qualities as dependent upon substances, their reality.²⁵

In Saṅkara's thought there is a constitutional necessity in us to regard the apparently real as truly real, forms and qualities for their substances. Psychologically, it is our projection of change on reality, denoted by his concept of adhyāsa or superimposition. Epistemologically, it is our inadequacy to comprehend the true reality of objects that makes us mistake objects for reality.²⁶

Also this cognitive error or misapprehension is dictated to by a powerful illusory power originating in Brahman, which Śaṅkara calls māyā or avidyā.²⁷ "We admit that Brahman is not the product of avidyā or is itself deluded, but we do not admit that there is another deluded conscious being (besides Brahman) which could be the producer of the ignorance."²⁸ In its universal dimension māyā means that inexplicably, reality appears as the world's multiplicity, through the power of projection that produces things (vik'ṣepa) while at the same time it conceals reality (āvaraṇa). For Śaṅkara the only answer to the insoluble riddle of the world's appearance, the why of it, is a mystery. [Our incomprehension of the mystery is also denoted by the term māyā.²⁹ Māyā is also positive as it produces the world (bhāvarupa) and in that sense its reality, even as an appearance, is undeniable.³⁰ Māyā is indistinguishable from Brahman in the same way as effects are indistinguishable from their causes or qualities from their substances.³¹]

refer to assignment

The world-appearance is not an illusion if by illusion is meant non-existence. Śaṅkara clearly differentiates between cognitive states where objects are apprehended as real and illusory states like dreams and mirages.³² Dreams and mirages do not possess the same pragmatic validity or utility value as does the world of waking experience. Again, dreams and illusions have an objective content only for the subjective consciousness. Being private to individuals, they exist so long as those states last. The waking state can contradict or sublate not only states of dreams and illusions but also of sleep. Furthermore Śaṅkara distinguishes between all of them and the completely non-existent, like the son of a barren woman.³³ The world

then is justified on the grounds of sense experience³⁴ and pragmatic validity, vyavahārika satya.³⁵ It is only from the perspective of Brahman that the universe ceases to have a status in reality; but not otherwise. Brahman, the only true reality which is not subject to sublation (bādhā) is the true ground both of the universe and of man (ātman). To know Brahman-ātman is the spur to the philosopher's quest.³⁶

What is the nature of Brahman? While objects are states of different material substances they themselves are not true reality as they are subject to apparent modification. Thus material substances like clay, gold or water cannot constitute ultimate reality. As universals they lend themselves to an infinite series of changing finite particulars which are states or conditions (avasthā) of the universals. Śaṅkara states: "There are in the world many universals (sāmānyas) with their particulars (viśeṣas), both conscious and unconscious. All these sāmānyas, in their graduated series are included and comprehended in one great sāmānya, i.e., in Brahman's nature as a mass of intelligence."³⁷ If reality is accorded to the many particulars separately a definition of reality becomes impossible, since at times they could be confused with one another, such as a rope for a snake, a tree stump for a person. Thus all material substances or universals and their finite particulars are mutable forms, and are not a mark of true reality. All particulars and their universals are appearances of Brahman the only reality.²⁸

Epistemologically the existence we attribute to objects is the most universal of experiences. This universality of the existence of earthly phenomena is absolutised as a principle of being, by Śaṅkara. For him existence or being, appears as phenomena. Existence is the universal substance which persists through all states or forms of

objects. Thus for him existence is the criterion of reality. Reality underlying phenomena is undeniable but what its nature is, is undescrivable since it is not a datum of the senses. It has to be inferred as a basis of objects whose forms alone are experienceable.

Saṅkara extends his arguments from external phenomena to internal mental states. The existence of our thoughts and emotions is undeniable as it is taken for granted. Perception of phenomena is a mental act; phenomena are known through our ideation of them. Even an illusory idea which lacks an objective counterpart exists as an idea in the mind. Saṅkara extends the criterion of existence to hold true for states of swoon and sleep also though they are without any object of consciousness. The existence of ideas of any kind is an undeniable fact. Existence is revealed not only in the cognition of all things but also the conception of all ideas. Thus Saṅkara holds that existence is the common basis, the universal substance which serves as the substratum of all states, physical and psychological. Inference requires the existence of reality which is not subject to the changes that objects or mental states are heir to. While changing physical and psychological states cannot claim the status of indubitable reality on account of their contradictable nature - a rope, for instance can be mistaken for a snake - existence can claim such a status. Existence persists in the midst of changes. The universe as a whole changes but its existence is a persistent fact; existence is the common denominator in the universe of names and forms. It is the sat, the self of the universe and of man. Saṅkara next attempts to establish the sat as absolute consciousness.

First, for 'Sāṅkara, the Upaniṣads furnish evidence to the effect that sat, Brahman, is of the very nature of consciousness. 'Sāṅkara further argues that our consciousness of our existence in any state-sleep, dream and waking - indicates that our true nature is of the nature of consciousness.³⁹ We believe that mental states are conscious.

Actually according to 'Sāṅkara, they reflect consciousness, reveal it. Also the fact that physical things appear to the senses shows that their existence also reveals itself through them. Chatterjee and Datta put the point thus: "The power of appearing (bhāti) is common to both internal and external forms of existence, and it can, therefore be argued that existence which is common to the internal and the external world must possess the power of revealing itself. Therefore, it is reasonable to hold that Absolute existence is of the nature of self-revealing consciousness."⁴⁰

'Sāṅkara further argues that the external world is "well-adapted for the drama of the soul-life",⁴¹ that objects are guided by and are for the use of sentient beings. Nature betrays a universal purpose, that the hand of an ultimate consciousness is shown in the drama of life. The analogy of the potter and his artifacts is used to express this idea.⁴²

Again, 'Sāṅkara, following the Upaniṣads asserts that Brahman is of the nature of bliss as well.⁴³ One proof is our tendency for seeking joy in the midst of life's conditions, and the culmination of joy is the bliss a person experiences in Brahma-jñāna.⁴⁴ Therefore ultimate reality is of the nature of existence-knowledge-bliss, sat-cit-ānanda.

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4.3 BRAHMAN AND THE WORLD *

To admit the usually popular notion of theism, making Brahman creator is for Śāṅkara inadequate as it involves either the independent origin of matter or to make matter a part of Brahman. Also the notion of a second from Brahman indents on the hypothesis of Brahman as sole reality, while to admit of internal differences in ultimate reality is to make Brahman a sort of dissolute absolute.

* The only way out for Śāṅkara was to show the dependent status of the world on Brahman. This is not a solution to the world's mystery, since we do not know why Brahman should appear as the world. But since the world cannot exist without Brahman, Brahman must be regarded in some mysterious way as its cause.] As such Brahman must be admitted to possess a power of self-revelation, translated into the manifested universe.⁴⁵ From the human point of view the wielder of this power is seen as Creator, God, the wholly other. Brahman and its power, māyā, like fire and its power to burn, are inseparable, māyā not having an independent status, just as forms or qualities are indivisibly related to their substances. The wonder and mystery of the world is only from the human end. As wielder of māyā Brahman has to be conceived as agent as no other explanation can suffice; Brahman is God, Īśvara, the cause of the world. God without māyā is Brahman, qualityless, one without a second. If māyā is a mystery, then also is the creatorship of Brahman a mystery. The transition from non-creator to creator need not mean ontological transformation of the Absolute. The world's appearance does not signify a change of reality. The world in no way affects the being of reality. "As a magician himself is not affected...

by [his] magic... it being unreal, so also the supreme Self is not affected by this world which is a delusion."⁴⁶

4.4 GOD

Following the early Upaniṣads Śaṅkara at first uses negative descriptions to denote the indeterminate Absolute. We have a positive description in the conception of Brahman as sat-cit-ānanda. Even this designation is an insufficient explanation, giving only a clue to the Absolute's nature and not what it is in itself. It suggests that Brahman is not contentless but the highest form of reality. Śaṅkara, as quoted by Radhakrishnan says:

"Brahman, free from space, attributes, motion, fruition and difference, being in the highest sense and without a second, seems to the slow of mind no more than non-being." ⁴⁷

The positive description of Brahman refers to its essential features and those of creatorship to its accidental ones.⁴⁸ [Brahman is the efficient and material cause of the world, which has a conscious plan and purpose; what the plan is, is hard for us to divine. Therefore Śaṅkara suggests the theory of līlā.]

Ontologically, for us, God is the Absolute subject regarding the world external to itself. Brahman associated with māyā is God.⁴⁹ This association is accidental as, really, māyā is an apparent adjunct, upādhi. From the point of view of ultimate reality there is nothing but the Absolute, and the universe or any conception about it, is irrelevant.

4.5 THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL

Individuals are the absolute under limitation. Brahman individuates itself into a multiplicity of finite selves. The process is a mysterious one and presents the same problem as the one concerning the lapse of the Absolute into the phenomenal realm, without, at the same time, the absolute suffering any change. Śaṅkara is obliged to fall back on metaphors such as one cosmic space and parts of space. Jars occupying parts of space seem to limit cosmic space; but when the jars are removed their little spaces unite in the one cosmic space. Śaṅkara uses the reflection theory also. The sun and the moon are mere reflections in water and not real. White crystals appear red because of the reflection of red flowers placed near them. Similarly the individual selves are reflections of the ātman in avidyā, ignorance on the removal of avidyā the reflections go but not the reality of which they are reflections.⁵⁰

The intelligence, ego, mind, senses and body form a unified system constituting the human personality. The true Self underlying them all is Brahman. Brahman considered as the inner reality of man is called ātman, the inner witness of the life history of individuals. The ātman, however, is not affected by the experiences of each person. Individuals are the external vestures the Absolute assumes through māyā. The mind, ego, intelligence and senses are the internal subtle body, which are not destroyed at death. The subtle body retains the residue of sense impressions of a person's given life-time and bears them towards another incarnation. The person's physical self, the body, is temporary as it disintegrates at death. The subtle body

fashions for itself another body in a future birth. This process goes on until the individual liberates himself when the subtle body is dissolved.⁵¹

4.6 ETHICS AND SOTERIOLOGY

The highest object of worship is God. When Brahman uses its power to create and sustain it is referred to as God. The realization of God as active Creator is the highest religious goal but this realization of God as supreme personality without moral defects but with every moral perfection, is not sufficient for liberation. The philosophical goal for Sankara requires that the highest state of realization should transcend every distinction of duality and so the individual must "travel" from God as object to Brahman as pure subject. In this experience both the creator and created are sublated and Brahman as the sole reality is known.⁵² The highest realization requires that one must shed his nescience, avidyā. When the individual's misconception about his true nature is dispelled, there is the consequent identification with his true self, the ātman, and the greatest human value is attained. In this transfigured experience, God, the saguṇa Brahman is also transcended with the world. The ineffable experience of the freed-in-life (jīvanmukta) is that of the Absolute, the nirguṇa Brahman.

Every form of dualism is transcended. Liberating knowledge is a mysterious, special occurrence in which differences of the known, the knower, and knowledge, which are features of sense-object knowledge, are removed, the inmost Self being transcendent to them.

"Brahman is comprehended in the unanalysable mentation (vṛtti) of the form, 'I am Brahman', that arises from hearing the great Upaniṣadic saying "'That thou art'." 53

Śaṅkara says that in

"common experience, the mentation of the form of a pot, with the reflection of Consciousness on it, goes out of a person to envelop the pot. Then that mentation destroys the ignorance about the pot; still the witnessing Consciousness is needed to reveal the pot through a manifestation of the identity of the Consciousness underlying the pot and the apprehending Consciousness. The mentation about Brahman destroys the ignorance about and the ignorance subsisting on It. But the apprehending Consciousness cannot reveal Brahman, the (phala) mentation being included in ignorance itself as the latter's product, so that it gets destroyed along with that ignorance and can have no further action." 54

While liberation, mokṣa, is the knowledge of the underlying unitary principle of one's own self and the universe it at the same time establishes one in his true status as that principle. The finite personality is in a sense exchanged for an universal one.

4.6.1 Jīvanmukti

Mokṣa can occur before physical death, jīvanmukti, freedom in life. The saved are not reborn, the seed of a future birth having been burnt out on the rise of knowledge. When the soul is at the stage of Īsvara there is the duality between them and so absolute freedom is not attained, avidyā not yet overcome. This is the fate of the worshippers of the personal God. God is the ruler of māyā with which He creates and destroys. Māyā is the principle of self-expression in God and it

deludes souls but not God. Avidyā is the result of māyā. Souls worship God for freedom from saṃsāra. "In religion we have the relation of master and servant.... Elsewhere [souls] are said to be parts of Īśvara, even as sparks are of fire."⁵⁵ God as the ordainer of karma can free finite selves through His grace.

The practice of morality and worship of God lead to mental purification. Householders and renunciants have their respective duties which when properly executed are a means to release. However, Śaṅkara "insists that those who follow the āśrama rules must become sannyasins before they attain release", since there is always the danger that householders may omit to perform some works.⁵⁶

For Śaṅkara any amount of moral practice or good works in itself is not productive of saving knowledge. Karma thrives on distinctions while mokṣa is freedom from distinctions. The practice of morality has only preparatory value. Jñāna, knowledge is the only means to release but jñāna cannot be had without morality.⁵⁷

own Notes

End Notes : Chapter Four

Śaṅkara

Most references to Śaṅkara are from Swami Gambhirananda's translation of the BRAHMA-SŪTRA-BHĀṢYA of Śri Śaṅkarācārya.

I will use B.S.G. to denote this.

1. "So long as the oneness of the true Self is not realised, nobody entertains the idea of unreality when dealing with the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge...."
- B.S.G., II. i. 14, p.330.
2. Rāmānuja, Madhva and Prabhupāda took exception to Śaṅkara's theory. Among non-Indians a good example of a critical approach to Śaṅkara and to Indian thought as a whole is that of Schweitzer, A. in his Indian Thought and its Development.
3. B.S.G., II. i. 18, p.343.
4. ibid., I. i. 1., pp.7-11.
5. "The realization of Brahman is the highest human objective; for it completely eradicates all such evils as ignorance, etc., that constitute the seed of transmigration. Therefore Brahman should be deliberated on."
- B.S.G. ibid., i. i.1. p.11.
6. ibid., II. i.1. - II. ii. 45, pp. 367-443.
7. ibid., I. i.4., pp. 26-28.
8. ibid., I. i.1., p.9.
9. ibid., I.i.5., p.45.
10. ibid., II. ii.1., p.368.
11. ibid., I.i.1., p.12.
12. ibid., I.i.2., p.15.
13. ibid., II.ii. 25-31, pp.414-426.
14. ibid., I.i.12, p.62; II.i. 13, p.325.
15. ibid., II.i. 23, p.349.
16. ibid., III.ii. 21, pp.620-621. also Chatterjee and Datta, An Introduction To Indian Philosophy, p.369.
17. B.S.G. IV. i. 13, p.835.
18. The theme of Chap. II., B.S.G.
19. B.S.G. II.i. 9, pp.317-9.
20. ibid., II.i. 14, pp.327-8.
21. ibid.,
22. ibid., II.i. 18, p.339.
23. ibid., II.i. 18, p.343.
24. ibid., II.i. 14, p.327.
25. ibid., II.i. 18, p.340.
26. ibid., II.i. 27, p.356; also p.3.
27. ibid., II.i. 14, p.328.

28. Śaṅkara cited in Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, Vol. II, p.577.
29. Chatterjee and Datta, op. cit., p.384.
30. B.S.G. II.i. 27-32, pp.354-361.
31. ibid., II.i. 27, p.356; II.i. 18, p.340.
32. ibid., III.ii. 4, p.594.
33. ibid., II.i. 18, p.342.
34. ibid., II.i. 28, p.420.
35. ibid., II.i. 14, p.330.
36. ibid., I.i. 1, p.11.
37. quoted in Radhakrishnan, S., op. cit., p.534.
38. B.S.G. , II.i. 18, p.344.
39. ibid., III.ii. 4-12; I.ii. 21, p.139; II.i. 14, p.334.
40. Chatterjee and Datta, op. cit., p.379.
41. Radhakrishnan, S., op. cit., p.546.
42. B.S.G. II.ii. 1, p.369.
43. ibid., I.i. 19, p.71.
44. ibid.
45. ibid., II.ii. 7, p.378; II.i. 25, p.351.
46. ibid., II.i. 9, p.318.
47. Radhakrishnan, S., Vol. II, p.538.
Also B.S.G. I.iv. 15, p.274.
48. Radhakrishnan, S., op. cit., p.539.
49. ibid., pp.553-561.
50. B.S.G. III.ii, 19, p.615-620.
51. Radhakrishnan, S., op. cit., p.648.
52. B.S.G., III.ii. 25, p.629.
53. ibid., I.i. 4. footnote, p.31.
54. ibid., pp.31-2.
55. Radhakrishnan, S., op. cit., p.609.
56. ibid., p.617.
57. ibid., pp.621-630.

CHAPTER 5

Chapter Five investigates the main ideas of an idealistic Vedāntic school which has also accommodated a realistic approach to a predominantly spiritual metaphysics. The trend set by Rāmānuja has been carried right into modern times, with many variations.

5. RĀMĀNUJA

The reputation of Rāmānuja, who came nearly two centuries after Śaṅkara, as a Vedāntin is second only to that of Śaṅkara. To the latter it did not matter one way or the other if devotees addressed God by one name or the other. He himself wrote impressive hymns to the chief deities of Hinduism.¹ [But for Rāmānuja, a Vaiṣṇavite, the interests of Vaiṣṇavism were paramount and so he promoted them vigorously. His sectarian loyalties, however, had to be reconciled with Vedāntic idealism.] And it was to this end that he sought to square the religion of God with the Absolute of philosophy.

In his time the Bhakti tradition was popular and its main representatives in the South, both Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite, sought to provide a philosophical basis for theology. In the Vaiṣṇava movement, the main rival of Śaivism, the more important of Rāmānuja's predecessors were Yamunācārya and Nāthamuni. For them, as for the other Ālvars, the devotional hymns to God, collectively called the Prabandham, had the same intention as the theistic portions of the Vedas. Rāmānuja's "chief aim was to proclaim the doctrine of salvation through bhakti, and to make it out to be the central teaching of the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Brahma Sūtras."²

5.1 SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

While the triple canon was the basis of authority for him he was considerably influenced by the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas such as the Viṣṇu and the Bhāgavata. Albeit the philosopher in him restrained his faith for otherwise it would have made Rāmānuja accept uncritically and

literally much of the mythology of the Purāṇas.³ The sources of knowledge for him were perception, inference and scripture.

5.2 METAPHYSICS

CHECK with other metaphysics

Rāmānuja's severe criticism of 'Sāṅkara's conception of the indeterminate non-differentiated Absolute was to show that such a Nirguṇa Brahman could hardly become the supreme object of adoration. For Rāmānuja theistic interests were paramount, and if man were to direct his fervent devotion to the highest reality, then both man and that reality must be ontologically real and a real difference must also exist between their natures. It is for this reason that in Rāmānuja's conception Brahman is not qualityless undifferentiated spirit, but is endowed with real qualities.

5.2.1 The nature of Brahman

Interpreting Brahman's designation as existence, knowledge and bliss, Rāmānuja states in his commentary on the Brahma-sūtras that "the three terms are in co-ordination... (which) means the existence of several attributes in the same substratum.... It cannot be said that the terms have oneness of meaning and therefore are the very nature of Brahman and not attributes, for, in that case, only one term would have been quite sufficient to apprehend the nature of Brahman and moreover, such an interpretation would conflict with co-ordination, for in co-ordination there must be different reasons or motives for using these terms."⁴

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad text "one only without a second"⁵ indicates not Brahman's homogeneity but that "besides Brahman there is no other efficient cause, and thereby prove that Brahman is unique... in

possessing excellent auspicious qualities."⁶ Rāmānuja also argues that texts denying attributes to Brahman, deny in fact only attributes of matter in Brahman. Statements describing Brahman's will to create, that "His essential nature... is knowledge, strength and action [and] This Self is free from evil, old age, death, sorrow... with true desires and true volitions"⁷ show that Brahman which is essentially knowledge, also possesses other infinite auspicious qualities and is free from evil qualities like sinfulness, grief and death.⁸

Clearly Rāmānuja's conception enables him to attribute to Brahman many auspicious qualities which benefit the God of religion. In Rāmānuja's thorough-going world-view Brahman is not the only reality. For him matter and finite souls are also ontologically real. Their relation to Brahman is such that they are neither radically distinct from it nor are they its illusory forms. Thus Rāmānuja steers clear of radical dualism and strict monism. By arguing against the negative view of Brahman in scripture and also against the view of Brahman as sole reality, Rāmānuja opened the door to the interpretation of Brahman as dynamic reality.

For Rāmānuja God has five aspects:

There is the Supreme transcendent (para) with the six attributes of knowledge, lordship, potency, strength, virility, and splendour. The supreme is called Nārāyaṇa sometimes, who lives in heaven.⁹

The grouped form of four Vyuhās: Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. Vāsudeva is the same as the supreme Lord. "With Saṁkarṣaṇa,

creation assumes an embryonic form; through Pradyumna the duality of spirit (Puruṣa) and matter (Prakṛti) makes its first appearance; and finally, Aniruddha enables the body and soul to grow."¹⁰

God's immanent aspect is called the Antaryāmin (inner ruler).

Viṣṇu's incarnations as depicted in the Purāṇas and in the Gītā.

The most concrete form of God is in the shape of sacred images.

This form is called Arcāvatara. "The belief is that God descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that he may be easily accessible to his devotees."¹¹

5.2.2 Rāmānuja's realistic approach

When it came to the question of the nature of selves and the world, the idealism of Śaṅkara was anathema to Rāmānuja. He felt that Śaṅkara compromised the ontological validity of the selves and the external world when Śaṅkara made them inexplicable appearances of Brahman. He therefore criticised Śaṅkara's theory of Brahman and the illusory nature of the world.

The main objections that Rāmānuja urges against Śaṅkara are the following:

Śaṅkara's theory of nescience cannot be proved. One problem about it concerns the locus of nescience. Nescience cannot reside in the individual self since the individual self "comes into existence only after Brahman is covered by ignorance."¹² Alternatively nescience cannot be in Brahman since, if it were so, then Brahman's omniscience

would be negated. The very being of Brahman is knowledge and "so opposed to ignorance."¹³

Furthermore, māyā or nescience which conceals Brahman which is self-luminous pure consciousness, would destroy Brahman because nescience is opposed to consciousness. Any obstruction to the self-revealing luminosity of Brahman is in principle destructive of that luminosity. Since Brahman is of the very nature of consciousness Brahman would be destroyed.¹⁴ Rāmānuja holds that there is a fundamental contradiction regarding the status of avidyā. It is sometimes described as neither real nor unreal by Śaṅkara and his followers. [For Rāmānuja a thing is either real or unreal but cannot be both. Śaṅkara at times describes māyā as positive, bhāva-rūpa. If māyā is positive reality then there is a second besides the Absolute Brahman. Again if it is real then it would be identical with the absolute the only reality, which is like saying the Absolute is ignorance. The co-existence of māyā and Brahman is impossible. Also, it makes no sense to say that māyā is unreal since the unreal can have no existence.] If non-existence was regarded as an object of perception, prior knowledge of the object must be presupposed. "To have a knowledge of the non-existence of a pot for example, we must have a knowledge of the pot and of the place where its absence is experienced."¹⁵ If māyā is a positive entity then no amount of knowledge could destroy it.

For Rāmānuja there is no scriptural authority for the theory of māyā as understood by Śaṅkara. "The word māyā does not mean unreal or false but... refers to Prakṛti which is the cause of this wonderful

creation and the Lord is called Māyin because He possesses the power and not because of nescience on His part. It is the jīva that is bound by this māyā.... Again in 'The Lord became many by His māyā' the reference is to the Lord's manifold powers."¹⁶

add [In the realistic idealism of Rāmānuja Brahman is a composite personality possessing the three integral parts of God, selves and matter. The three together make up the complete whole, Brahman. In this tripartite nature of Brahman the two spiritual entities are God and the multiplicity of individual souls. The relationship between the three is such that God is the supreme controller of selves and matter. Selves and matter constitute the body of Brahman. When Rāmānuja says that Brahman is the sole reality he means that Brahman is the unity of the differences of its three parts. Separately each part enjoys a distinct status but collectively there is identity between them. "Each part is separate and yet not different in substance from the whole."¹⁷ It is possible to speak of each part as uniquely distinct and at the same time to refer to it as Brahman. It is for this reason that Rāmānuja's system is called Viśiṣṭādvaita. Vedāntins recognize three types of distinction.

There is heterogeneous distinction in which something, say, a cow is different from things of other classes such as horses, elephants. The distinction between one thing and another thing of the same class such as one cow and another is homogeneous. The third kind of distinction is within the same thing, (Svagatabheda) as between

head, legs and tail of a cow. Ramanuja subscribes to the last kind of distinction when he "holds that Brahman is devoid of the two kinds of external distinction..., because there is nothing besides God, either similar or dissimilar to him. But God is possessed of internal distinctions..., as there are within Him different conscious and unconscious substances which can be mutually distinguished."¹⁸

5.2.3 Substance and quality

For Rāmanuja there are two basic categories, substance and quality. Anything which possesses qualities is a substance. Qualities are dependent upon its substance and so are distinguished from it. However, for the very reason that they are dependent for their being upon the substance, shows that qualities are not external to it. Qualities and substance form a complex whole. The relation between them is an internal and not an external one.

In the example of the blue lotus which Rāmanuja cites, the quality blueness is different as a quality from the lotus, its substance and basis of blueness, but is not radically distinct as if it were a separate entity. The two terms can be described as distinct from each other and yet not as radically apart. Identity or inseparable relation has to be admitted. This view differs from Śaṅkara's which makes out that qualities are appearances of their substances. For Rāmanuja the identity between substance and qualities does not exclude but includes the qualities. "It includes them and it is their

difference that calls for an affirmation of identity in the above sense."¹⁹ This principle of identity in difference holds true also for substance and its modes, for example, clay and jar. In this way Rāmanuja seeks to establish that the soul is a part of Brahman. "By part, however, is meant that which constitutes one aspect of a substance. Hence a distinguishing quality of a substance is a part of that substance. The lustre of gems, the generic character of a cow in cows, or the body of an embodied being, is a part of the gem, the cow, and the embodied being respectively. In this sense, the soul which is the body of Brahman, as declared by scripture, is a part of it."²⁰

The universe, inclusive of sentient and insentient entities who are comprehended in Brahman as its body, has Brahman for its support. All three are conceived as a complete whole. Rāmanuja refutes an Absolute under limiting conditions, for, "in that case, Brahman will have to experience all the happiness and misery experienced by the soul."²¹

For Rāmanuja the theory of identity in difference is the only explanation that does justice to the scriptural declaration of the Absolute's omniscience and freedom from defects. To the objection that a part is also heir to the defects of the whole, in this case it would mean that God would be subject to the defects of souls, he offers the following rebuttal. "Though a distinguishing quality of a substance is a part of it, yet we observe differences between the two. Though light is a part of the object of which it is a quality, yet the object is different in nature from its quality, the light. So also, though the soul is part of Brahman as Its body, still the

essential nature and characteristics of the two are not one."²²

For Rāmanuja the best proof for the transcendence of Brahman and hence its absolute independence of the other members of the triad of which it is the support, is scripture. He accepts Brahman in the theistic sense as supreme personality, omnipotent God. God's infinite powers distinguish Him from the dependent souls. As the antarāyamin, God is the regulator of the cosmic scheme from within.

Through the use of the principle that God is the inner regulator of the universe Rāmanuja attempts to assert the full independence of God so that the changes in the world and in the life history of the individuals do not affect Him, just as bodily changes in individuals do not affect their souls. In support of his argument he cites the analogy of a king and his subjects. The king does not experience the pain his subjects feel when he metes out punishment to them.

5.2.4 Creation

When there is no gross evolution of the universe into name and form, Brahman's body is said to be in the state of dissolution, at rest. The state of evolution occurs when Brahman is connected with the name and form.²³ Thus creation and dissolution are the appearance and disappearance of souls and matter in different cycles according to the will of God. God alone can initiate the world process as He is endowed with infinite powers. For Rāmanuja there are people endowed with different powers and this unequal distribution of powers plus the fact that beings are graded into gods, men and



animals, in samsāra, go to show that God's will in creation not only has a purpose but also that God could be liable to the charge of partiality.²⁴ In our experience people have motives for their actions. Similarly when God creates the world He can be said to have a motive. To these criticisms Rāmānuja's reaction is that God, who is superior to beings, cannot have a purpose. It is God's spontaneous activity. "Even as kings engage themselves in activity, like playing with a ball, without any motive but for mere amusement, or even as children play out of fun, so also Brahman, without any purpose to gain, engages Itself in creating this world of diversity as a mere pastime."²⁵

The charge of partiality could be brought against God from another point of view. The fact of suffering in the world is sufficient to indict God on a charge of cruelty. Also there is the question of the unequal distribution of pain and pleasure. To the question of pain and pleasure Rāmānuja replies that they are temporary conditions that beings find themselves in on account of the results of their past karma. At the time of evolution God takes into account the souls' karma. In this sense God is the operative or "efficient cause in bringing the latent tendencies of each individual to fruition."²⁶

5.3 BONDAGE AND FREEDOM

The soul, atomic in size, repeatedly inhabits different bodies towards which it gravitates life after life on account of its karma. The soul has its true nature concealed from it "according to the wish of the supreme Person"²⁷ due to its sinful karma. Unlike Śaṅkara's conception of the individual soul as an appearance of Brahman,

Rāmaṇuja's conception of it is as an eternal spirit and of the nature of knowledge since it has knowledge as its essential quality.²⁸ For Rāmaṇuja both God and souls are of the nature of knowledge and they also possess it. Thus there is the distinction between their essential nature and essential quality. The former is called substantive knowledge and the latter attributive knowledge. Attributive knowledge enables the souls to have dealings with the world and other selves, as it reveals objects to the souls. Attributive knowledge is both a substance and a quality. It is a substance since it is the basis for change - it contracts and expands when it manifests various objects to individuals.²⁹ It irradiates from the soul and functions as mental and cognitive acts, via the mind and sense organs, and meets the external objects. It is a quality inasmuch as it is dependent on God or the souls. However, the attributive knowledge of God does not expand or contract as it is always all-pervasive. The soul is an agent and within certain limits enjoys a measure of freedom. It is free to act in the sense that it can choose either evil or good actions. God does not impel it to action if the soul does not have the initial volition. At the same time God does not withhold permission if the soul wishes to act.³⁰ Though God is the soul's inner substance and controller, the soul does exercise its options. Rāmaṇuja's conception of the soul as atomic, each soul living in its own body, enables him to explain that no confusion of the results of actions arises. Each soul will experience the results of its own actions.

Ontologically, the soul's identification with its body and attachment to various desires consequent upon such identification, constitutes its bondage. Bondage is thus the result of the confusion, felt by the soul,

in which it loses consciousness of its own spiritual and blissful nature, and at the same time falsely identifies with material nature. In the process the maximum expression of the soul's attributive knowledge is impeded because it pervades the body with its knowledge.

5.3.1 Means to liberation

[For Rāmaṇuja the best means to salvation is bhakti, extreme longing for God.] The paths of karma, jñāna, and dhyāna lead up to bhakti. Rāmaṇuja argues that the Śāṅkaran school has not the right understanding of the concept 'Knowledge' as taught in Vedic texts. He explains that knowledge does not mean the identity between man and Brahman but means meditation - a steady stream of concentrated consciousness on God. Intellectual discrimination is also a kind of meditation since the subject matter is God. The way of works, karma, should involve disinterested performance of one's duties in accordance with one's station in life (in the four āśramas). One should eschew all selfish motives when executing Vedic rites, such as longing for material rewards or even heaven. "Prayer, fasting, giving gifts, worship of the Deity, which are not connected with any of the Āśramas, can promote knowledge."³¹ Sincere seekers of ultimate freedom, even outside the āśrama system, are all capable of salvation, though "belonging to an Āśrama is better."³² On the realization that the performance of rites is not conducive of the highest good, a man turns to the study of Vedānta.³³ This would lead him to realize that constant [meditation is the only way to salvation] which means "seeing" God. [Thus for Rāmaṇuja the means and the end of life is Bhakti.] "...the ultimate object of man's love must be this supreme

Source of the value of all that he values in life."³⁴ [God responds to man's devotion.] "We conclude that he to whom this constant remembrance which is exalted to the height of direct perception is dear, because the object of that remembrance is dear, he is loved by the Self and by him the Self is realized."³⁵

Among the ethical qualifications are discrimination in food, virtuous conduct, doing good to others including animals,³⁶ wishing well to all, truthfulness, non-violence, charity, cheerfulness and hope. An important element of bhakti that Rāmānuja emphasizes is prapatti, total surrender. While jñāna and karma were generally limited to the three upper classes, prapatti was universal, knowing no sex or caste restrictions.³⁷

Prapatti is not only extreme attachment to God but has the sense of absolute self-emptying and taking unconditional shelter in the arms of God. The power of God's protection is never doubted. For the bhakta in this frame of mind, nothing short of the divine has any significance any more.³⁸

When liberation takes place the soul's knowledge becomes all-pervasive, enabling it to become omniscient. The soul's "attributes of knowledge, bliss, etc., which undergo contraction by karmas, manifest in the form of expansion, when the bondage in the form of karmas is destroyed and the self reaches the supreme Light."³⁹

When released the soul recovers the insight of its ontological position in relation to God and matter - in short, to the whole unity. Its essential attribute as the intuition of Brahman is

restored.⁴⁰ Alternatively, the state of liberation consists in the destruction of ignorance which had hitherto led the soul to believe it was a finite creature liable to sin and sorrow. The soul eventually obtains release from the constant rounds of birth and death. It also attains all powers of God except God's power of creation.

God is pleased with the continuous meditative worship of the soul whose ignorance He destroys and God enables the soul to experience perpetual bliss on account of the close proximity between them.⁴¹ The saved soul can never return to samsāra.

End Notes : Chapter Five

Rāmanuja

The translation of Rāmanuja's 'Sri Bhāṣya' which I have used is by Vireswarananda S. and Adidevananda S.

This work is abbreviated as B.S.V.A.

1. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, p.450.
2. *ibid.*, p.669.
3. *ibid.*
4. B.S.V.A. 1.1.1. p.50.
5. Radhakrishnan, S., The Principal Upanisads, 6.2.1., pp.447-448.
6. B.S.V.A. 1.1.1 p.51.
7. *ibid.*, 1.1.1 p.52.
8. *ibid.*
9. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, p.689.
10. Mahadevan, T.M.P., Invitation To Indian Philosophy, p.277.
11. *ibid.*
12. B.S.V.A. 1.1.1 p.55.
13. *ibid.*
14. *ibid.*, p.64.
15. *ibid.*, p.59.
16. *ibid.*, p.73.
17. Puligandla, R., Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy, p.231.
18. Chatterjee and Datta, p.418.
19. Hiriyanna, M., Outlines of Indian Philosophy, p.400.
20. B.S.V.A., 23.42, p.298.
21. *ibid.*
22. *ibid.*, p.299.
23. *ibid.*, 1.4.15, p.194.
24. *ibid.*, 2.1.34, p.237
25. *ibid.*
26. *ibid.*, 2.1.34, p.238.
27. *ibid.*, 3.2.3, p.332.
28. *ibid.*, 2.3.31, p.289.
29. *ibid.*, 2.3.18, p.282.
30. *ibid.*, 2.3.41, p.295.
31. *ibid.*, 3.4.36, p.426.
32. *ibid.*, 3.4.40, p.427.
33. Chatterjee and Datta, *op. cit.*, p.427.
34. B.S.V.A., 1.4.20., p.201.
35. *ibid.*, p.7.
36. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, p.704.
37. Rao, P.N., Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy, p.143.
38. *ibid.*, pp.141-146.
39. B.S.V.A., 4.4.2, p.481.
40. *ibid.*, 1.2.12., p.132.
41. *ibid.*, 4.4.22., p.496.

CHAPTER 6

Chapter Six looks at the way in which Vivekananda reconstructs idealistic monism in order to suit modern philosophico-religious aspirations, particularly for the Hindus.

6. VIVEKANANDA

6.1 FORMATIVE YEARS

Born as Narendranath in 1863 in the famous Kayastha Dutta family of Calcutta, Vivekananda, unlike the large majority of Indians whose cause he later passionately espoused, had the advantages of a high social status and religious and educational opportunities. His father who was an attorney of the Calcutta High Court, and his mother who brought home to him the message of moral conduct as depicted in the epics of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, helped mould his early career.¹ Endowed with a keen intellect, Vivekananda had a strong proclivity to trance states; even as a child he used to lose himself often in meditation for long hours.² Besides a knowledge of his native Bengali and Sanskrit, Vivekananda also received the benefits of Western education. At Calcutta University so thoroughly did Vivekananda master English, Western Logic and Philosophy that he elicited the following remark from Principal William Hastie:

"I have never yet come across a lad of his talents and possibilities, even in German Universities, among philosophical students. He is bound to make a mark in life." 3

But at a critical juncture in his young career Narendra was negatively influenced by the utilitarianism of J.S. Mill and Spencer, the rationalistic skepticism of Hume and the theory of the survival of the fittest of Darwin. They cut right across his faith in his ancestral culture. The nihilistic notions implied in their world-views rendered him temporarily an agnostic.⁴ Later, however, as Swami Vivekananda (his monastic title) he criticised the agnostics and the Utilitarians when he lectured to capacity houses in the West. The turning-point in his public career as a brilliant exponent of

Vedānta followed in the wake of his phenomenal success in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.⁵ At this point it is important to delineate briefly the historical circumstances that led to the socio-economic conditions of India in Vivekananda's time. Only brief mention of the religious movements of the nineteenth century will be made, with just a bare outline of the Brahmo Samaj. The Samaj inspired many other movements and was the leading one in Bengal; Vivekananda as a youth was its member for a few years.

6.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The British had conquered India in 1757 for the sake of trade and economic exploitation.⁶ British rule, however, seriously affected Indian culture in many ways, just as the Muslim conquest of India did since 1000 A.D. Before the Moguls, some Muslim adventurers, taking advantage of the disunity among Indian rulers, made many inroads into India until the Turks occupied Delhi in 1206. The relative ease with which the Muslims and, later, the British were able to conquer the country was a fact Vivekananda lamented bitterly.⁷ One of the baneful legacies of Islamic rule in India was the coercion of large numbers of Hindus and Buddhists to Islam. In the last analysis Mogul rule posed the severest threat to India's religious-philosophical culture. Initially the British Raj also encouraged mass conversion of Indians to Christianity. Later, the task was confined to the activities of British missionaries. However, Christianity, like Islam under the Moguls, failed to have the

desired widespread effect on the Hindus. The British had a different kind of effect on Indian culture than the Moguls. (The British brought "Western modernity - modern political, social and economic organizations, and the emerging scientific and technological culture."⁸ Britain was convinced that colonial rule⁹ was in the best interests of the ruled. Later British administrative policy separated the two spheres of politics and religion. Because the administration now rarely interfered in religious matters, it became easier for the Indians to adopt the socio-political innovations of their rulers.¹⁰ The Hindus who had been less conservative than the Muslims were the first to adopt Western culture, with many intellectuals and others among them slavishly imitating Western ways. In this way a cultural rift began to develop gradually in Indian society. Economically, India slowly became impoverished. Another great impact on Indian culture came from the independent Western scholar. His disinterested painstaking researches on all aspects of India's culture and civilisation were equally startling in their effects on the academic circles in Europe.) While Sanskrit's consanguinity to Europe's languages gave an impetus to the science of linguistics, and led to the discipline of Indology,¹¹ the discovery of the Vedas and other religious texts helped the development of comparative religions.

The Upaniṣads and the Gītā "profoundly influenced the Transcendentalists, such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman" in America.¹² Knowledge of Indian mathematics, logic, painting, music, sculpture and architecture spread in Europe in the nineteenth century and ever since, in the academic world, there has been a growing appreciation of Indian values

in the West. However,

"Just as the Western students of Indian thought were influenced by it, so also the Indians were influenced by Western intellectual tradition." 13

Thus a reciprocal East-West cultural commerce was slowly taking shape. But the Western influence on the Indian was definitely the greater. For example, the political struggle for freedom under Gandhi and Nehru cannot be understood without the influence of Western values that were imbibed by the Indian leaders.] 2

11 Vivekananda came under the spell of the Brahmo Samaj led at the time by Keshab Chander Sen. Christian missions, in their conversion attempts, were severely critical of Hinduism, its metaphysics, rituals and the caste system. While many Hindu orthodox leaders were against change in any form, there were many progressive thinkers who felt that much of the Christian criticism was justified and so started campaigns for reform. The reformers felt that the basic principles of Hinduism were sound but there was a great need to eschew the excrescences like excessive ritualism, superstitions and idolatry. Some movements such as the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Radha Saomi Satsang sought to purify Hinduism from within by reducing rituals to a bare minimum. A new kind of syncretism began to make itself felt. Some reformers urged Hindus to see in the person of Jesus a noble example of moral and spiritual excellence worthy of emulation. [Keshab Chander Sen and Ramakrishna advocated this doctrine which was later adopted by Vivekananda.]

The person who spearheaded the drive to national renaissance was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, "hailed as the father of modern Indian nationalism."¹⁵ Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. He preached against polytheism, caste, idolatry, sati, child marriage - in short against all that the reactionary Hindus represented. The orthodox opposed him and so did the Christian missions because Roy rejected Trinitarianism in Christianity and the divinity of Jesus.¹⁶ The British authorities were slow in conceding to Roy's demands for the abolition of the pernicious practice of sati.¹⁷ On the social front his reforms such as the remarriage of widows and the abolition of child marriage had a very limited appeal as his movement did not gain a strong foothold in mainstream Hinduism. But the effects of his movement and others like his slowly gained ground in India, with the result that the country benefitted much from enlightened thought of the West. However, they rejected the dogmas of Christianity.¹⁸ The Brahmo Samaj was the most influential of these socio-religious movements. After Roy's death Rabindranath Tagore and Keshab Sen continued the Brahmo's objectives. Both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda had met Keshab; but whereas Keshab failed to influence Ramakrishna, Keshab had impressed the young Vivekananda.¹⁹ Finally it was Ramakrishna who exerted considerable influence over both of them.

⑤ It would be apposite at this stage to consider the influence that Ramakrishna had on Vivekananda. Vivekananda's proclivity to spirituality was only temporarily allayed by secular education and the mild forms of worship enjoined by the Brahmo Samaj. Ramakrishna perfectly understood the deep longing for immortality which Vivekananda had always felt.

Under Ramakrishna's²⁰ guidance, Vivekananda became an adept in concentration until one day he had the ultimate realization of his identity with the Absolute.²¹ According to Ramakrishna the highest human activity was spiritual striving, the culmination of which was oneness with the Absolute. It is on account of this fact that Vivekananda, under the direct influence of his master, Ramakrishna, and his own experience, made it his life's mission to carry India's ideal of mystic religion to the world.] He was eminently suited to the task since he spoke as one who knew and not as one of the scribes.

Ramakrishna, who had negligible formal education, was yet educated in the ways of old India where, at the popular level, the emphasis was on religious practice. But he exhibited throughout his life a rare spirituality, a quality which imparted to him a charisma that attracted thousands of people. | Great social leaders including Keshab Sen, Partap Mazumdar, Vijayakumar Goswami, itinerant monks, "Christians, Muhammedans, Sikhs, great literary geniuses and philosophical thinkers, theologians and professors" and many aspirants from all walks of life paid homage to him.²² While not decrying most religious rituals, he showed that outward conformity to them was of little use. He breathed new life into them by emphasizing, both by preaching and personal example, their esoteric significance. Initially, he addressed the Hindu concept of God-realisation by worshipping the divine as the female Kālī, the Bengali deity. After his spiritual quest was crowned with the vision of Kālī as universal power and presence, he launched on an astonishing mystical career of devotion to the principal deities of Hinduism. He claimed to have been rewarded with singular success

in all his undertakings. What is remarkable in the case of Ramakrishna is that, unlike most seekers after truth, he continued to experiment with every form of religious practice enjoined in the Hindu texts.²³

For him it was the same reality which appeared in various forms according to the aptitude and psychological disposition of the votary.²⁴ The impersonal absolute when conceived as creator was God for him. On the basis of these doctrines he tended to justify all conceptions of theism within every religious system.²⁵ Ramakrishna claims a unique position in world religion by holding that he had intuited both Jesus and Islam's prophet Mohammed.²⁶ Thus for him the manifestation of God was not restricted to any one religion. If enough sincere desire and enthusiasm were applied it is possible, he claimed, for the devotees of all traditions to be vouchsafed direct experience of God. It was on this basis that he asserted that there are no fundamental distinctions between religions, but that each one is a pathway to God.²⁷ For him doctrinal distinctions divide but not spiritual facts which give self-certifying conviction. This teaching, his chief disciple, Vivekananda, was to preach later with ardent persuasion and a certain measure of success. Vivekananda under his master's tutorship was initiated into profound religious mysteries.²⁸ But both for teacher and disciple the crowning experience of mysticism was knowledge of one's identity with Brahman.

Reality in its true essence when experienced, obliterates all sense of the individual self and all distinctions due to the discursive intellect. Thus for them the formless Absolute was a higher conception

than theism, and judged by this standard, much of Hinduism and all other religions, fall short in their conceptions of reality.²⁹ Thus Vivekananda's constant theme was Advaita idealism with which he enthralled his audiences in America and England, a surprising phenomenon for the times. In his audience, there were many for whom Vedānta sounded very strange. To intellectual circles, however, Vedānta was not alien.³⁰ Vivekananda achieved great success because he was a lecturer of an extraordinary personal magnetism. He had the ability to present his case through logical argument, a superb command of English and the patience and sympathy of most of his hearers./ Understandably, opposition to him came from Christian missionaries who saw in his ideas a threat to their own evangelistic efforts in India. He had gone to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 to present the Hindu viewpoint and to appeal for donations for his impoverished country.³¹ The instant success there brought him more invitations to lecture for three consecutive years, but little money. Vivekananda's most influential disciples came from America and England, especially the English headmistress Margaret Noble who became famous as Sister Nivedita, her monastic title. She continued to spread his ideas after his death, being especially remembered for her espousal of women's education in India.³²

After his exposure to Western culture in America he was appalled by the general cultural stagnation in India. There could have been no greater contrast between the general Indian social malaise and the spirit of immense ethical seriousness in the West. But his optimistic enthusiasm and indomitable spirit led him to consider that the Indian

situation was not hopeless. His conclusion was that Indian culture could be revitalised, that the times required not a surrender of its essential principles but a reformulation of them; not a slavish imitation of the Western institutions;³³ but a remodelling of the philosophico-religious national heritage in the light of actual concrete needs.³⁴ He advocated the adoption of many sound Western values in education, in social organization, in optimism and self-reliance.³⁵

6.3 METAPHYSICS

It has already been shown that Śaṅkara attributed true reality to Brahman alone and that while the world is not devoid of existence, it still lacks ultimate reality though not practical significance. The world might not be perfect reality but on that account he does not dismiss it as totally unreal. It has a dependent status as the appearance of Brahman. Vivekananda subscribes to these views of Śaṅkara; however, differences between them emerge in Vivekananda's reconstruction of Śaṅkara's system. The climate of pessimistic despair in India was certainly decisive in his reconstruction. It is not altogether true to say that the whole exercise of Śaṅkara's scheme was negative because it aimed solely at withdrawal from the world. His comments, for instance, on the practical nature of Gītā ethics amply testify to his appreciation of action directed to worldly ends. But it is true that Śaṅkara sees the main business of philosophy as the transcendence of the universe. For him philosophy is spiritual in intention and end. The negative stress lies in his

constantly recurring theme of one's true nature as the Absolute, of the mutability of things and the world's unreality, of the renunciation of earthly and heavenly desires, and the thirst for liberation.³⁶ These views have Vivekananda's approval as well, but only in the final analysis, soteriologically speaking. But it is far from being the main burden of Vivekananda's teachings especially with regard to ethics. He rightly states that such hard disciplines are only for the ascetic intellectual.³⁷

"The Jñāni is a tremendous rationalist: he denies everything... takes nothing for granted; he analyses by pure reason and force of will, until he reaches Nirvāṇa which is the extinction of all relativity." 38

When the veil of ignorance is sundered then the realisation of the relation between the finite and the infinite is understood. It is because Vivekananda's contribution to the history of idealistic ideas is so extraordinary in this regard that he deserves to be quoted at length.

"Wherever there is any blessing, blissfulness, or joy, even the joy of the thief in stealing, it is that Absolute bliss coming out, only it has become obscured... as it were, with all sorts of extraneous conditions, and misunderstood. But to understand that, we have to go through the negation, and then the positive side will begin. We have to give up ignorance and all that is false, and then truth will begin to reveal itself to us. When we have grasped the truth, things which we gave up at first will take new shape and form; will appear to us in a new light, and become deified. They will have become sublimated, and then we shall understand them in their true light." 39

The view of the consequent loss of finite consciousness and so of the world in Brahman experience has been a problem for monistic idealism since the early Upaniṣads. The universe was rejected and annihilated. Vivekananda here adds his insight to the question of the nature of the changed world perspective, after the return to finite consciousness. He recovers the world and gives it a new status. The source, the Absolute, it seems, has given of its spiritual profundity to material entities. It imparts not only a kind of reality to the world but also one which is deified. In the actual transcendence the world is negated. Here Vivekananda belongs to the ancient tradition. But he differs so uniquely by gloriously retrieving the world, divinising it. This view has significant consequences which he fully utilises for practical humanitarian ethics.

Of the two doctrines, negation and positive acceptance of the world, Vivekananda definitely favoured the latter. At the same time he had to affirm Brahman's transcendence and supremacy from the historical process. He pointed out that the "real is infinitely greater than the external, which is only a shadowy projection of the true one;"⁴⁰ that "It is the Ātman, beyond all, the Infinite, beyond the known."⁴¹ "Spirit is beyond space and time and is everywhere."⁴² "In reality, this individual soul is the unconditional Absolute Brahman (the supreme)."⁴³ His views regarding the world are expressed in the following representative quotations. "This world is neither true nor untrue, it is the shadow of truth."⁴⁴ As a shadowy projection the world has a certain validity, though it is not perfectly true. At times he inclines towards manifestation: "The Atman... is the

eternal witness of all its own manifestations."⁴⁵ "Infinite manifestation dividing itself in portion still remains infinite, and each portion is infinite."⁴⁶

On many occasions he used pantheistic descriptions:

"This Absolute (a) has become the universe (b) by coming through time, space, and causation. (They) are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen, and when it is seen on the lower side, It appears as the universe." 47

Also:

"Brahman is the same in two forms - changeable and unchangeable, expressed and unexpressed. Know that Knower and the known are one." 48

Again:

"Undifferentiated consciousness, when differentiated, becomes the world." 49

What are the reasons for such ambiguous statements? It was no easy task for a thinker whose main preoccupation was the explication of religio-philosophical issues, to communicate his ideas to large audiences. Thus the philosophical technicalities of the Advaita had to be presented in terms readily accessible to average audiences. And there was the added problem that while the Advaita was strange to Western ears, Indians were generally familiar with theistic, and polytheistic notions. What is amazing is that he tried at all, and met with a remarkable measure of success.

For Vivekananda the Absolute is the only source of the world and because of the difficulty in explaining the relation between the two, he uses terms of manifestation, pantheism, emanation, expression, creation and appearance.⁵⁰ Besides his wish to reach his listeners, he had also a missionary interest, namely, the spiritual transformation of society. Hence his neo-Vedantic realism. His apparent inconsistencies and ambiguities are not indicative of confusion. He is careful to present logically the Advaita postulates before using those terms of reference that seemingly compromise his position.

6.3.1 The basis of Vivekananda's metaphysics.

His metaphysics is based on śruti, 'Sāṅkara's system, reason, and, one must assume, because of his avowed declarations,⁵¹ his own intuitive knowledge. He states that there is common cause among traditional Vedāntins 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."⁵² For him God is the true reality of the world, a conception that enables him to use God as a synonym for the Absolute. The essential portions of the Vedas for him are the Upaniṣads "the foundation-stone of Vedānta philosophy."⁵³ By Vedic revelation he understands that the ancient seers had gleaned the eternal verities of ethical and spiritual life grounded in the Imperishable.⁵⁴ They had preached principles and not personalities.⁵⁵ These principles are verifiable in experience. Therefore Vedic revelation, as presented in scripture, the written word, is mediate knowledge about the immediacy of the supernormal or "direct perception" of truth.⁵⁶

The traditional demarcation between śruti and smṛti is accepted by him, smṛti is secondary. Vivekananda holds that although Kṛṣṇa is God incarnate in Hinduism yet it does not mean that therefore Kṛṣṇa constitutes the authority of the Vedas. In fact Vivekananda stated that the Vedas "are the authority of Krishna himself. His glory is that he is the greatest preacher of the Vedas that ever existed."⁵⁷ Of all smṛti texts Vivekananda holds the Gītā in special regard; but it cannot supersede the śruti. Owing to the different schemes of life that he and Prabhupāda espouse, their commentaries on the Gītā also differ. Important too are their views on God's incarnation. It is in many respects central to Prabhupāda's metaphysics, though not to Vivekananda's.

For Vivekananda God repeatedly descends on earth, conscious of His own divinity.⁵⁸ Again, he holds that it is any exceptional person who, becoming aware of his inner metaphysical state, can be called an "Incarnation of God."⁵⁹ Thus God and the God-conscious person manifest divinity and so are worthy of our worship. While holding that Kṛṣṇa, Jesus and the Buddha⁶⁰ are the great Incarnations, Vivekananda, however, exalts in turn Kṛṣṇa⁶¹ and his own guru Ramakrishna⁶² before all others.

Vivekananda's main feeling in the matter is:

"Whether all believe in this doctrine or not is not the point; the real meaning, however, of this Avatāravāda is the worship of Mān - to see God in man is the real God - vision." 63

6.3.2 The Absolute and māyā

What could be mistaken for pantheism in Vivekananda's view about the Absolute's becoming the universe via time, space and causation, or its degeneration into the universe is qualified by him with "if we may be permitted to say so."⁶⁴ Vivekananda assumes a priori the notion of the Absolute, after the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara. As perfect, indivisible and indeterminate reality the Absolute is beyond time. Hence it cannot be said to have become the limited world, but the world is its appearance.⁶⁵

6.3.2.1 Causality

Causality cannot apply to the Absolute; so it is neither caused nor can it cause any effect. If the world is an effect of a cause then the cause too is an effect of a prior cause. So the Absolute, to be free and perfect, cannot become nor cause the world.

Vivekananda further states that the concept of will or desire is questionable for the reason that, as he points out, contrary to Schoepenhauer's thought, will, which betrays agency, can be associated not with the Absolute but with finite personalities, not before, but after the production of the world.⁶⁶ Then the "why" of the world is self-contradictory as it presupposes that the Absolute has a mind which reasons.⁶⁷ Vivekananda finds the Buddhist theory of flux, of changing matter and mental consciousness to be inadequate. The concept of changeability is a relational

one, the transient changeable to the ultimately immutable. The less and less changeable must reach the point when the truly unchangeable reality is conceived.⁶⁸ But this is to admit duality or plurality, the unchanging Absolute and the changing many.⁶⁹

6.3.2.4 Substance and qualities

He has recourse to the argument concerning substance and qualities. He mentions to an audience the modern controversy between Frederick Harrison who, like the Buddhist, denied substance and Spencer who upheld it.⁷⁰ For him, as for Śaṅkara, qualities cannot be thought apart from their substances. Substance appears as qualities, the "unchangeable... appearing as the changeable," the noumenon as phenomena, the one soul as finite feelings and perceptions in the human individual.⁷¹

6.3.2.5 God, the Absolute and māyā

The hypothesis of God as creator is a weak one. God has necessarily to be seen as external to nature, a deus ex machina. There is the ethical objection of a partisan creator God who "simply expresses the cruel fiat of an all-powerful being."⁷² Metaphysically, the

design theory is objectionable for God is seen as a grand architect planning the universal process. The when and why of it all enters the picture. Where did He obtain the material to create? Was it in Himself or was it co-existent? If the former, then "God is sometimes potential and sometimes kinetic, which would make Him mutable" and God dies.⁷³ If the latter, then God stands in need of materials having limited His omnipotence and abrogated His independence. Because of the unsatisfactory nature of these alternatives, Vivekananda concludes that the Absolute appears as the world.

But, whence this appearance? For him the only safe course is to adopt the humble attitude of agnosticism.⁷⁴ To divine the secret nature of the paradox of the Absolute's relation to the world has been a perennial problem of philosophy. If the answer was known it would mean the exposure of Brahman to the knowing finite mind, reducing it to the relative.⁷⁵ Māyā has as one of its significances the element of mystery, the unknowability of it all. To concede two realities, Brahman and the world, requires "two absolute independent existences which cannot be caused... time, space and causation cannot be said to be independent existences."⁷⁶ The two ideas, ignorance of the world's appearance and its existence in space and time, are both denoted by the term māyā. A strict dualism cannot be altogether avoided since, the Absolute and the world, however temporary the world's tenure, co-exist. This concession of two

realities in Vivekananda's thought is justified only on the ground of the momentary mysterious grounding of the world in the Absolute. Brahman remains independent, undiminished, perfect. As it constitutes the world's reality it is the latter that is dependent on it, and earns the title of illusion.⁷⁷ Vivekananda's statements of Brahman becoming the world or as really expressed in it, is actuated by the compulsion of the notion that the world is really rooted in the spiritual.⁷⁸ No pantheism is actually intended. To aver that this is so is to fly in the face of evidence to the contrary. He never tires of demonstrating the untenability of the view of qualified monism of Rāmānuja that the world and souls are the real body of God.⁷⁹ Nor does he favour any form of dualism.⁸⁰ His usual description of the world process is that the Absolute manifests itself in it, and is superior to and different from any of its configurations. It is under the burden of his enthusiasm to denote the absolute's transcendence that he stresses sometimes the illusory and dream images of māyā or he even totally denies the existence of the world. "Upon (the Ātman) name and form have painted all these dreams."⁸¹ But the world is real from the sense-mental perspective, and the Absolute is real from the intuitive.⁸²

These considerations lead him to this theory of world-realism of unity in diversity. "The whole of this universe is one Unity, one Existence, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually."⁸³ It is the same reality which appears differently from different perspectives. The wholistic view demands loyalty to an all-inclusiveness. Thus under the theme of Unity in diversity, the one in the many, Vivekananda counselled a spiritual view even of the material world.

The same constitutional necessity that makes us believe the world to be real, makes us believe also in the idea of a personal God. The fact of love,⁸⁴ in differing degrees, in us, our feeling for immortality, our seeking the pleasurable in life, all indicate that we aspire to a higher destiny whose name is God. He stated:

"I admit that a Personal God cannot be demonstrated. But He is the highest reading of the Impersonal that can be reached by the human intellect, and what else is the universe but various readings of the Absolute?" 85

The "various readings" are fashioned by māyā. It is interesting to see how strict logic necessitates an almost forcible exclusion of earthly demands of the senses because they are based on a false notion of the reality of things. And yet Vivekananda accommodates the two kinds of realities as one unity, the phenomenal and the noumenal and the personal and impersonal conceptions of noumenon, conceived from two different standpoints.

The notion of a Personal God is a conception from the phenomenal side, and

"God as the cause of this universe must naturally be thought of as limited, and yet He is the same Impersonal God." 86

In other words, our notions of truth or of the Absolute as notions are necessarily limited. We call truth God. We take two views of reality from two different standpoints. Hence emerges Vivekananda's strong stand on the reality of the world included in the Absolute as immanent ground:

"...the whole is the absolute; but within it every particle is in a constant state of flux and change. It is unchangeable and changeable at the same time, Impersonal and Personal in one. This is our conception of the universe, of motion



and of God, and that is what is meant by 'Thou art That'. Thus we see that the Impersonal instead of doing away with the Personal, the Absolute instead of pulling down the relative, only explains it to the full satisfaction of our reason and heart." 87

It is this comprehensiveness that enables him to adopt the Catholic attitude to non-Advaita systems - pluralism, dualism, qualified monism and even the Semitic monotheisms. But as a rational system he declared that the Advaita alone is "the most rational of all religious theories."⁸⁸ Other systems are useful as temporary measures but in the end the Advaita truth has to be realised. / He believes that the temper of the modern age, its spirit of reason and science, can make his theories acceptable. The "highest ideal of morality" and the "real basis of ethics"⁸⁹ requires the "highest philosophical and scientific conceptions."⁹⁰ The question of religious differences also needs the solvent of reason. He wrote,

"why religions should claim that they are not bound to abide by the standpoint of reason, no one knows. If one does not take the standard of reason, there cannot be any true judgement." 91

Ordinary faith which is a nominal assent to traditional belief is not the faith which saves. "A man must have not only faith but intellectual faith too."⁹² Because of dogmatic differences in religions, scripture alone cannot be our guide. He further points out that "there must be some independent authority, and that cannot be any book, but something which is universal, and what is more universal than reason?"⁹³

While reason has its uses against blind attachment and loyalty to tradition and can satisfy the intellectual side, it is intuitive knowledge that can genuinely quell interreligious conflict.⁹⁴ Intuition

brings abiding certitude which both religion and philosophy seek. Intuition is another name for religion. "What we experience in the depths of our souls is realisation,"⁹⁵ for, "only the man who has actually perceived God and soul has religion."⁹⁶ The realist apprehends concrete matter alone but for the "really genuine idealist, who has truly arrived at the power of perception, ... the changeful universe has vanished."⁹⁷

6.4 ETHICS IN VIVEKANANDA'S THOUGHT

Vivekananda seeks to alter the mental bias that sees matter as matter, to a conception of matter as spirit. Since there exists the inveterate tendency of the mind to take the actual things as real, it is better to regard them as divine. The false world of our own psychological conditioning has to be given up. He called on man to "open your eyes and see that as such it never existed; it was a dream, māyā. What existed was the Lord Himself."⁹⁸ The investiture of secular things with divine raiment has the principal aim of directing ordinary activity in terms of a higher spiritual ethic. It is not a negation of ethics but its revision. It is working with a different kind of motivation - transfigured activity which imprints eternity on time.⁹⁹ Psychologically its value lies in its liberating experience, the release from the necessity and compulsion of sense demands, from the tyranny and the obsession with ego-centred action.

"Work incessantly, holding life as something deified, as God Himself, and knowing that this is all we have to do, this is all we should ask for. God is in everything, where else shall we go to find Him?" 100

[wrote Vivekananda. Elsewhere he taught:

"Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve... 101
Do it only as a worship. I should see God in the poor.... The poor and the miserable are for our salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the diseased, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper and the sinner." 102

This teaching is the direct outcome of Ramakrishna's influence.] Once, having returned to normal consciousness from Samādhi (supersensuous experience) Ramakrishna said that it was arrogant condescension for man to profess that he can have "compassion for all beings". He indignantly declared:

"you wretch, who are you to bestow it?
No, no; not compassion to jivas (souls),
but service to them as Shiva (God)'." 103

Vivekananda thereupon commented:

"Ah! what a wonderful light I have got today from the master's words. In synthesizing the Vedantic knowledge, which was generally regarded as dry, austere and even cruel, with sweet devotion to the Lord, what a new mellowed means of experiencing the Truth has he revealed.... If Man can... look upon all the persons... as Shiva, how can there be an occasion for him to regard himself as superior to them, yes, or to be even kind to them?'" 104

This new social ethic, constantly reiterated in his public addresses is profoundly humanitarian. This led R.P. Srivastava to conclude that Vivekananda's was "one of the greatest humanistic approaches ever made by philosophers."¹⁰⁵ Vivekananda, however, does not ignore the individualistic basis for ethical discipline of the traditional Advaita.

Vedānta Principles

["Day and night say, 'I am He.' It is the greatest strength; it is religion... never say, 'O Lord, I am a miserable sinner. Who will help you? You are the God of the universe.'" 106

Also, "never forget the glory of human nature. We are the greatest God.... Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless Ocean which I am."¹⁰⁷ The constant reiteration of the theme declared above shows how for Vivekananda a metaphysical postulate can be pressed into the service of an ethical discipline. It is for him the strongest antidote to fear¹⁰⁸ or what might be called "existential anxiety." It is positive assertion of enthusiasm and unbounded self-confidence.

In the Parliament of Religions he must have startled his audience with a similar declaration:

"...the Hindu refuses to call you sinners.... Ye divinities on earth - sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep." 109

The traditional monistic idealism asserted the essential immortality of one's self. It implied a purely individual penitential discipline belonging to the species of self-perfection. Vivekananda grants that a superior psychological type, the Jñānī, can alone succeed in this rigorous path of discriminative knowledge.¹¹⁰ Vivekananda, however, combines the two versions, the traditional individualistic model with his new "deification principle." Both of them have the self-same theme, namely, "That one is manifesting Himself as many, as matter, spirit, mind, thought, and everything else."¹¹¹ In this unification of the two models the individualistic strain has also been made

relevant to a social setting.

One of the desired results of these disciplines is assertion of one's potential being. The other, as already stated, is negative banishment of weakness and positive strengthening of self-confidence on the basis of the spiritual identity of the race. He wrote, "without the supernatural sanction... or the perception of the superconscious... there can be no ethics."¹¹²

Furthermore, Vivekananda believes that the universe is a play of the clash between self-interest and self-denial.¹¹³ Generally, for him, the East, especially India, exemplifies the latter spirit while the West the former. Self-sacrifice in the interests of the whole means the gradual diminishing of the individuality; the removal of the selfish propensity through the assertion of one's universal self, the Absolute, for "Perfect self-annihilation in the ideal of ethics,"¹¹⁴ not utilitarian expediency. He states,

"my idea is to show that the highest ideal of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest metaphysical conception, and that you need not lower your conception to get ethics and morality, but, on the other hand, to reach a real basis of morality and ethics you must have the highest philosophical and scientific conceptions." ¹¹⁵

6.4.1 Utilitarianism

For Vivekananda utilitarianism is too narrow an ethic as it is based on purely pragmatic considerations. This theory breaks down because



one's interests are not always guaranteed. It has little room for altruism. Its vision of things is limited to the finite world regarded as the only goal. Vivekananda lamented that:

"the utilitarian wants us to give up the struggle after the Infinite... as impracticable and absurd, and, in the same breath, asks us to take up ethics and do good to society." 116

Doing good as an ethic is a:

"secondary consideration. We must have an ideal. Ethics itself is not the end, but the means to the end." 117

A further weakness of utilitarianism is that its ideal of societal good could be interpreted selfishly, that altruism can be ruled out completely. Why should not one's own happiness take precedence over others'? For Vivekananda a purely secular view fails to take into account the ideal aspirations of mankind. The mark of civilisation is the attempt to rise above nature, embracing spiritual ideals;¹¹⁸ but, conversely, civilisation falls when these are neglected.¹¹⁹

6.5 MĀYĀ AND EVOLUTION

Though Maya's existence is a mystery, its source is no other than Brahman. Its relation to Brahman is as an inexplicable power concealing Brahman and projecting the universe. As its source Brahman can be called its originator. It is neither "absolute zero"¹²⁰ nor truly existent as "that can be said only of the Absolute."¹²¹ The rope appears as a snake. So too Brahman appears as the universe.¹²² In a sense Brahman "came to think of itself as imperfect, as joined to and conditioned by matter."¹²³ Thus it seems that the Absolute, in some

sense, is the cause of its own limitation in finite forms.

Vivekananda calls Brahman or God intelligence. It shines as the universe, but limits itself as cosmic energy whose forms are matter, thought, force and intelligence.¹²⁴

"Everything... is His creation, or to be a little more accurate, is His projection; or to be still more accurate, is the Lord Himself."¹²⁵
God, as the material and efficient cause

"gets involved in the minute cell, and evolves at the other end and becomes God again. He it is that comes down and becomes the lowest atom, and slowly unfolding His nature, rejoins Himself. 126
This is the mystery of the universe, its cosmic or teleological significance."

Thus man's conscious direction of his life should be in accordance with the cosmic scheme as he has its backing.¹²⁷ If the mollusc or amoeba evolves to animal and human forms, it is so unconsciously. Whereas animals evolve instinctively, human beings do so consciously.¹²⁸ Within certain limits man can exercise the option of his free-will and can liberate himself from the cycle of rebirth, a theory which is the "only logical conclusion of thoughtful men,"¹²⁹ and which is essential for our moral well-being.¹³⁰ Repetitive experiences in the world are not the only aim of life. In fact experiences themselves in the end engender the feeling for the transcendent.¹³¹

6.6 LIBERATION

For Vivekananda the world is a mixture of good and evil, of pleasure and pain. The differences between them are not final but relative.

Good and evil have no separate origins.¹³² They are interpretations of subjective selves in relation to life's problems and conditions. Agreeable or disagreeable experiences make life for one either good or bad. Man is not so thoroughly depraved, that he cannot rise in virtue or spiritual stature.¹³³ Imperfection is man's condition in space - time. Moral excellence or perfection in exceptional individuals is still short of the mark.¹³⁴ True perfection is viewed in absolute terms. The status of perfection belongs to those who have achieved perfect conscious control over the mental self and thereby have identified with their infinite nature.¹³⁵ Attachment to things of the senses, the basic urge to life and clinging to it tenaciously in the midst of tragedy, inspired by a futuristic optimism in a better turn of events, is cosmic ignorance, delusion, māyā.

End Notes : Chapter Six

Vivekananda

Where references to The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda are made the abbreviation C.W. will be used to facilitate the work.

1. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume, p.34.
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3. ibid., p.40.
4. Ghanananda, S., and Parrinder, D. (ed.), Swami Vivekananda In East And West, pp.18 and 22.
5. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), op.cit., p.86.
6. Damodaran, K., Indian Thought, p.328.
7. C.W. III, pp.190-191.
8. Puligandla, R., Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy, p.259.
9. Koller, J.M., The Indian Way, p.350.
10. ibid., p.351.
11. Puligandla, R., op.cit., p.261.
12. ibid.
13. ibid., p.262.
14. Damodaran, K., op. cit., p.345.
15. ibid., p.346.
16. ibid., p.348; also Koller, J.M., p.355.
17. ibid., p.350.
18. Koller, J.M., op. cit., pp.356-357.
19. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), p.42.
20. Ghanananda and Parrinder (ed.), p.24.
21. ibid.
22. Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), p.45.
23. ibid.
24. ibid., pp.45, 51.
25. ibid., p.45.
26. Isherwood, C., Ramakrishna And His Disciples, p.124; 148.
27. Prabhavananda, S., The Spiritual Heritage of India, pp.340-341.
28. Ghanananda, S. (et. al.), pp.43-44.
29. Cf. For Ninian Smart "the universalist message of Swami Vivekananda, and of ... Ramakrishna, genuinely represents a new departure in world religions - the attempt to make the highest form of Hinduism a world faith. In so doing the Vedanta would cease to be the highest form of Hinduism as such: but it would become the highest form of religion in genreal." - in Ghanananda and Parrinder (ed.), p.71.
30. Rolland, R., The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, pp.47-50.
31. C.W., Vol. I, p.20.
32. Rolland, R., op.cit., p.92.



33. C.W. Vol. III, p.195; p.441; Ghanananda, S. (et al). p.57.
34. Ghanananda, S. (et. al.), pp.96-100.
35. ibid., pp.101-103.
36. Gambhirananda, S., Brahma-Sutra-Bhasya of Sri Sankaracarya, p.9.
37. C.W., Vol. VIII, p.10.
38. ibid., p.11.
39. ibid., vol. II, p.167.
40. ibid., vol. VII, p.11.
41. ibid., vol II, p.248.
42. ibid., vol. VII, p.7.
43. ibid., vol. VIII, p.157.
44. ibid., vol. VII, p.11.
45. ibid., p.34.
46. ibid., p.35.
47. ibid., vol. II, p.130.
48. ibid., vol. VII, p.35.
49. ibid., p.39.
50. ibid., vol. II, p.248.
51. Isherwood, C., op. cit., p.207.
52. C.W., vol. II, p.239.
53. ibid., vol. I, p.355.
54. ibid., p.7.
55. ibid.
56. ibid., p.232.
57. ibid., vol. III, p.249.
58. ibid., vol. VII, p.4. also p.199.
59. ibid., vol. II, p.228; p.19.
60. ibid., vol. IV, p.32; pp.121-122.
61. ibid., pp.95-96; vol. III, p.258.
62. ibid., vol. VII, p.483.
63. ibid., vol. III, p.459.
64. ibid., vol. II, pp.130-131.
65. ibid., also, pp.461-462; also VII. 4.
66. ibid., vol. II, p.131.
67. ibid., p.132.
68. ibid., p.274.
69. ibid., p.135.
70. ibid., p.342.
71. ibid., p.344.
72. ibid., vol. I, p.8.
73. ibid., p.7.
74. ibid., p.10.
75. ibid., vol. II, p.132; 465.
76. ibid., p.135.
77. ibid., p.248.
78. ibid., p.338; 173; 248; also VIII, p.362.
79. ibid., vol. VIII, p.362; also II, p.413.
80. ibid., vol. II, p.464; 355.
81. ibid., p.275.
82. ibid., p.462.
83. ibid., p.249.
84. ibid., vol. III, p.74; vol. II, p.355; vol. I, p.422.
85. ibid., vol. II, p.337.

86. *ibid.*, p.338.
87. *ibid.*
88. *ibid.*, p.337.
89. *ibid.*, p.335.
90. *ibid.*
91. *ibid.*, p.335.
92. *ibid.*, p.138; vol. III, p.5.
93. *ibid.*, vol. II, p.335.
94. *ibid.*, p.163.
95. *ibid.*, vol. III, p.54.
96. *ibid.*, vol. II, p.163.
97. *ibid.*, p.333.
98. *ibid.*, p.147.
99. *ibid.*, p.250.
100. *ibid.*, p.150.
101. *ibid.*, vol. III, pp.246-7.
102. *ibid.*
103. Ghanananda and Parrinder (ed.); *op. cit.*, p.29.
104. *ibid.*
105. Srivastava, R.P., Contemporary Indian Idealism, p.48.
106. C.W., vol. III, p.26.
107. Rolland, R., *op. cit.*, preface.
108. C.W., vol. III, p.25.
109. *ibid.*, vol. I, p.11.
110. *ibid.*, vol. III, pp.11-28.
111. *ibid.*, vol. II, p.304.
112. *ibid.*, p.63.
113. *ibid.*, p.354, p.91.
114. *ibid.*, p.3; p.63.
115. *ibid.*, p.355.
116. *ibid.*, p.63.
117. *ibid.*
118. *ibid.*, p.212; vol. VIII, p.206.
119. *ibid.*, vol. IV, pp.438-480.
120. *ibid.*, vol. I., p.363.
121. *ibid.*
122. *ibid.*, vol II, pp.459-464.
123. *ibid.*, vol. I, p.10.
124. *ibid.*, vol II, p.211.
125. *ibid.*
126. *ibid.*
127. *ibid.*
128. *ibid.*, p.225.
129. *ibid.*, p.218.
130. *ibid.*, pp.218-225.
131. *ibid.*, p.219.
132. *ibid.*, vol. IV, p.393; vol. II, p.161.
133. *ibid.*, vol. II, p.415; p.474.
134. *ibid.*, p.137; p.353.
135. *ibid.*, p.353.

7. PRABHUPĀDA

7.1 CAITANYA MAHĀPRABHU (1485-1533)

Caitanya, the son of Vaiṣṇava Brāhmin parents was born in Navadvīpa, a province in Bengal. Educated in the traditional manner in the house of a Sanskrit scholar he soon excelled in Sanskrit and formal logic. Though he was a very skilful debater of philosophical topics, his predominant characteristic was religious. The mode of worship dearest to his heart was imitating the kind of extreme devotional fervour exhibited by the gopīs of Vṛndāvana towards Kṛṣṇa as recorded in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata.

Caitanya is best known for popularising Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal from where its impact was felt throughout India.¹ His travels in the south and east coast of India also ensured the success of the Bhakti movement. His deep thirst for a vision of Kṛṣṇa and his charisma attracted congregations in their thousands. He initiated the saṅkīrtana movement which was a "peculiar type of self-intoxicating song-dance."² Through saṅkīrtana people were to be delivered from nescience.³

Caitanya's defeat of some stalwart supporters of the monism of the Śaṅkara school virtually ended the influence of monism in Bengal. Like most Vaiṣṇava preachers Caitanya also instituted important social reforms. The provision in his movement for the conversion of non-Hindus as well as the removal of restrictions to women and the lower castes, as also the success of his campaign against excessive ritualism with its paralysing effects, ensure for Caitanya an important place among Indian reformers.

His efforts lessened the impact of Islam in Bengal. In the province of Nadia, for instance, Muslim intolerance of Hinduism largely ceased with the conversion of the local Muslim magistrate. One of the

"earliest of his disciples was a Moslem fakir, who attained to great fame and sanctity in the sect under the name of Haridās. His disciples, Rūpa and Sanātana, were renegade converts to Islam and outcasts from the Hindu society, whom Caitanya welcomed back into the fold." 4

7.2 CAITANYA AS AN INCARNATION

The depth of Caitanya's devotion, marked by unusual displays of God-intoxicated moods and ecstasies that made him oblivious of the empirical world, convinced many of his followers and other contemporaries that he was no ordinary mortal. They therefore hailed him as an Incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. Vaiṣṇavas have generally cherished his memory; but none so fondly as Swami Prabhupāda for whom there could not be the least doubt of Caitanya's divinity and that his advent was meant for the spiritual regeneration of mankind.⁵ Dās Gupta's opinion of Caitanya is not so flattering. For him Caitanya's ecstasies betrayed "unique pathological symptoms of devotion which are perhaps unparalleled in the history of any other saints."⁶ It is unfair to describe Caitanya as an example of exaggerated and pathological emotionalism. What is nearer the truth is that in Caitanya we have a rare religious genius for whom the divine life was the only kind of life worth living. The nearest approach will be in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and as Das Gupta suggests in the life of St Francis of Assisi.⁷

A curious development in Vaiṣṇavism that was started by Caitanya was a one-sided emphasis on worship of and surrender to God in the form of Kṛṣṇa, whereas the other important Incarnation of Viṣṇu, Śrī Rāma, revered by other Vaiṣṇava saints, was virtually neglected by him. Heir to this legacy Prabhupāda himself has been responsible for the exaltation of Kṛṣṇa bhakti at the expense of Rāma bhakti in his movement.

7.3 SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA - A BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS LIFE (1896-1977)

Born in Calcutta as Abhay Charan De, A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda graduated at Calcutta University in 1920, majoring in English, philosophy and economics. Reared in a religious family Abhay Charan was deeply influenced by his father in Vaiṣṇavism. His religious inclination was further nurtured since his meeting with his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī at the instance of a friend. Initially unwilling to meet his master, Prabhupāda was "forcibly taken" to him.⁸ Sarasvatī Goswāmī told him to spread the Vaiṣṇava teachings of Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the world, an instruction which his master was to repeat to him fifteen years later in 1937 "just a fortnight before his passing away."⁹

This proved to be historic, the turning point in Prabhupāda's life and in the fortunes of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism. He was initiated in 1933 by Sarasvatī Goswāmī who founded "64 Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava maths in India, Berlin and London."¹⁰ However, it was his master's father, Bhaktivinode Thakur who pioneered the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement in the modern age.¹¹ In essence they helped to revive Caitanya's teachings and none so eminently succeeded in this task than Prabhupāda who maintained that there was no difference between Lord Kṛṣṇa's and Caitanya's teachings.¹²

Prabhupāda did not take his guru's advice seriously at first. It was only in 1959 when he embraced monasticism and quit his job as a manager in a pharmaceutical company that he decided to comply with his guru's behest in real earnest.¹³

That it was no easy task for him to renounce the world we have in his own words:

"I sometimes dreamed that Guru Mahārāja was calling me and that I was leaving home.... This is horrible. How can I leave my home? My wife? My children? This is called māyā.... Following his orders, I left my home, including a few children, but now Guru Mahārāja has given me many nice children all over the world. Thus by serving Kṛṣṇa no one becomes a loser." 14

In 1965 "at the advanced age of 70"¹⁵ he went to New York and so successfully did he spread his movement that it was established both nationally in the United States as well as internationally. It became a "confederation of more than one hundred ashrams, schools, temples, institutes, and farm communities."¹⁶

7.3.1 Prabhupāda's achievements

Initially he attracted the American youth only in small numbers but due to his indefatigable activities his movement soon began to win the attention of young and old in ever increasing numbers. However, the largest membership of his movement both during his lifetime and since his demise has always comprised of the youth.

On the other hand, Vivekānanda's appeal was of a more general nature but with more of the elderly and the thoughtful having been drawn by his lectures than the young. Prabhupāda's translations of the Gītā, the Bhāgavata, and the Isopaniṣad have won high praise. Some American universities have adopted his translation of the Gītā as a standard text. So voluminous is the literature that has been published by his

Bhaktivedānta Book Trust that the Trust has become the "world's largest publisher of books in the field of Indian religion and philosophy."¹⁷ Among his impressive contributions to socio-economic organization are his twin creations of the Vedic farming community and the Vedic Gurukula school.¹⁸ These institutions now abound in many countries. Prabhupāda's concept of the Vedic farm has its origin in the idea of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the ideal cowherd who is surrounded by a pastoral community. Prabhupāda's inspiration in this regard is derived from the idyllic pastoral setting which is depicted in the Bhāgavata. Based on this prototype the Hare Kṛṣṇa farm community combines the ideals of the secular and the sacred, agricultural activity with the principles of Bhakti religion.

Despite his strong criticism of scientists and the scientific method as well as the achievements of Western technology Prabhupāda was himself not averse to making good use of modern technology. This was evident in the vedic farms where tractors and harvester combines were in general use. This was also evident in the printing and distribution of the Hare Kṛṣṇa literature which would hardly have been possible without the benefits of scientific technology. His criticism was really levelled against what he called the general atheistic skepticism of scientists and their indifference to the metaphysical conclusions of Vaiṣṇavism. For instance, the scientists "are very proud to go to the moon, but why don't they take information how to go to Kṛṣṇa's Goloka Vṛndāvana?"¹⁹ Scientists are "criminals and rascals" because they produce "so many destructive devices"²⁰ such as atomic weapons.²¹

"Our mission is to bring these rascals to their senses.... They do not know that there is God.... They know nothing of bliss or of eternal life.... Actually their position is like that of an animal. An animal does not know what is after death." 22

Prabhupāda also started various relief centres where food was distributed to people in times of dire need²³ such as during famines and floods. While this practice is still in operation there has also been put into use soup kitchens for the generally needy at all times. As part of their activities his followers also distribute vegetarian food cooked according to Indian culinary methods. This food is consecrated as it is first offered to Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's devotees have founded many thriving restaurants which sell vegetarian food at reasonable prices. The profits from this business, as well as from the sale of their books, go to the maintenance of the movement. Another source of revenue is the proceeds from life membership in the movement. Life members are generally those, who while not being resident members in the organization are yet sympathetic to the movement's ideals and who participate in the religious programmes from time to time.

In the temples of the movement the images of God are worshipped ceremoniously in accordance with the time-honoured Indian practice. Also much chanting of Kṛṣṇa's name takes place and religious speeches are delivered. Furthermore the devotees chant the great Hare Kṛṣṇa formula, called the Mahāmantra, not only in the temples but also in the streets of even busy metropolitan Western centres, reminiscent of a similar practice current in Caitanya's time in India. An increasingly

familiar sight in Western cities is the annual cart-pulling Jagannātha or Juggernaut festival whose significance lies in honouring the Lord of the universe. Transplanted from India this ceremony has drawn such huge crowds that in some cities in the United States the day on which it is held has been declared a public holiday.

Some of the temples built by the movement are so breathtakingly designed in every detail that The New York Times has described the one in West Virginia in the United States as a "magnificently opulent black-and-gold-domed palace."²⁴ An almost equally beautiful temple has also been erected in Durban in South Africa. These have become great tourist attractions.

Thus in a dozen years since his journey to America Prabhupāda accomplished the task of giving Kṛṣṇa-centred Vaiṣṇavism the seal of his personal authority. Also, so rapid was the universal spread of his movement and such has been its impact on the Western mind that it has largely outrivalled in influence other Vaiṣṇava movements in the world. The history and fortunes of Vaiṣṇavism have been altered once and for all. Today people of all races belong to it. The most significant thing about it is, however, that for the first time many non-Indians, mainly whites, hold key spiritual and administrative positions in its hierarchy, thanks largely to the provision made by Prabhupāda in this connection in his movement.²⁵

7.4 SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

Swāmī Prabhupāda, following Caitanya, holds that since Śaṅkara's commentaries on the Brahma-sūtras were written from a materialistic point of view they are unacceptable.²⁶ Prabhupāda considers that Śaṅkara's monism is "māyāvāda philosophy" and that it is atheistic. Caitanya's and Prabhupāda's general attitude to the Advaita tradition is similar to that of Rāmānuja and for very much the same reason; for them Advaita metaphysics hardly encourages devotion to a personal God and on that account the Advaita is anathema to them.

Obviously then Prabhupāda's view concerning the nature of scriptural authority will differ in some respects from the view of Śaṅkara and Vivekananda. While in Vedānta the highest standard of authority is denoted by śruti, for Prabhupāda, however, every text which bears the import of God in terms of Vaiṣṇava religion is also equal in status to śruti. Also, while conceding the distinction between śruti and smṛti he flies in the face of the tradition when he blurs the distinction between them by speaking of both of them as Vedic. Thus his interpretation is again out of joint with tradition which preserves the primacy of śruti, that is, the Vedas.

Prabhupada's position becomes clear when he says that:

"That department of knowledge which is proved by Vedic instruction (like the Upaniṣads) is called śruti-prasthāna."

Also the

"Bhagavad-gītā, Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, especially Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the mahāpurāṇa are called smṛti prasthāna." 27

In other words both śruti and smṛti are sovereign authority, prasthāna.

Prabhupāda is right when he states that the word Vedānta means "the end of Vedic knowledge." But by the term Vedānta he also means "any book which deals with the subject matter indicated by all the Vedas."²⁸ Thus he broadens the scope of the triple canon since according to him it is not only the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-sūtra and the Bhagavad-gītā which are the absolute standard but also the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata. Again, for him the term Vedānta is synonymous with the term Vedic when he states that:

"These are all Vedic literatures: the Purāṇas, the Mahābhārata, the four Vedas, and the Upaniṣads." 29

Sometimes he suggests that the Brahma-sūtra is the "last word of the Vedas."³⁰ At other times he states that the Gītā:

"is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important Upaniṣads in Vedic literature." 31

Also, the Bhāgavata is the

"embodiment of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa and is therefore situated in a position superior to the other Vedic literatures." 32

For Prabhupāda Nārāyaṇa who is the supreme being has breathed forth the Vedas which are therefore infallible authority.³³ By the same reasoning because it has Kṛṣṇa as the supreme source of all, the Gītā is also infallible authority.³⁴

The Gītā is

"the perfect theistic science because it is directly spoken by... Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa." 35

Since the legendary Vedavyāsa or Vyāsadeva is the author of the Bhāgavata and the Gītā and since he is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, these texts are entitled to be called Vedic.³⁶ His emphasis concerning what is standard authority is clear in his declaration that

"any commentary which does not conform to the principles of the Gītā or the... Bhāgavatam is unauthroized. There is complete symmetrical agreement between the Upaniṣads, Vedānta [Brahma-sūtras], the Vedas, the Bhagavad-gītā and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam." 37

The special regard which he has for the Gītā is further apparent when he speaks of it as the "essence of all Vedic literatures." He adds:

"In this present day, man is very eager to have one scripture, one God, one religion, and one occupation. So let there be one common scripture for the whole world - Bhagavad-gītā. And let there be one God only for the whole world - Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And one mantra only - Hare Kṛṣṇa... Hare Rama... And let there be one work only - the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." 38

The last quotation speaks of his conviction that the religious solution is what human life requires in its earthly setting. Therefore it is now necessary to describe the main ideas of his philosophy of religion.

7.5 METAPHYSICS

7.5.1 Ultimate reality

For Prabhupāda Kṛṣṇa holds the highest ontological position in the cosmos which has two realms, the spiritual and the material. To the spiritual belong God, God's abode (Goloka Vṛndāvana), the impersonal Brahman, the localized Paramātmā and Souls. To the material belong the planets of the demigods such as Indra, Śiva and Brahmā as well as the physical universe. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Being the inner spiritual core, the substance of the entire cosmos.⁴⁰ The avatāra descends from the spiritual sky, God's abode. The material realm consisting of "millions of universes" is a "display of only one fourth" of Kṛṣṇa's creation.⁴¹ Not only are the impersonal Brahman and Paramātmā "expansions of the potency" of Kṛṣṇa but so is the rest of creation.⁴² Furthermore Brahman is the "spiritual ray" of Kṛṣṇa and Paramātmā is His "all-pervading partial expansion."⁴³

Prabhupāda is ambivalent concerning the ontological status of Viṣṇu.⁴⁴ At times Viṣṇu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead! Prabhupāda states that "When we speak of Viṣṇu, we mean Kṛṣṇa."⁴⁵ However, he qualifies this with: "Viṣṇu is an expansion of Kṛṣṇa" from whom the former originates. Also, "In the beginning of the creation there is Lord Viṣṇu, and from Lord Viṣṇu, Brahmā is born." Śiva is born from Brahmā and "these three gods take charge of the three modes of material nature."⁴⁶

In Prabhupāda's system the demigods are qualitatively inferior to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore it is curious how Viṣṇu somehow escapes this stricture, despite being a demigod, for Prabhupāda says:

"Viṣṇu is the chief of the primal demigods including Brahmā and Śiva."⁴⁷ But Prabhupāda again shifts ground when he says that Viṣṇu and the demigods can never be "on the same level."⁴⁸ At times even "Narāyaṇa is the exalted Supreme Personality of Godhead" and higher than the demigods.⁴⁹

Because of the primacy of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa worship Prabhupāda scales down the value of Śiva's divinity and the consequent worth of his worship. Śiva as a demigod is not a masterful deity like Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. Kṛṣṇa is generally identified with Viṣṇu. While Kṛṣṇa has sixty-four qualities Śiva has only five partially important ones.⁵⁰ Śiva, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa,⁵¹ advocates that worship of Viṣṇu is best; but better still is the worship of a Vaiṣṇava.⁵² Śiva who is under the influence of māyā, ignorance, and an incarnation of tamas, "affirms that liberation can be achieved only by the mercy of Viṣṇu."⁵³ Though Śiva is "almost on the level of Viṣṇu," he cannot release souls "from the clutches of māyā."⁵⁴

Śiva is among the great authorities such as Manu, Janaka and Kapila in whose footsteps one should follow.⁵⁵ It is incomprehensible, however, that Prabhupāda should recommend following Śiva when the latter is said to be prone to sexual temptation.⁵⁶ For Prabhupāda yogis who meditate on forms other than Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu "simply waste their time in a vain search after some phantasmagoria."⁵⁷

7.5.2 The nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa has a transcendental spiritual body with hands, eyes, ears and senses.⁵⁸ He has all riches, all strength, all fame, all beauty, all knowledge and all renunciation.⁵⁹ Four special qualities not possessed by even Narāyaṇa, who is just below Kṛṣṇa in rank and who presides over Vaīkunṭha,⁶⁰ are: the ability to manifest wonderful pastimes; expertise in transcendental flute playing; the power to attract devotees; and the possession of unparalleled personal beauty. These four qualities only Kṛṣṇa has.⁶¹

As the Supreme or Absolute Truth Kṛṣṇa is the shelter of all manifestations, that is, of the demigods, the living entities and material elements.⁶² Kṛṣṇa is identical with His "name, quality, form, pastimes, entourage and paraphernalia."⁶³ Though He has His permanent abode in Goloka Vṛndāvana He is present in all parts of the material and spiritual creation. This is made possible by "His different manifestations of energy and by His plenary expansion."⁶⁴

"His holy name and the "omkāra vibration" which are the seed of "deliverance from the material world" are as good as He Himself, since He is Absolute.⁶⁵ Omkāra and the name of God, Kṛṣṇa, are "beginningless, changeless, supreme" and pure.⁶⁶ These names reside in everyone's heart as Īśvara the Supreme and those who chant them can know the "whole creation to be one unit, or an expansion of the energy" of God.⁶⁷ Kṛṣṇa is "Himself this cosmos and still He is aloof from it. From Him only this cosmic manifestation has emanated, in Him it rests, and unto Him it enters after annihilation."⁶⁸

Qualitatively Kṛṣṇa is the essence of the universe and of all His forms.⁶⁹ As the original person, Absolute and infallible, though capable of expanding into unlimited forms, He is still the same original, the oldest, and the person always appearing as a fresh youth!⁷⁰

The māyāvādī notion that if Kṛṣṇa "has become everything" then as a person He is lost in His creation is erroneous, "a materialistic idea." Prabhupāda states:

"If we tear up a piece of paper into small pieces and throw it away, the paper no longer has an existence. However, Kṛṣṇa is not like that."⁷¹

Despite His distribution in millions of parts,

"He is still present in the same strength,"
undiminished.⁷²

7.5.3 God's Incarnation

God in His transcendental form of sat, cit and ānanda "is covered by the curtain of yoga-māyā and thus ordinary people cannot understand Him."⁷³ God comes down in the human and in other forms for the sake of devotees, while the Gītā text states that God comes to deliver the pious and destroy miscreants, Prabhupāda holds that the slaying of demons is only incidental. They are destroyed in order to protect devotees.

Following Caitanya Prabhupāda states that the avatāra, Incarnation, "descends from the kingdom of God for material manifestation.... Such incarnations are situated in the spiritual world."⁷⁴

Comparing the Incarnation to the rising and the setting sun - when actually the sun is stationary - Prabhupāda says the Lord appears to us to be born in the ordinary sense. This is a misconception since His nature is unborn and eternal. Ontologically He is "without change of body."⁷⁵ There is no difference between His quality and body.⁷⁶ Whenever the Lord appears "by His internal potency" He is "in His original eternal form, with two hands, holding a flute ... uncontaminated by this material world."⁷⁷

There are full and partial Incarnations, the full being more important as they come when crises of great magnitude occur. Nṛsimha, half-man and half-lion, and the human descents are the most important. Kṛṣṇa is the most powerful and the source of all others.⁷⁸ Though Vaiṣṇava theism would equate all Incarnations of Viṣṇu in power and function, Prabhupāda distinguishes between the potencies of each of them. Rāma exhibited God's fame, Nṛsimha His power, the Buddha His compassion and Caitanya His causeless mercy.⁷⁹

The intervention of God in human history is not always violent. The Buddha and Caitanya were peaceful Incarnations. Caitanya, "described secretly but not directly in the confidential parts of the revealed scriptures,"⁸⁰ came to spread the worship of Kṛṣṇa. Incarnations such as Kapila and Narāyaṇa are direct expansions of Kṛṣṇa. Curiously Vyāsa is both an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa⁸¹ and also of Narāyaṇa,⁸² who has four qualities less than Kṛṣṇa.⁸³

The Incarnations exhibit the three energies of God, of thinking, feeling and acting.⁸⁴ God appears not only on Indian soil. He comes to teach principles of religion in every age in accordance with people's capacity to understand.⁸⁵ Sometimes "He sends His bona fide representative in the form of His son, or servant or Himself in some disguised form."⁸⁶ The Buddha came to preach non-violence in an age when "people of demonic tendency still took to animal sacrifice without reference to the Vedic principles."⁸⁷ Śaṅkara was Śiva's incarnation.⁸⁸ "His mission was special; he appeared to reestablish the Vedic influence... (and) to drive away Buddha's system of philosophy."⁸⁹

7.6 THE HUMAN CONDITION

Prabhupāda's appeal to mankind to investigate its true nature stems from his observation that life is full of suffering.⁹⁰ Even Arjuna, though Kṛṣṇa's friend, suffered through anxiety induced at the prospect of fighting in a war.⁹¹ The root of man's problems lies in the fact of his unbounded enthusiasm that he, relying on his own abilities, will overcome his environment. For Prabhupāda, this is precisely man's grievous error, since in the attempt to "dominate material nature he succumbs to the encumbrances of material affection."⁹² Man, however, does not understand his true position in relation to his world. Through attachment to bodily wants he becomes subjected to "miseries inflicted by the body and mind, by other living entities and by acts of nature."

The attachment to worldly existence is the result of ignorance regarding the true status of the individual. Human life "is meant

for making a solution to these four material miseries - birth, old
⁹³
 age, disease and death." Man's malady is so serious that nothing
 short of a metaphysical solution can eradicate it. "If we realize...
 that we are part and parcel of... God... then we will transcend this
 hankering and lamenting."⁹⁴

The tragedy is that there are only a few who look for non-empirical
⁹⁵
 causes for human problems. An important cause of man's suffering
 lies in thinking that the earth is his permanent dwelling place when
 actually it is illusory. The world and everything in it, all that
 we aspire for in life, house, property, children, friends and riches
 "will be destroyed, including ourselves."⁹⁶ For Prabhupāda "life in
 this material world is simply a shadow of life in the spiritual
 world."⁹⁷

Man becomes subject to bodily needs - what Prabhupāda calls material
 life - and is generally mindful only of the four goals of "eating,
 sleeping, mating and defending."⁹⁸ While these elemental drives are
 necessary, man errs grievously when he believes that physical
 desires are his only good. For Prabhupāda the quality of life in
 the modern world has been reduced to the level of animals.

"For example, the dog is busy for sense
 gratification.... The man is also doing
 the same business, in different ways....
 A dog is not afraid of having sex
 pleasure... before everyone, and we hide
 it. That's all. People are thinking that
 to have sex pleasure in a nice apartment
 is advanced."⁹⁹

Besides the fact of natural necessities man has artificially compounded his problems. For Prabhupāda empiricism in modern science has aided the general modern tendency towards atheism. In India the monism of Śaṅkara, which dethrones God, "gives an indirect impetus to abominable mundane sex."¹⁰⁰

Criticising scientists who hold that "life is produced from matter" when they "cannot produce even a single blade of grass by biochemistry",¹⁰¹ Prabhupāda states that life comes from life, that the soul which is the life principle in man descends from God. In the West too much wealth is a deterrent to religious practice. In India the impersonal conception of reality according to Advaita has negatively infected the religious climate. In the West Christianity has not resolved man's crisis. Christ's teachings have been imperfectly understood and some basic Christian principles such as the command not to kill¹⁰² have been ignored. Also the Christian notion of the relationship between God and man where God is a father figure is imperfect. Thus the three factors that have added to man's crisis are the influence of the scientific method, of the Advaita¹⁰³ and the problems associated with religion, chiefly in the West. In India the quality of the religious life is still better, in spite of various economic and secular difficulties.¹⁰⁴

For Prabhupāda the scholarly spirit instead of guiding research in metaphysical matters has unfortunately tended towards a one-sided interest in things secular. The "glitter of material nature, illusion or māyā" deludes man and dooms him to a life of fleeting

pleasures. Man seeks security in the temporal but it cannot give us constant and unending enjoyment.¹⁰⁵ Endless repetitiveness of feverish worldly activity wherein man is totally immersed is a limited, myopic ideal, a blinkered existence. This is the bane of modern civilization which, with its competitive struggle to reach the pinnacle of power and prestige, leads only to frustration. It is unintelligent activity, animal existence.¹⁰⁶ Modern material civilization characterized by competition and struggle is like a race of dogs. "The dog is running on four legs, and you are running on four wheels, that's all."¹⁰⁷

At times Prabhupāda concedes that life is a mixture of happiness and misery which alternate as a result of karmic destiny over which we have no control. Our solution lies in the application of intelligence and "energy for Kṛṣṇa consciousness", which is the hallmark of Vedic civilization.¹⁰⁸

Man unconsciously seeks immortality in a mortal world. Though he witnesses the spectacle of death in life, he behaves as if death will not touch him. "This is animal life." Man's position is like that of a goat in a Kālī temple; "I have seen that a goat was standing there ready to be sacrificed and another goat was very happily eating the grass."¹⁰⁹

7.7 THE AGE OF KALI

Prabhupāda subscribes to the traditional notion of the four ages of the universe. The present age of Kali, the age of "quarrel and hypocrisy", ¹¹⁰ the last of the series, will see the progressive degeneration of morality. The first, Satya-yuga, represents ethical perfection attained by "mystic yoga". ¹¹¹ The human life span was then one hundred thousand years. In the next age, Tretā, "the process of realization was to perform... ritualistic sacrifices recommended in the Vedas." In Dvāpara yuga "the process was temple worship." ¹¹²

The present state of morality reflects the following symptoms: illicit connection with women; indulgence in meat-eating; intoxication; and gambling.

At the termination of Kali-yuga God "appears as the Kalki avatāra, vanquishes the demons, saves His devotees, and commences another Satya-yuga." ¹¹³

7.8 VEDIC CULTURE AND MODERN CULTURE

For Prabhupāda the parlous state of modern civilisation is due to man's excessive preoccupation with mundane things. ¹¹⁴ Prabhupāda therefore advocates a careful consideration of Vedic theistic science which has the perfect answer to present problems. ¹¹⁵ He is not against worldly activity as such. He does not recommend that all should embrace monasticism in one fell swoop. Those who renounce are exceptional in that they have developed the religious sense to

an extraordinary degree.¹¹⁶ He accepts the karma-yoga theory of the Gītā which presupposes action in a real world.¹¹⁷ What he objects to is the sense of attachment to the fruits of work.¹¹⁸ Intellectuals such as scientists and philosophers can fall victim to conceit, to the success of work well done.¹¹⁹ Prabhupāda recommends the principles of Vedic culture - a change of attitude to life, to the nature of the world and man, to the acceptance that the spirit of God broods over all. God pervades the cosmos.

Man should recognize his limitations, grant the superiority of God and surrender to Him in a spirit of humility, to be "humbler than the straw in the street."¹²⁰ On account of the imperfect nature of modern social institutions it would be difficult to implement the fundamentals of the classical varnāśrama dharma system, though not its animating spirit.¹²¹ Prabhupāda endorses the Vedic concept that vocations should not be hereditary but should be pursued out of aptitude and interest, the best man for the job.

Since creatures are endowed with natural talents and since nature is to be traced to God, then it is man's duty to recognize that his life has a divinely ordained plan, and to accept it in his work.¹²²

In fact the universe is instinct with divine law and harmony. To attend to the here and now, to achieve progress in things external to the exclusion of the notion of God is the bane of modern civilisation. The

"darkness of the present age is not due to a lack of material advancement, but that [we have lost the clue to our spiritual advance-

ment, which is the prime necessity of human life and the criterion of the highest type of human civilization." 123

India alone had the clue to the real life of culture. While

"others were yet in the womb of historical oblivion, the sages of India had developed a different kind of civilization... that we are not at all material entities, but that we are all spiritual, permanent, and indestructible servants of the Absolute... perfect happiness can be ours only when we are restored to our natural state of spiritual existence. This is the distinctive message of our ancient Indian civilization." 124

World civilisation is materialistic by Indian standards

"for everyone who is born in the land of India has a natural spiritual inclination (and if he is) a little more educated in the Vedic principles... he is able to perform the most beneficial welfare activity for the entire world." 125

"The four principles of sinful life - meat-eating, illicit sex, gambling and intoxication"

have covered the world in darkness. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement "will bring peace and prosperity" and the effect "of our spreading (it) all over the world is that now the most degraded debauchees are becoming the most-elevated saints." 126

7.9 OPPOSITION TO THE ADVAITA TRADITION

Swami Prabhupāda's marked antagonism to the Advaita shows in remarks such as: the Māyāvādī monists or impersonalists commit the greatest offense and greatest sin;" 127 they "become dependent on some rich follower" even after undergoing severe austerities; 128 they "flatter

themselves and believe they have become the Lord";¹²⁹ they take the
¹³⁰ path of demons; they are puffed up word jugglers,¹³¹ quarrelsome¹³²
 and are in the same class as "opposing swāmis, yogis... scientists,
 philosophers and other mental speculators."¹³³

¹³⁴
Māyāvādīs will have great difficulty in receiving salvation, since,
 as jñānīs,¹³⁵ they take a "troublesome path." Monists and "meditators"
 are only partially and indirectly Kṛṣṇa conscious; as against them
 a directly Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee has a perfect knowledge of the
 Absolute Truth.¹³⁶

Prabhupāda conceives the triune nature of deity in a descending order
 of ontological significance. Kṛṣṇa comes first followed by Paramātmā
 and Brahman. Prabhupāda uses the two theories, the metaphysical
 hierarchy and the expansion of Kṛṣṇa's powers, as useful devices to
 secure the supremacy of his own theistic position.

The reduction of Brahman to the position of least metaphysical
 importance reflects his general regard for the Advaita tradition.
 The following statements further testify to this. In the trinity of
 God, Kṛṣṇa, the "Absolute Truth is ultimately understood as Bhagavān,
 partially understood as Paramātmā and vaguely understood as the
 impersonal Brahman."¹³⁷

Māyāvādīs are therefore "indirectly" Kṛṣṇa conscious. The whole
 trinity has to be realized if full metaphysical knowledge is to be
 acquired.¹³⁸ Also, Brahman realization related to God's "sat or

eternity aspect, and Paramātmān, Supersoul realization, is the realization of His sat and cit, eternity and knowledge aspects." The "ānanda feature is realized in Bhagavān." ¹³⁹

Māyāvādīs are atheists since they "imagine that there is God," and so "there actually is no God, or if God exists, He is impersonal and all-pervading and can therefore be imagined in any form. This conclusion is not in accord with the Vedic literature." ¹⁴⁰

Māyāvādīs who have "treated atheistic havoc all over the world" ¹⁴¹ also deny that God has a body and that individual souls are distinct from Him and whoever shall believe in this "most calamitous misrepresentation of spiritual knowledge... is doomed to remain perpetually in this material world." ¹⁴² The supreme reality cannot be impersonal since this denies God's plenipotentary powers. ¹⁴³ Furthermore the puffed-up incompetent monist "cannot understand variegatedness in spiritual energy" since he believes that distinctions obtain only in the empirical world. When the monist concedes the existence of God he deems it to be a "product of this material nature." ¹⁴⁴

Again, the Māyāvādīs deny the personality of God, that He can have no hands, eyes, legs, etc., which is an indirect insult to God who is rendered crippled. ¹⁴⁵

7.9.1 The world and souls

Swāmī Prabhupāda endorses Rāmānuja's criticism of Śaṅkara's theory of "creation".¹⁴⁶ If the Absolute is sole reality then Śaṅkara can on no account establish the rise of a second, that is, of the world. Prabhupāda accepts the Vedic statement that everything is generated, maintained and after annihilation, is absorbed by the Absolute. Again, he asks the question of the why of things: "Why it is we are part and parcel of Narāyaṇa. Why has Narāyaṇa become many?"

For Prabhupāda God "has created us for His enjoyment," for the same reason that parents beget and maintain children. He creates us "for His enjoyment, not to create distress... (but) to enjoy ourselves in His company."¹⁴⁷

In his cosmology Prabhupāda has recourse to the theory of Incarnation. When God "descends as the first puruṣa incarnation of the material creation, He immediately manifests sixteen elementary energies." Lying within the "Causal Ocean" He is the "original incarnation in the material world. He is the Lord of time, nature, cause and effect, mind, ego, the five elements, the three modes of nature, the senses and the universal form."¹⁴⁸

God has three main energies. The para is the energy of God Himself.¹⁴⁹ The marginal energy is the soul, the living entity and the apara or avidyā energy is the material world, māyā.¹⁵⁰

7.9.2 Māyā

The term māyā means many things. It means God's external creative potency, Durgā. It means illusion, affection and delusion.¹⁵¹ As illusory agency māyā overcomes living beings who see the world as the only true reality, but it cannot overcome God. Māyā covers the spiritual effulgence, brahmajyoti, which is constituted by the rays of God's body. "Everything that exists is situated in that brahmajyoti, but when the jyoti is covered by illusion (māyā) or sense gratification, it is called material."¹⁵²

Māyā is the principle of individuation. As an agency of delusion māyā bewitches individuals into believing that they are separate from God,¹⁵³ and that they are merely physical selves. Māyā also gives one the sense of false security¹⁵⁴ and fuels desire for worldly happiness. True devotees of God declare war on māyā to escape its clutches.¹⁵⁵

Again, māyā makes one turn away from God, to maintain its hold on souls in order to continue the world process. Māyā is the last snare; it breeds pride, especially in monists.¹⁵⁶

The world process ends after one hundred years of Brahmā, when he dies. One year of Brahmā is "4 300 000 000 of our earthly years." The energy manifested to produce the universe is rewound in God. "Then again, when there is need to manifest the Cosmic world, it is done by His will:



"Although I am one, I shall become many!... He expands Himself in this material energy."¹⁵⁷

The limit of the physical universe is upto the Vaikunṭha planets.¹⁵⁸

7.9.3 The soul's nature

The soul is atomic in size, it is the manifestation of the superior energy of God, it is conscious and can become embodied. The soul is one ten-thousandth part of the tip of a hair.¹⁵⁹ It is eternal and exists before creation, "whatever is created is but a combination of the living entity and material nature."¹⁶⁰

The soul is forever active, even after liberation. It can inhabit any body and transmigrates from body to body until liberation.¹⁶¹

When Mahā-Viṣṇu glances at the material nature, it becomes agitated and the souls are impregnated into it.¹⁶² The soul or the living entity, is invisible and so is called formless. It is impossible to calculate its dimension. Even invisible microbes and insects, which "have an anatomy consisting of many working parts" and big animals all have souls.

Souls which are tiny sparks of the Supreme,

"transmigrate from aquatics to trees... to insect life, then to reptile life, then to the bodies of birds and beasts. Darwin's theory of evolution is but a partial explanation of the transmigration of the soul. Darwin has simply taken information from Vedic literature, but he has no conception of the soul." ¹⁶³

7.9.4 The cosmic cycle

The cosmic process is an ever-recurring cycle. The Lord,

"although aloof from all the activities of the material world, remains the supreme director... but the management is being conducted by material nature." 164

When the souls are injected into every fresh cycle they assume various bodies, plant, animal or human, in accordance with their past desires and activities. There is simultaneous creation.

"The activities of the different species of living beings are begun from the very moment of the creation. It is not that all is evolved... whatever desires (souls) had at the last annihilation are again manifested." 165

Prabhupāda insists on the neutrality of God. On the orders of a judge some are incarcerated, some are hung and others awarded wealth - "but still He is neutral." Similarly God is not "attached to the creation and annihilation" of the world. 166

God is not affected by the activities of the world, whereas living beings are subject to actions and their reactions, being impelled by the guṇas, the modes of nature. The four-fold division of human society into priests, brāhmaṇas (characterised by the mode of goodness), administrators, ksatriyas (situated in the mode of passion) the mercantile men vaiśyas (mixed modes of passion and ignorance) and labourers, śūdras (mode of ignorance), is created by God. 167 Prabhupāda accepts the ideal of this theory. Nobody is superior by virtue of birth but by aptitude. Human culture which can be effected best by Vedic principles, the highest representative

of which is Swami Prabhupāda's movement, has its true significance only in the cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A brāhmaṇa is not a true brāhmaṇa if he does not turn to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Kṛṣṇa's devotee is above even the brāhmaṇas, since most brāhmaṇas have given up their calling and become monists. Thus a new class of Kṛṣṇa conscious brāhmaṇas need to be created "because the brāhmaṇa element is lacking." ¹⁶⁸ ¹⁶⁹

The duty of people lies in the performance of their prescribed rules and regulations ordained by qualities born of nature. Even God works for the creation and support of the cosmos. As the architect of the universe, he has laid down the regulative principles of dharma. Since souls are spiritual sparks they naturally belong to the spiritual order of things. But due to their association with matter their "fiery quality is extinguished." ¹⁷⁰ Their hope lies in reviving their "original position by getting free from material contact" through surrendering to Kṛṣṇa the supreme leader of the universe. ¹⁷¹ He will help the souls break away from the "superior strength of the inferior energy" of māyā. ¹⁷²

Neither matter nor souls are false as monism teaches; they are only temporary. That which emanates from God never can be false.

7.10 THE PATH TO LIBERATION

Modern man has gone astray instead of abiding by the orders of God. Man's first concern should be religion. ¹⁷⁴ Detachment from the

contaminations of material nature must be gradual. The kind of detachment advocated by Māyāvādī and Buddhist philosophers is impractical as it is too drastic. Detachment can come by association with a sādhū, a person attached to Kṛṣṇa.¹⁷⁵ The practice of karma-yoga also helps to break worldly ties by offering God the results. Karma-yoga means service to Kṛṣṇa. "It is not the philosophy of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to disengage people from their activities,... but one should never forget Kṛṣṇa."¹⁷⁶

For Prabhupāda any one of the four yogas of the Gītā, besides bhakti, cannot alone bring liberation. "All other yogas are progressions toward the destination of bhakti-yoga."¹⁷⁷

Karma-yoga is the beginning of the path to God-realisation, and when it increases in knowledge and renunciation, the stage of jñāna-yoga is reached. "When jñāna-yoga increases in meditation on the Supersoul by different physical processes... it is called aṣṭāṅga-yoga". Bhakti-yoga culminates in realisation of Kṛṣṇa. "One who sticks to a particular point and does not make further progress is called by that particular name: karma-yogī, jñāna-yogī... etc."¹⁷⁸

The true jñānī thinks always of God.¹⁷⁹ He tolerates all kinds of earthly conditions without complaining.¹⁸⁰

Liberating knowledge consists in the discrimination between spirit and matter, in the fact that one's essential self is the soul, that one has no eternal traffic with the world and that one is eternally

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related to the Supreme. Only rascals will not acknowledge the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa, "but will simply manufacture some philosophy or other."¹⁸² One should be aware of the omnipresence of God, to see the divine in elements of nature.¹⁸³

Owing to the inconclusiveness inherent in each path - save bhakti - its practitioners can have a moral lapse.

7.10.1 Māyāvādīs have limited knowledge

Māyāvādīs think that they are truly liberated in Brahman-knowledge but "we see that after some time they descend to politics and philanthropic activities."¹⁸⁴ Māyāvādīs offend God by denying His supremacy.¹⁸⁵ They equate souls with God.¹⁸⁶ Among their other faults are that they consider Kṛṣṇa's form as material,¹⁸⁷ that they consider the world false, they differentiate between God and His name.¹⁸⁸

Māyāvādīs are dry mental speculators who are jealous of the Supreme. "Therefore...they unnecessarily poke their noses in the Vedānta-sūtra, but they have no ability to understand it."¹⁸⁹ Liberation is wrongly conceived by them. For Prabhupāda "devotional service is situated on a platform above liberation."¹⁹⁰

7.10.2 Bhakti-yoga as the best path

The highest felicity for man is to be Kṛṣṇa conscious, for then he "does not aspire for any other happiness."¹⁹¹ The true devotee is free from anxiety and worldly cares, accepts his lot in life with equanimity,¹⁹²

willingly acknowledges his own insignificance before God and humbly surrenders to Him. Mukti, liberation, has no attraction for the devotee. The bhakta's loving relationship with God is of such a nature that even God becomes subservient to him.¹⁹³ The practice of devotional service begins with hearing and chanting. This purifies the heart of the conditioned soul.¹⁹⁴ Chanting the holy name, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare - Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare is the only means for self-realisation.

7.10.3 The guru's importance

The above mantra, accompanied with the benediction of "all-perfection", was given to Caitanya by his guru. The guru's role is extremely important.¹⁹⁵ One's great good fortune is to meet a guru who initiates one into Kṛṣṇa-bhakti. Meeting the guru is not accidental but a result of God's grace.¹⁹⁶ The guru is on an equal basis with Kṛṣṇa and, being His representative, is worshipped as Kṛṣṇa.¹⁹⁷

The sign of a bogus guru is that he cheats, extorts money and promises speedy salvation. The path of God-realisation is not an easy one; disciplines are required.¹⁹⁸ Swāmī Prabhupāda prescribes the following restrictions, since no true culture is possible without discipline. Illicit sex, which is sex outside marriage, is prohibited. One should give up meat, eggs, fish, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol and tea; gambling is prohibited. Gambling, illicit sex, alcohol and meat are four sinful activities.¹⁹⁹

Prabhupāda distinguishes between love of God and desire for liberation. The latter is inferior since it is only a negative desire of withdrawal and so "material", and it does not have the content of love of God in it.²⁰⁰

Caste or social distinctions are no barriers. Faith and love are required; it is no loss that one is not a scholar since absorption in God's love is superior to any state of spirituality. Sometimes erudition can be an obstacle. Love for Kṛṣṇa can steadily deepen until it reaches the height of mahābhāva - a state that Rādhā often displayed in her separation from Kṛṣṇa as well as in her passionate longing for him.²⁰¹ The bhakta will want nothing since God will provide.²⁰²

Om, the transcendental vibration is the same as the mahamantra, and both can "deliver a conditioned soul" since they are identical with the Supreme Lord. It is Śaṅkara's mistake to abandon omkāra and "whimsically" accept tat tvam asi "as the supreme vibration of the Vedas."²⁰³ Impersonalists "commit spiritual suicide by annihilating the individual existence of the living entity." Though Kṛṣṇa helps them by "absorbing them into His effulgence" yet they reject God's person and "cannot relish the bliss of transcendental personal service to the Lord, having extinguished their individuality."²⁰⁴ They consequently return to samsāra.²⁰⁵

Generally, because of their attachment to the "bodily" concept of life and because of their observation that entities having personal

features, are subject to change and misery, the worldly cannot credit the notion of a supremely perfect personal God, nor of eternally surviving individual personalities in heaven.

Consequently the bewildered reject the doctrine of personal immortality and embrace an ultimate metaphysical nihilism. Monists will wish to identify with the ultimate reality. Others similarly in a "diseased condition of life" turn their backs on spiritual culture, which speaks with several philosophical voices. Therefore some from this class want to "merge into the supreme spiritual cause" and others out of disaffection and hopelessness turn to some kind of intoxication, "and their affective hallucinations are sometimes accepted as spiritual vision."²⁰⁶

But the intelligent devotee is not neglectful of spiritual life, has no "fear of a spiritual personal identity" and gets rid of the "conception of void that underlies the frustration of life."²⁰⁷ With the help of his guru the disciple becomes devoted to God and progresses spiritually until he realizes his constitutional position in relation to God.

The superiority of bhakti-yoga to other paths lies in the fact that it is only in devotion to Kṛṣṇa that the senses are not "aroused" while "meeting the demands of the body."²⁰⁸

The intuitive experience "nirvāṇa, or material cessation", is not the final goal but one that leads to it. With the simultaneous awareness of one's spiritual identity, one is also aware of the presence of God. There arises the "manifestation of spiritual activities, or devotional service of the Lord."²⁰⁹ Liberation is the "clearance of the impure mirror of the mind,"²¹⁰ the dissolution of primordial ignorance.

Heaven is Vṛndāvana where Kṛṣṇa and his entourage reside. Liberation is sojourn in Vṛndāvana or also in any of the millions of planets of Vaikuṇṭha,²¹¹ Vṛndāvana is the chief abode.²¹²

We do not become God as Māyāvādīs claim. They address each other as Narāyaṇa, thus overcrowding the world with Nārāyaṇas. Even the poor man in the street is Daridra Narāyaṇa. "But what is this nonsense? Nārāyaṇa is the exalted Supreme."²¹³

The Vaikuṇṭha planets are beyond time. "When the time element is present, there is the certainty of destruction, but when there is no time element - past, present or future - then everything is eternal."²¹⁴

Bhakti-yoga leads to total sense control and dissolves the subtle body composed of mind, intelligence and ego. In the spiritual planets souls will attain their original, "spiritual body, which is the same kind of beautiful body that Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa has."²¹⁵

End Notes : Chapter Seven

Prabhupāda

The following texts of Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda which will appear repeatedly are abbreviated as follows:

<u>Teachings of Lord Caitanya</u>	: T.L.C.
<u>The Science of Self-Realisation</u>	: S.S.R.
<u>Bhagavad-gītā As It Is</u>	: B.G.P.
<u>Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta</u>	: C.C.
<u>The Nectar of Instruction</u>	: N.I.
<u>Teachings of Lord Kapila</u>	: T.L.K.
<u>Śrī Īsopanisad</u>	: Iso
<u>Śrīmad Bhāgavatam</u>	: S.B.

1. Das Gupta, S. A History of Indian Philosophy, vol. IV, p.390.
2. *ibid.*, p.389; also T.L.C. p.208.
3. T.L.C. p.208; p.288.
4. Radhakrishnan, S. Indian Philosophy, vol. II, p.761.
5. T.L.C. pp.xi-xii.
6. Das Gupta op. cit., p.389.
7. *ibid.*
8. S.S.R., p.296.
9. *ibid.*, p.297.
10. Iso., p.101.
11. *ibid.*, p.102.
12. T.L.C., p.viii.
13. Iso., p.102.
14. S.S.R., p.297.
15. Iso., p.102.
16. S.S.R., p.306.
17. *ibid.*, p.306.
18. N.I., p.96.
19. S.S.R., p.226.
20. *ibid.*, p.227.
21. *ibid.*, p.276.
22. *ibid.*, p.227.
23. Goswami, S.D. Prabhupāda, p.103.
24. Prabhupada, B.S. Back To Godhead, vol. 14, No. 11, p.7.
25. *ibid.*, p.19.
26. T.L.C., p.239.
27. *ibid.*, p.211.
28. *ibid.*, p.211.

29. Iso., p.7
30. ibid., p.7.
31. B.G.P., p.3.
32. T.C., p.256.
33. ibid., p.211.
34. B.G.P., p.72.
35. ibid., p.32.
36. ibid., p.713; also p.847.
37. Iso., p.35.
38. B.G.P., p.28.
39. ibid., p.431; also p.470.
40. S.S.R., p.79.
41. ibid., p.135.
42. C.C., p.131.
43. B.G.P., p.318.
44. C.C., p.5-8.
45. T.L.K., p.22.
46. ibid.
47. B.G.P., p.411.
48. T.L.K., p.116.
49. ibid.
50. T.L.C., p.146.
51. B.G.P., p.234.
52. T.L.K., p.141.
53. B.G.P., p.381.
54. ibid.
55. T.L.K., p.192.
56. B.G.P., p.149.
57. ibid., p.148.
58. T.L.C., pp.267-268.
59. B.G.P., p.74.
60. ibid., p.577.
61. T.L.C., p.146-147.
62. ibid., p.68.
63. ibid., p.IX.
64. B.G.P., p.462.
65. C.C., p.124.
66. ibid.
67. ibid.
68. ibid.
69. B.G.P., p.469.
70. ibid., p.578.
71. T.L.K., p.230.
72. ibid.
73. B.G.P., p.400.
74. ibid., p.227.
75. ibid., p.223.
76. ibid.
77. ibid., pp.222-223.
78. S.B., 1.3.28., pp.175-177.
79. ibid.
80. B.G.P., p.227.
81. ibid., p.713.
82. T.L.C., p.239.
83. ibid., p.146.
84. ibid., p.82.

85. B.G.P., p.225.
86. ibid.
87. ibid.
88. T.L.C., p.212.
89. S.S.R., p.106.
90. ibid., p.55.
91. B.G.P., p.56.
92. ibid., p.647.
93. S.S.R., p.238.
94. ibid.
95. B.G.P., p.382.
96. T.L.K., p.229.
97. ibid.
98. T.L.C., p.256.
99. S.S.R., p.177.
100. T.L.C., p.256.
101. S.S.R., p.216.
102. ibid., p.115.
103. ibid., p.106.
104. C.C., p.238.
105. S.S.R., p.298.
106. ibid.
107. ibid., p.179.
108. ibid.
109. ibid., p.144.
110. ibid., p.173.
111. ibid., p.141.
112. ibid., p.142.
113. B.G.P., p.428.
114. C.C., p.110.
115. S.S.R., p.75.
116. T.L.C., p.139.
117. B.G.P., p.352.
118. ibid.
119. ibid., p.670.
120. C.C., p.245.
121. T.L.K., p.97.
122. B.G.P., p.224; p.189.
123. S.S.R., p.74.
124. ibid., p.174-175.
125. C.C. 238.
126. ibid.
127. T.L.C., p.231.
128. ibid., p.253.
129. ibid.
130. C.C., p.80.
131. ibid., p.48.
132. ibid., p.30.
133. ibid., p.31.
134. T.L.K., p.217.
135. B.G.P., p.601.
136. ibid., p.318.

137. C.C., p.97.
138. Iso., p.12.
139. ibid., p.78.
140. S.S.R., p.106.
141. C.C., p.102.
142. ibid.
143. T.L.C., p.231.
144. ibid., p.233.
145. C.C., p.80.
146. T.L.C., p.220.
147. T.L.K., pp.202-203.
148. T.L.C., p.85.
149. ibid., p.219.
150. T.L.K., p.154.
151. ibid., p.10.
152. B.G.P., p.248.
153. ibid., p.261.
154. T.L.K., p.250.
155. ibid., p.162.
156. ibid., p.204.
157. B.G.P., p.455.
158. T.L.C., p.85.
159. ibid., p.25.
160. B.G.P., p.653.
161. ibid., p.445.
162. T.L.C., p.85.
163. S.S.R., p.236.
164. B.G.P., p.458.
165. ibid., p.456.
166. ibid., p.457.
167. ibid., p.235.
168. ibid., p.236.
169. S.S.R., p.205.
170. C.C., p.105.
171. B.G.P., p.189.
172. C.C., p.107.
173. T.L.K., p.24.
174. C.C., p.240.
175. B.G.P., p.507; T.L.K., p.150.
176. T.L.K., p.152.
177. B.G.P., p.359.
178. ibid.
179. T.L.K., p.250.
180. B.G.P., p.91.
181. S.S.R., p.144.
182. T.L.K., p.176.
183. ibid.
184. C.C., p.136.
185. ibid., p.135.
186. ibid., p.8.
187. ibid., p.82.
188. ibid., p.60.
189. ibid., p.137.
190. ibid.

191. B.G.P., p.331.
192. ibid.
193. C.C., p.138.
194. ibid., p.135.
195. S.S.R., p.63.
196. C.C., p.81.
197. T.L.K., p.184.
198. S.S.R., p.63; p.69.
199. ibid., pp.63-64.
200. T.L.C., p.208.
201. ibid., p.325.
202. B.G.P. p.333; p.425.
203. T.L.C., p.225.
204. B.G.P., p.232.
205. T.L.K., p.116.
206. B.G.P., p.232.
207. ibid., p.230.
208. ibid., p.332.
209. ibid., p.331.
210. ibid., p.330.
211. T.L.K., p.116.
212. B.G.P., p.701.
213. T.L.K., p.116.
214. ibid., p.227.
215. ibid., p.170.

CHAPTER 8

In the Conclusion an evaluation of the main tenets of the four Vedāntic thinkers investigated in this dissertation is undertaken.

CONCLUSION

Doctrine and Methodology

The traditional nature of Vedāntic idealism

The two conceptions of the impersonal Absolute and the personal God and their attendant world-views can be clearly traced to Upaniṣadic times. These conceptions, re-emerging in Saṅkara and Rāmānuja, are again expressed in Vivekananda and Prabhupāda and in other leaders of neo-Hinduistic movements. Thus Vedānta has been a continuous tradition, expressing itself in every stage of its growth with ever increasing insights and displaying the inherently conflicting nature of its major philosophical options. Somewhere along the line Vedānta allied itself with popular theism and, due to this elasticity, myriads of naive religious practices abound today side by side with the loftiest metaphysical conceptions.

The tradition of conflict surfaces again in Vivekananda and Prabhupāda who occupy different metaphysical positions. Vivekananda attempts to reconcile the diverse elements in Hinduism by arranging them in an ascending order, from lower to higher forms until the top is reached in the Absolute. Prabhupāda likewise takes his stand on a single theistic metaphysics and reconciles alternative notions by attempting to show their inherent inferiority. They interpret modern Hinduism in these two chief ways.

Vedānta and other systems

Every thinker is a product of his age whose special circumstances determine the mould in which he casts his thoughts. While socio-economic and political factors are presupposed in the cultural crucible what is really significant to its configurations is the interpretation of the relation between metaphysics and life. Both orthodox and heterodox Indian thinkers presented their versions of the ultimate truth so as to promote the highest quality of life for the regeneration of man and the maintenance of the social order.

Heterodox thinkers felt that the acceptance of the validity of 'sruti authority was nugatory in this process. On the other hand Vedāntins felt that the heterodox - whom Vedāntins considered heretics - represented a dangerous subversive element destructive of the social fabric. So, against them and those orthodox schools which acknowledged the 'sruti only superficially, the Vedāntins adopted certain principles of methodology. The standard accredited methodology implicit in the three Vedānta texts, incorporating authority, inference and personal experience, survived generally in Vedāntic quarters up to the time of Śaṅkara.

Canon of interpretation

The question arises as to what extent each of the Vedāntins considered in this dissertation remained faithful to the established canon of interpretation. While it is true that each adhered to the spirit and form of the traditional methodology, the manner of its presentation and the degree of its expression varied from one thinker to another.

To what extent did they honour the pride of place accorded to the Upaniṣads and, what according to them, was the exact significance of the Vedānta sūtras and the Gītā in comparison to śruti? Were they unanimous in recognizing that the Purāṇas and the epics were less significant than the triple canon?

In the main Śaṅkara and Vivekananda form a class apart from Rāmānuja and Prabhupāda with regard to these matters. Śaṅkara and Vivekananda agree that the Upaniṣads are the pre-eminent authority whether they are seen as part of the triple canon, which for them constitutes the Absolute standard of the Vedānta, or seen in comparison to any other texts. Thus for them extra-canonical texts come below in rank and provide only corroborative evidence. Vivekananda states that the

"...law is that wherever these Puranas and Smritis differ from any part of the śruti, the śruti must be followed and the smṛiti rejected." 1

Śaṅkara further emphasizes Upaniṣadic authority, since the Upaniṣads, as the jñāna-kāṇḍa portions of śruti, endorse the role of reason.

However, there is an altogether different sense in which Rāmānuja and Prabhupāda venerate the śruti legacy. For them the Upaniṣads are certainly authoritative but equally so and for Prabhupāda even more so, are other secondary texts. This is on account of their predominantly theistic proclivities, having come under the influence of their predecessors and contemporaries in Vaiṣṇavism.

RETURNS

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Swami Prabhupāda has clearly a more sentimental approach in promoting theistic Vedānta, and it also explains the reason for the paucity of rational arguments in his works.

Śaṅkara and Vivekananda preserve a proper balance between authority and reason. It appears then that those wedded to the idealism of an impersonal reality have preferred to state their case on the grounds of eternal principles primarily and on the grounds of a divine personality secondarily. Therefore it is not an accident that Śaṅkara and Vivekananda emphasize those Upaniṣadic passages which genuinely attest to the idea of reality in impersonal terms.

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By Vivekananda's time Vedānta emerged largely triumphant on the Indian scene. Yet it is to his credit that though the neo-Hinduism of his day presented more the emotional side of bhakti religion, he was not induced completely under its spell, despite the fact that his spiritual mentor, Ramakrishna was highly devotional by temperament, being hailed by some as the greatest religious phenomenon of nineteenth century India.²

It seems that his own predominantly intellectual bent which, together with his exposure to the rational side of Western culture - the nineteenth century age of science and reason, Utilitarianism, Darwinism, scientific principles in technology - made the difference in Vivekananda's case on the side of a more logical as against a more faith-bound presentation of Vedāntic doctrine. That age also accounts for his success in the West where the explosion of knowledge was evident on so many fronts. The critical scholarship which vigorously undertook to unlock the cultural legacy of India to the world was essentially Western-inspired and Vivekananda came under its influence. Another reason for the emphasis on rationality in Vivekananda's thought was the constant diatribe against Hinduism by Christian missionaries. All in all then he was caught up in the critical mood of the times.

Yet it still does not explain why he did not write elaborate commentaries on the triple texts as did his Vedāntic forbears. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, he spent most of his brief life in preaching; his philosophy was literally sounded out in public lectures. Secondly, critical scholarship concerning Indian culture was yet in its nascent stage, not having reached the peak of refinement of more recent times.

Rāmanuja's critical insights were the result of a defence of Vaiṣṇava theology and the texts he used were a primary tool in the battle. In his age the bhakti movements in South India were very powerful. He struggled hard to promote Vaiṣṇavism against the Advaitins and

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As an interpreter of Vedānta through rational means Vivekananda proved to be the legitimate heir of Śaṅkara. Prabhupāda lacked the really incisive critical depth of the others. His unmistakable sincerity and commitment to the cause of Vaiṣṇavism were shown in his wide ranging references from devotional texts.

Both Vivekananda and Prabhupāda were constantly conscious of the mission entrusted to them by their spiritual masters. The unprecedented impact of an Eastern movement on the minds of so many Western youths



was made possible by the conviction and ceaseless drive of Prabhupāda. That he weaned thousands of youth who were in search of their souls, in a short period of twelve years, is in itself a remarkable feat. The traditional approaches of the four yogas - jñāna, karma, dhyāna and bhakti as presented in the Gītā - were endorsed by him. In consonance with the spirit of the Gītā he makes all the yogas theocentric. Both Rāmānuja and he exalted the unconditional majesty and transcendence of God with the corresponding diminution of the finite personality. While vindicating the concept of a personal God Prabhupāda thinks it important to establish precisely what the nature of God is. Though He is all-pervading His "personal abode is in Goloka Vṛndāvana" and His name is Kṛṣṇa.³ Prabhupāda is careful to point out that Kṛṣṇa's body is not like that of an ordinary man; it is an eternal spiritual body.⁴

Chanting Kṛṣṇa's name is a spiritual exercise establishing one on the transcendental platform. Nobody is more conscious than Prabhupāda of the fact that "the personalist and the impersonalist will fight with one another perpetually."⁵

Prabhupāda is not fair when he suggests that monists set themselves against God by deriding or mocking Him.⁶

The conviction of the monists springs equally from a sincere desire for the truth, not only logically to formulate a theory concerning truth but also to possess it. Monists or māyāvādīs are not merely mental speculators entertaining empty notions, as Prabhupāda would

have us believe. It is in this spirit that Vivekananda establishes his metaphysical position. His is a thoroughly rational conception of the Absolute, even if ultimately it means the denial of God as personal. For Vivekananda as for all Advaitins the highest conception of the supreme is not so much a denial of God as much as God interpreted in impersonalistic terms. There is a provision in the impersonal view of reality for that reality's assumption of the role of creator and preserver. The point is that a descriptionless reality can be the only source for the known world. How the impersonal "becomes" the personal is a mystery. The source of the world is a spiritual principle.

Perhaps what Prabhupāda and other theists object to in monism is the final overthrow of individual selves in mokṣa. If there are no selves how can there be God, since the witnessing act of the selves is necessary to show that God exists? The selves must therefore be real, transcend space and time and eternally co-exist with God. God and selves are therefore complementary to each other. Since the Absolute is a nameless reality Advaitins see no point in addressing God only by this name or that. God might be Om or Īśvara, Kālī or Kṛṣṇa. For Vivekananda what matters is the conception, the faith that the name conveys, and not the name itself. The Advaita represents an eclectic system in which every aspiration of the upward movement to truth becomes legitimate. No endeavour is spurious. In a sense Prabhupāda's system is equally accommodative since in the search for truth the aspirant slowly advances from the lower aspect, the impersonal, to the highest, the personal. Prabhupāda's impatience lies in the fact that people take a round

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He states that in India,

"...religion means realisation, nothing else.
It does not matter whether one approaches the
destination in a carriage with four horses,
in an electric car, or rolling on the ground." 9

Thus, Vivekananda does not dismiss any endeavour of the upward soteriological movement as spurious, since he feels that every attempt is a genuine expression of the human longing for the divine; as such it is conducive of spiritual good.

The spiritual nature of Vedāntic Idealism

All Vedāntic thinkers comment on the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman but interpret Brahman either as impersonal or personal. Also the spiritual nature of Brahman is exalted. Correspondingly the world is a world of matter and so a secular view of the world, which is a limited view, is a materialistic one. The non-spiritual elements in man's personality, the psycho-physical, are for idealism less important than the spiritual. In Vedānta the mind-body complex does not survive in mokṣa, since the complex belongs to the empirical which has only temporary existence. For the Advaita the phenomenal series has no ultimate status since the world is grounded in Brahman, the only reality. The case is different in Viśiṣṭadvaita since matter also has ultimate ontological validity.

Theism requires the survival of individuality and so Rāmānuja and Prabhupāda posit the notion of spirit selves however much they might be dependent on God. Thus these theists conceive of the ultimate transcendent value of God and souls.

Ethics and Soteriology

While the world is grounded in spirit it is yet accorded a status commensurate with its temporary duration. In Vedānta ethical values have meaning in so far as earthly life lasts. Though the world seems to be an arena for the display of conflicting human interests it can yet become an opportunity for the realization of goals which exceed its limits. Both the thirst for spiritual values, despite the thirst for earthly life, ingrained in man's constitution, and the phenomenal character of the world presuppose this. Morality is necessary for liberation. Vedāntic thinkers generally present two sets of moral rules. One set lays down stringent moral disciplines meant for the renunciant while the other set, meant for the householder, is not so severe. The vegetarian ideal espoused by Prabhupāda seems out of joint in a world which is largely meatarian. While his condemnation of drugs is laudable his rejection of stimulants such as tea and coffee is carried to extreme lengths. For him slaughterhouses represent unnecessary cruelty and suffering to animals and meat-eating a bar to spiritual progress.

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, while respecting vegetarianism as an ideal for others, set themselves no such restrictions since both of them ate meat.

While liberation, as the supreme value and goal of human life, requires earnest application of moral rules it also necessitates a sincere desire for the knowledge of truth. For theism freedom

lies in the knowledge of the individual's inner nature as a spirit entity as well as the recognition of his constant dependence on God. The saved souls shed their ignorance and their bodies, realize their freedom from physical desires, attain realization of God, enjoy perpetual divine bliss and retain their spiritual identity for all eternity. For monism the theistic position is vitiated by the great fault that selves retain their identity. For monism the theistic view espousing the subject-object relation - between souls and God - cannot mark the true end of individuals, since all relations hold true only on the phenomenal level. Thus for monism freedom is in the knowledge of the Absolute as the true self of man. Theism holds that relations on the level of transcendence should not be confused with empirical notions of relational ideas.

These then are the final positions of two of the greatest metaphysical conceptions of Vedāntic legacy.



EPILOGUE

Vedānta has established itself as the most able defender of the orthodox legacy. Most heterodox systems, not living creeds anymore, numerically speaking, are mere curiosities of the past in the eyes of the academic scholar. The scholar wistfully points to the dynamic role they once played in the overall context of Indian philosophic culture. The traditionalist who overstates his case that Indian systems, particularly Vedānta, were pre-eminently spiritualistic or transcendental, is being criticised increasingly by current Indian scholars. K. Bhattacharyya, for instance, states that Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsa,

"All professedly Hindu, were unambiguously against all that is trans-natural.... The supernatural, in their view, is still a natural item, only pushed beyond its normal limits : it is only the supernormal natural." 10

A similar view is expressed by R. Prasad who holds that the Indian thought tradition,

"Along with being at once metaphysical... is also logical, epistemological; critical, analytical, empiricist, etc."

For him those who emphasize the spiritual do so due to "sentimental attachment" and "obsession" which make them give the tradition a "religious or nationalist colour."¹¹

Prasad refers to C.T.K. Chari, T.M.P. Mahadevan and S. Radhakrishnan and could very well have included Vivekananda and Prabhupāda in this context.

While it is true that Prabhupāda would be most vulnerable to such an open charge, it is not entirely true in the case of Vivekananda who has, besides highlighting the spiritual, also emphasized the logical and critical components of Vedānta. The reason for the nationalistic and traditionalist spirit in Vivekananda and Prabhupāda is that they were first and foremost Vedāntic apologists imbued with the sense of mission. So too were Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja who felt that Vedānta was in peril and did their best in attempting to rescue it in the way they thought best. Vivekananda and Prabhupāda, however, operated in an international environment since Vedānta had no more to justify its existence purely in the Indian philosophical milieu.

It was inevitable that the challenge to Hinduism both from Islam and Christianity, as also from the increasing tempo of western secular institutions, would evoke some sort of response from a culture always sensitive to opposition and debate. Hence the modern Indian renaissance.

Swami Vivekananda and Swami Prabhupāda as well as other exponents of Modern Hinduism have carried the debate to western countries. Both Prabhupāda and Vivekananda are critical of the one-dimensional empirical view which the scientific spirit engenders. While the former is openly hostile to the achievements of science, the latter sees a great deal of good in science.

B.K. Lal states that Indian thinkers have to square their philosophies with,

"the 'scientific facts' and the empirical attitude' of the present-day world." 12

Indian thinkers, adds Lal,

"assert the value of the elements of tradition with a renewed vigour emphasizing that these elements are not against the scientific temper of the present-day world." 13

This statement is true concerning Vivekananda who avers that the:

"end and aim of all science is to find the unity, the one of which the manifold is being manufactured, that one existing as many." 14

Hence, the Advaita can be reconciled with modern science, but not with other systems, since science,

"and its sledge-hammer blows are pulverising the porcelain foundations of all dualistic religions everywhere." 15

Among missionary quarters there is a growing apprehension of Eastern religions. Pat Means notes that their,

"presence in the western society today denotes one of the most remarkable shifts towards the metaphysical in the history of western civilization." 16

Also,

"it is the widespread adoption of an eastern mindset... that is presenting the greatest challenge to the communication of the gospel in the west today." 17

Pat Means' opposition to neo-Hinduism is clearly shown in his The Mystical Maze the second chapter of which he calls: "The cults : Psychic Slavery In The West."

A different and sympathetic view is expressed by Lin Yutang who doubts whether,

"...our highly specialized and departmentalized thinkers are capable of reuniting science, philosophy and religion." 18

For him the "link" binding these three disciplines can come from India since it is only in India that culture enjoyed an organic unity.

The fusion of Indian and Western traditions has been a slow but steady process and time alone will tell what its outcome will be.

End Notes : Conclusion

1. Vivekananda, S. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. III, p.261.
 2. Isherwood, C., Ramakrishna and His Disciples, p.1.
 3. Prabhupada, B.S., Bhagavad-gita As It Is, pp.461-462.
 4. *ibid.*, pp.459-462.
 5. *ibid.*, p.461.
 6. *ibid.*, pp.460-463.
 7. Vivekananda, S., *op. cit.*, p.390.
- Cf. Organ, T., who states:
- "The Hindu is repelled by the notion prevalent in Christianity and Islam that devotion to one God necessitates an obligation to oppose the worship of other gods." - Hinduism, p.176.
8. Vivekananda, S., *op. cit.*, p.32.
 9. *ibid.*, vol. I., p.468.
 10. Pappu, S.S.R.R., and Puligandla, R. (ed.) Indian Philosophy: Past and Future, p.190.
 11. *ibid.*, p.304.
 12. Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p.xi.
 13. *ibid.*
 14. Vivekananda, S., *op. cit.*, vol. I, p.133.
 15. *ibid.*, vol. III, p.432.
 16. The Mystical Maze, pp.22-23.
 17. *ibid.*
 18. Indian Wisdom, p.11.

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