

EARLY INDIAN THOUGHT

*The Philosophy of Vedas, Upanishads
and Post-Vedic Literature*

S. RANGACHAR

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RAO AND RAGHAVAN

PRINCE OF WALES ROAD, MYSORE 4

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*The Philosophy of the Vedas, Upanishads
and Post-Vedic Literature*

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BANGALORE



RAO AND RAGHAVAN

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RAO AND RAGHAVAN
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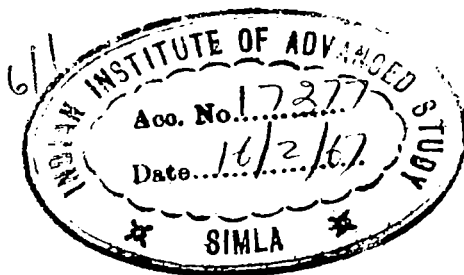
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PREFACE

The main purpose of this book is to lay bare the philosophy as contained in the early portions of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and other post-Vedic literatures and to do so without having any particular point of view. I mean to say that I have no thesis to prove and have just assumed the role of an unbiased observer. My aim has been purely descriptive and explanatory.

Of course, the Vedas and Upanishads are claimed to form the bases for divergent schools of thought and arguments which have formed into different systems. Not that I have no thesis to prove and substantiate; like others I have my own theories and convictions. But I have not permitted any undue influence of later systems to prevail over the thoughts and suggestions as revealed in these early scriptures.

I have sought to cover the field of study in these pages with a convenient degree of adequacy. This book is just an introduction to the ocean of ideas contained in the scriptures. I am, of course, painfully aware of the fact that I have fallen short of my aims in many ways. The chapters are just a brief resume of my lectures to my students.

The book is meant primarily for the university students who have little or no acquaintance with Indian Philosophy and also for the general public who could neither attend class lectures nor sit before a

scholar or pundit. Above all it is intended to create a genuine interest in the minds of the tiros and make them go after scholars like Max Muller, Deussen, Keith, Jacobi, Muir, Macdonnell, Bloomfield, Hume, Zimmer, Radhakrishnan, Dasgupta and Hiriyanna. I acknowledge my deep sense of gratitude to these masters and a host of other exponents of Indian philosophy.

I wish to thank Dr. A. De Mendonsa, Head of the Department of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Philosophy, University of Mysore, and Sri M. Yamunacharya, Reader in Philosophy (retd.), University of Mysore, for their valuable suggestions.

I am grateful to the Hon. Minister for Education Shri S. R. Kanthi for writing a foreword to the book.

I am highly indebted to our Principal Shrimathi H. M. Parvathamma for the kind encouragement she has given me all along.

My thanks are due to my friend Sri S. Narayana Rao of Pragathi Printers, Shimoga, for the neat printing of the book.

Maharani's College for Women
Bangalore
July 1, 1964

S. RANGACHAR

FOREWORD

I readily agreed to write a foreword to the book *Early Indian Thought* by Shri S. Rangachar, Lecturer in Philosophy, Maharani's College for Women, Bangalore, as it serves the useful purpose of giving a general outline of the Vedic literature which has been the basis on which the Hindu religion and philosophy, from time immemorial, have been developed. All systems of Hindu religious and philosophical outlook have tried to justify themselves by showing that they are consistent with Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita and Brahmasutras which together are known as "Prasthanatraya". Of these, Brahmasutras are intended to show consistency in the Upanishads which give expression to the spiritual experience of different seers. The Upanishads themselves together with the Bhagavad-Gita are the main source of our philosophy and as such the author is right in giving more space for them than for the other portions of Vedic literature. The *samhita* of the Vedas, i. e. collection of *mantras*, mainly consist of prayers to Indra, Agni, Varuna, Vayu and other Vedic deities which have now lost their importance, while *brahmanas*, the other portion of the Vedas, deal with sacrifices which are not observed now. The author has done well in explaining to some extent the 'Nasadeeya Sukta' in Rigveda as it is the forerunner of the philosophical outlook as found later on in the Upanishads. Sacrifice

to Vedic gods has given place to worship of gods like Shiva and Vishnu in temples according to *agamas*—also known as *tantras*. As observed by Dr. Radhakrishnan in his *Indian Philosophy*, “The Living Hindu religion today from Cape Comorin to the remotest corners of Tibet is essentially Tantric. Even the few genuine Vedic rites that are preserved and are supposed to be derived straight from the Vedas, e. g. the Sandhya, have been modified by the addition of *tantric* practices”. As observed by the author, “Vedic worship” was purely utilitarian and “there were no temples and no idolatory” *Bhakti*, i. e. devotion was well developed later on. The author could have usefully given more space for consideration of *agamas* and explained how the prevailing practice of worship of gods like Shiva and Vishnu in temples arose out of Dravidian influence as evidenced by the excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, but, perhaps, this can form the subject matter of a separate book. The readers have to be thankful to the author for the useful information given in his valuable book on matters dealt with in it.

Vidhana Soudha,
Bangalore
June 27, 1964

S. R. KANTHI
Minister for Education

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THE VEDAS

The Vedic period is generally considered to be as between C. 1,500 B. C. and 600 B. C. There are four Vedas, namely,

1. The Rig-veda
2. The Yajur-veda
3. The Sama-veda
4. The Atharva-veda

The term 'Veda' simply means knowledge, wisdom or sophia. It is derived from the root 'vid', to know. The Vedas are believed to be the eternal and infallible wisdom of the East, particularly of India and the Hindus. In fact they are the earliest literary monuments of mankind. They are regarded as revealed truths and not even God is accepted as their author. They are called the Srutis, derived from the root 'SRU', to hear. They are said to be the Truths just heard by the seers and sages and preserved and transmitted

from generation to generation orally from teacher to pupil. They are regarded as *apaurusheya*, authorless because nobody composed them.

Each Veda comprises of four parts, namely,

1. The Mantras (Hymns)
2. The Brahmanas (Ritual treatises)
3. The Aranyakas (Forest treatises)
4. The Upanishads (Philosophic treatises)

THE MANTRAS

These are just hymns, prayers and spells addressed to different Gods. Each Veda has its own collection of hymns (mantras) called a *Samhita*. *Samhita* means a settled collection (*Sam*—together, *hitā*—put) in which verses of a particular order are put together.

Thus we have the four famous *Samhitas* (collections) namely,

1. The *Rig-veda Samhita* which contains verses primarily for recital (*Ric.*)
2. The *Yajur-veda Samhita* (the Veda of the *Yajus*). It is a book of liturgy and litany, mostly prose formulae that deal with the details of performing sacrifices and other meticulous punctilios connected with rituals. The term *YAJUS* means ritual or sacrifice and is derived from the root 'Yaj', to worship.
3. The *Sama-veda Samhita* which contains verses for chanting (*Saman*).

4. The Atharva-veda Samhita or Atharvangi-rasah, the Veda of the Atharvans or Athar-vangirasas that deal mostly with magical and sacramental rites. The hymns are not clearly distinguishable either from the Ric or from the Yajus.

Of these four collections or Samhitas, probably the earliest is the Rig-veda Samhita. This Mantra portion of the Rig-veda consists of a thousand and seventeen hymns (Suktas) besides eleven dubious ones called Valakhilyas. These hymns of the Rig-veda are classified in two ways, either into the eight Ashtakas or into the ten Mandalas. Although all the hymns are put into a single Samhita, there can be observed differences in their age. The verses are arranged in accordance with the Gods adored. The Mandal arrangement, where the hymns of the different families are put together is usually preferred by scholars.

While the Rig-veda consists entirely of original hymns, the Yajur and Sama vedas are not so. They presuppose the Rig-veda. We find in them the hymns of the Rig-veda profusely quoted as parts of a complicated liturgical ceremonial. In fact the three Rig, Yajur and Sama vedas are taken together as a single unit, Trayi Vidya, the sacred triumvirate of knowledge. The three are together concerned primarily with the performance of Yajna, sacrifice.

The Yajur and Sama vedas are primarily liturgical in character. In the Yajur-veda the verses are arranged in the order in which they are actually employed in the

various religious sacrifices. They are just sacrificial prayers, the Veda of the Yajus. In fact a distinction is made between the earlier and later portions of the Yajur-veda. The earlier part is called the Black Yajur-veda or the Taittiriya Veda. In it the hymns (the Mantras) and the liturgical prose formulae (the Brahmanas) are mixed up. The Brahmana portion is just a continuation of the Samhita. There is no real difference between the two.

The later part of the Yajur-veda is called the White Yajur-veda whose accredited seer is the Sage Yajnavalkya. In it the hymns and the liturgical portions are separately treated. The hymns are all arranged together in a Samhita. The rubrics and explanatory formulae are separately cast into the Satapatha Brahmana.

The Sama-veda has practically no independent value at all. Except for some seventy-five hymns of its own, all the other stanzas are borrowed from the Rig-veda and arranged in a different and convenient order to be sung in certain fixed melodies. It is just a book of chants which are mostly quotations from the Rig-veda. The verses are arranged in terms of their place and use in the Soma sacrifice.

The Rig-veda is in fact the Samhita or collection for the Hotris, the Yajur-veda, the Samhita for the Adhvarayu priests and the Sama-veda, a collection of verses for the Udgatri priests.

In a properly conducted sacrifice (Yajna) there will be the four classes of priests namely the Adhvarayu,

Udgatri, Hotri and the Brahmanas. The Adhvarayus of the Yajur-veda are to perform the ordinary duties in the sacrifice and are permitted to utter only the invocations. The Udgatri priests are enjoined to chant the verses as a kind of chorus. The Hotris, besides the Adhvarayus and Udgatris are to recite certain hymns in a loud tone and are required to know the whole of the Rig-veda by heart. Besides these three types of priests, there is the fourth class of priests called the Brahmanas. They are the overall masters of the ceremony and their duty is simply to watch and follow the whole sacrifice in their minds and remedy any mistakes or lapses that might arise during the performance.

The fourth namely the Atharva-veda is distinguished from the rest as of later origin. Not only is it believed so, we can also find in it retrospective references to the early seers and legendary characters of the Rig-veda. The magic songs of the Atharvanas are chiefly composed of 'imprecations and deprecatory formulae'. Incidentally, there are also to be found rare hymns of great beauty and even of moral feeling. In fact, next to the Rig-veda and the Upanishads, the hymns of the Atharva-veda are most interesting philosophically and even otherwise. Like the Rig-veda, Atharva-veda is also a collection of hymns and not a mere body of liturgical forms. Unfortunately this Veda is very much different from the other three in its matter and style. It is full of the wide-spread popular belief in numberless ghosts and spirits, in the potency of

charms, spells and magic. The charms are credited with functions connected in various ways with the processes of nature and the life of man. We find animism brimming and bristling everywhere. The charms and spells are directed mostly against demons, sorcerers and diseases. They are primarily intended for securing welfare, peace and harmony for the people. There are of course some magic formulas designed to secure victory over rivals or even to injure enemies. But this much is true, Black magic is condemned as strongly in the Atharva-veda itself as in the other Vedas. As a matter of fact, stray references to magic and spells are scattered throughout the Vedic literature of the other three Vedas also. But this much is true, they are the special province of the Atharva-veda and its ritual work, the Kausika Sukta which is the forerunner of the later Tantras.

Anyway the Atharva-veda has great philosophical significance although it is not considered as very sacred by the Hindus and taken on a par with the other three vedas. For a long time the Samhita of the Atharva-veda was not recognised as a Veda at all. The canonical works of the Buddhists do not even mention the Atharva-veda. Very lately it was given due recognition and status. Its Brahmana portion namely, the Gopatha is exactly like any other Brahmana. This veda is also peculiarly rich in Upanishads as it contains no less than fifty-two Upanishads and therein too some of the most important like the Mandukya and Prasna Upanishads.

Though the Gods of the Rig-veda are repeated in the Atharva-veda, their characters are not so distinct. For example, the Sun becomes Rohita, the ruddy one. Some of the Gods are elevated to exalted positions as those of Prajapati (Lord of men), Dhatri (Establisher), Vidhatri (Arranger), Parameshtin (He that is in the zenith), etc. In a different passage Varuna is described as the Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent witness. There are also references to Kala or Time or the first cause, Kama or desire as the urge behind evolution and Skambha or support, as the basic principle of everything that exists. This Skambha of Atharva-veda is in fact the highest principle called variously as Prajapati, Purusha and Brahma. Rudra, a malignant cattle destroying deity of the Rig-veda is made the Lord of cattle, Pasupati, in the Atharva-veda. Sanctity of the cow is recognised. Prana is for the first time acclaimed as the life giving principle of nature. Brahma-loka is mentioned and Hell is described by its proper name Naraka, with all its horrors and tortures. Sex is emphasised (thus anticipating the later tantric philosophies) and Goddesses are preferred to the male gods.

The Vedas are very much older than the poems of Homer or Hesiod. To compare the vedic hymns with the psalms is foolish enough. Of course the poetry of the Rig-veda is the 'oldest monument of gentile thought'. The hymns of the Rig-veda are the earliest prayers of man for the worship of the great powers of nature personified. Although some of the hymns express moral ideas and the spiritual aspirations and high

religious fervour here and there, by and large, we find the general strain of the songs of the vedic poet-priests is purely earthly and materialistic. These hymns are there of course, in praise of different Gods personifying the natural powers. The only blessings sought after are children and cattle, plenty and peace. The only evils deprecated and intended to be warded off are sickness, enemies, and the natural calamities like famine and floods. The religion of the vedas is pure, simple and straightforward. It is an honest transaction between Gods and men.

THE BRAHMANAS :

The word Mantra is derived by Yaska, an ancient vedic commentator from the word 'Manana' which means thinking. It is that by which we think of God, which helps divine contemplation. Besides these mantras which consist properly of hymns, each veda has another portion called the Brahmana. The Brahmanas are the ritualistic precepts attached to the hymns of the vedas. They are mostly prose treatises that discuss the significance of sacrificial rites and ceremonies and describe the details of their performance. They contain rubrics and liturgical details of ceremonies with long explanations of the origin and meaning of the rites employed. Apart from the glosses, we also find in them curious legends, divine and human, to illustrate the importance of the different rituals. Many of the legends are incorporated and reproduced

in the later classical literature as for example those of Sunahsepha and Namuchi. Sunahsepha is told by his father to be offered as a sacrifice to Varuna, instead of Rohita, Harischandra's son. This forms an episode in the Ramayana later. Similarly the legend of Namuchi whom Indra promised to harm neither by day nor by night, nor by any weapon wet or dry, but whom he afterwards killed at twilight with the foam of the sea, is given in the Mahabharatha later.

Not only have the Brahmanas provided plots and themes for many of the great later epic stories, they also contain certain shrewd observations. For example in the Aitareya Brahmana there is an interesting passage forestalling Copernicus almost two thousand years before his birth. Many of the Brahmanas are devoted to explaining the mystic significance of the various aspects of the ritual. By the performance of the rituals and sacrifices, one can set in motion the cosmic forces and get the desired results. Even the Gods are said to owe their positions to these sacrifices. Many stories are cited as in Katha Samhita, Taittiriya Samhita, Tandya Brahmana, etc., where in reported conflicts between Devas and Asuras for power, the Devas have always won the battle through the power of the sacrifices.

In the Brahmanas we find frequent references to the hymns (Mantras) and their words and phrases. That clearly indicates that the Mantras of the Rig-veda existed very much prior to the Brahmanas in an accepted form. The same applies to the Aranyakas and the

Upanishads also. It is therefore generally concluded that the Mantra portion is the earliest authority for the social and religious institutions of the Hindus. But even the Brahmana portion is considered equally eternal and an essential part of the Mantra portion. The Brahmanas are also said to be revealed to the fortunate seers and heard by them.

Many of the Brahmanas are lost. The Rig-veda has two Brahmanas namely, Aitareya and Kaushitaki. The Samaveda has eight, of which, the best known are the Panchavimsa, Tandya and Shadvimsa. The Yajur-veda has the two wellknown Brahmanas namely, the Taittiriya Brahmana and the Satapatha Brahmana. The Atharva-veda has, as already mentioned, one Brahmana called Gopatha.

The Brahmanas are sometimes caricatured as the Talmud of the Hindus. Anyway all the Mantras and Brahmanas are together said to constitute the vedic literature as a whole. Mantra-Brahmana-yor Veda Namadheyam (Apasthambha).

THE ARANYAKAS :

These are forest treatises as their very name (Aranya-forest) indicates. They form the concluding portions of the Brahmanas just as the Brahmanas themselves are attached to the hymns. These treatises are to be read and meditated upon in the third stage of a man's journey in life, namely, the Vanaprasthasrama just as the Brahmanas are meant for the householder's

stage (Grihasthasrama) and the Mantras for the Brahmacharyasrama. While the Brahmanas discuss the rituals to be observed by the householder, the Aranyakas supply the substitutes for rituals when the householder resorts to the forest in his old age. Meditation takes the place of the performance of sacrifice and the Aranyakas supply the symbolic and spiritual aspects of the sacrificial cult. They do not give us rules of sacrifices or explanations of ceremonies, but provide us with the meaning and interpretation of these sacrificial ceremonies. They give us the mystic side of the sacrificial religion and its symbolic counterparts. The sacrificial cult is replaced by the principles and practices of meditation. For example in the Brihadaranyaka, it is advised to take to meditation on symbolic imagery instead of the actual performance of the Horse Sacrifice (Asvamedhayaga). It is pointed out that the Ushas may be taken for the head of the horse and meditated upon. Similarly the Sun may be taken for the eye of the horse and so on. We find in the Aranyakas the slow transformation from the objective to the subjective, from veritable performance of rituals and sacrifices to the habits of mental concentration and meditation. The Aranyakas thus pave the way for the Upanishads. As a matter of fact many of the oldest Upanishads are tacked on to the Aranyakas themselves and incorporated in the Brahmanas, for example the Aitareya Upanishad, Kaushitaki Upanishad, Taittiriya Upanishad, etc. The well-known Aranyakas extant are the Brihad, Taittiriya

and the Kaushitaki.

THE UPANISHADS:

These form the conclusion and climax of the vedic search for Truth. They are therefore designated as the Vedānta, (anta-end) the concluding portions of the Vedas. In them we find gems of mature thought and beautiful metaphysical discussions. They form the acme of vedic culture and the apex of intellectual investigation. On the lofty peaks of the Upanishadic thoughts we find dissertations and discussions about Atman and Brahman, the principles of microcosm and macrocosm and also of the ways of self-realisation. The hymns, prayers and spells of the samhitas, the rituals and liturgical disputations of the Brahmanas and even the symbolic reverberations of the Aranyakas are all left behind and pure Bliss, the beatitude of inner peace is sought after to be realised within oneself. The search is entirely turned inward and crucial questions like "Ko nu Atman, Kim Brahman!— Who is this Self and what is this Brahman?" are asked. The chapters of true metaphysics are opened and closed also. They are not merely interested in discussions for their own sake. They are after realisation. We can easily observe the traits of conviction born of self-realisation. Worldly pleasures, material gains are all forgotten. The agency of Gods, the efficacy of prayers and rituals, the trading operations in spiritual affairs and the barter system between Gods and men are all

looked at askance and treated with contempt. The call of appeal is given in the form 'Lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light and from death to life' "Asato ma sadgamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrtyor mamrtam gamaya"—(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I.3.28). The pursuit of knowledge is withdrawn not only from its cash value of worldly pleasures, it is also restrained from being *sui generis*, for its own sake. It is provided with the highest practical end of achieving eternal peace, inward bliss and complete disentanglement from the cycle of births and deaths. The intensity of the search is so sincere, honest and even correct that the certainty and correctness of the results can be achieved during the life time of the person himself. The concept of the Jivanmukta assures one that he need not wait for death even and that one has the complete freedom and capabilities either to make himself or mar himself, by himself and within his own self. No external agency is required and no objective circumstances need prevent the inward subjective realisation of bliss. The soul of a single individual can cow down the entire universe by realising its own inner identity or source. The cosmic man may be rediscovered in the inner man. The Upanishads thus give more value and importance to Para vidya than to Apra vidya. They help to make a perfect man, every one, within himself. They do not take us on a wild goose chase, nor do they lead us to a dead end. They show us the harmony between precept and practice, understanding and realisation and give us the light,

peace and bliss very much needed in this sordid world and wanting in every one. The philosophy of the Upanishads will be dealt with in the next chapter.

It is believed there are more than two hundred Upanishads in extant. One of the Upanishads themselves, namely the Muktika Upanishad mentions the names of one hundred and eight upanishads. Usually the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and the Upanishads are mostly found together interpenetrating each other. The Samhitas lead to the Brahmanas, the Brahmanas end in the Aranyakas and the Aranyakas conclude in the Upanishads. The best known authentic Upanishads are the following twelve canonical ones, the criterion being that they are widely referred to by the later Vedantic Teachers like Samkara, Ramanuja, Madhva and others. They are the following :

The Aitareya and Kushitaki Upanishads of the Rig-veda,

Isa, Katha, Taittiriya, Brihadaranyaka and Svetasvatara Upanishads of the Yajur-veda,

Chandogya and Kena Upanishads of the Sama-veda,

prasna, Mundaka and Mandukya Upanishads of the Atharva-veda.

The philosophy of the Vedas can be gradually traced on the lines of polytheism, Henotheism, Monotheism, Pantheism and Monism. Vedic scholars like Maxmuller and others are of the opinion that the vedas represent the thoughts of a successive generation of thinkers and thus contain within themselves different

strata of thought. In the vedic caravan of Godheads we can easily observe the development of religious and philosophic ideas from the lowest naturalistic and animistic levels to the highest Absolutistic and monistic stage.

POLYTHEISM :

The simple and honest poet-priests of early Rig-vedic times were deeply impressed by the forces and powers of nature. They began to wonder at the natural forces like the Sun, the Moon, the rains, storm, lightning, etc. They felt they were surrounded on all sides by the mysteries of the universe and that they were naturally entirely dependent on these natural phenomena. They began to put to themselves the original and naive questions such as "where is the Sun by night? Where go the stars by day? Why does the Sun not fall down? Why is it the sea won't flow back into the rivers? Whence comes the wind and whither does it go? Of the two, night and day, which is the earlier and which is the later? Who makes the rain-fall, etc., etc.?"

They thought that the forces of nature were all represented by mysterious divine agencies. They began to posit a God for each one of these natural powers and forces of the Universe. There was a deity that made the Sun shine, another that compelled the fire to burn, a third that urged the wind to blow, a fourth that made the lightning flash across the sky and so on. Thus came about the many Gods of the vedas. It was

the duty of men to please them by prayers and propitiations so that they would in return confer on the votaries, sunshine, timely rains, plenty of crops, plenty of children and cattle, abundance of milk and all other bounties of nature. Indifference to these Gods would incur their displeasure and divine wrath would mean dearth and death to mankind.

This belief in many Devas is called as natural polytheism. Deva means God. It is derived from the root 'Div', to shine, which is similar to the latin *Deus* (of Indo-European origin) that also associates the concept of Godhead with the luminous powers of nature. We can, even otherwise simply call it as polytheism, belief in a plurality of Gods.

The many Gods of the vedas are called by the general name of the vedic pantheon of Gods. This pantheon of Gods is conveniently classed into membership of three different regions, as follows :

1 Gods of the Sky :

MITRA, the agent of the bright sky and day.

VARUNA, the agent of the dark sky and evening.

SURYA, the agent of the Sun.

SAVITRI, the agent of the enlivening or morning Sun.

ASVINAU, the twin agents of the morning and evening.

USHAS, the maiden of the Dawn.

Several others.

2 Gods of the mid-air region :

INDRA, the agent of the atmosphere in its

change between light and darkness, the
giver of rains.

THE MARUTS, the agent of the storm clouds.

VAYU AND VATA, the agents of the Air.

PARJANYA, the agent of the rain clouds.

RUDRA, the agent of storm and lightning.

Several others.

3 Gods of the earth :

PRITHIVI, the earth herself.

AGNI, the agent of fire.

SARASVATI, a river.

SOMA, the agent of inspiration.

Several others.

Nearly thirtythree Gods are classified into these three groups of eleven each, according to their abodes. Sometimes the Gods are said to be three hundred and thirty three or other combinations of three in number (R. V. iii 9.9). Yaska, an early scriptural authority declares that there are only three vaidic deities, Indra, Agni and the Sun and locates them in the Sky, Earth and Heaven respectively.

The Vedas primarily consist of hymns addressed to these different deities, more especially to Indra and Agni with the subordinate deities, the Maruts or the winds and the Adityas (the various manifestations of the Sun). We find many contradictory details about these gods in the different hymns. Therefore this labyrinth of innumerable Gods may be simply accepted as the visvedevas (visve means pantheon). Rig-veda itself classifies many of these Gods into young and old

(R. V. i 2713). In this plethora of Gods, some are superior and some others are inferior. As already stated Indra and Agni seem to be very prominent. Varuna is also a very distinguished God. Often we find the vedic seers themselves are not consistent in their adorations. They try to magnify the deity of a particular moment, at the expense of all the rest. The next moment, the same deity may be relegated to an inferior position and some other God may be installed as the highest. This kind of a tossing of Gods upstairs and downstairs is caricatured by Maxmuller as Kathenotheism or Henotheism. The anachronism may be attributed to the fact that the vedas were not all composed at a single period and that there are some discrepancies between the earlier and later compositions.

Apart from these Gods of natural phenomena, we also find in the later hymns mention made of abstract deities which reveal no traces of connection with natural phenomena. For example, the God Prajapati, Lord of Creation does not represent directly any natural phenomenon. So also we find personifications of pure abstractions such as Faith and Wrath as represented by the titles of Sraddha and Manyu respectively.

Moreover these naturalistic Gods are conceived more on the pattern of human beings and we cannot note much of a difference between the emotions, passions and desires of the worshippers on one side and the worshipped on the other side. The personality and behaviour seem to be the same both in Gods and men; only the Gods are more powerful and the men are

humble petitioners. The vedic Gods are consequently of incomplete personalisation and they don't seem to be the embodiments of absolute virtues as could be found in later theistic conceptions. They just look like hallowed human beings. That is all. In a way it looks as though vedic religion is a type of avid and atrophied anthropomorphism. The battles and adventures of these Gods, their desires and aspirations, and their demands on their votaries smack very much of human foibles, the ordinary passions and emotions and all the ordinary weaknesses of the flesh. The services of Indra can certainly be hired to fight the demons and the evils. If tempted with huge quantities of Soma liquor (which of course give him the needed strength and courage for the battle), Indra is expected to fight better.

In fact the Gods Indra and Varuna are the most prominent Gods of the vedas. Indra is adored by the men of the warrior type and Varuna is extolled by the pious devotees.

INDRA :

Indra is the warrior God and a colourful cavalier God too. He is the Zeus of the Hindus. He mainly represents valour and strength. He is very fond of soma juice. He fights all the enemies of the worshippers. He is glorified as having recovered all the cows stolen by the demon Pani. Often he will be engaged in fighting the demon Vritra and it is this clash between Indra and Vritra that appears to us in the form

of lightning and rainstorms. Indra is generally considered as the Rain-God. He is the God of the Atmospheric regions, of the blue sky. He is the champion God with the highest divine attributes. He is so to say a king among the Gods with several minor deities like Vata, the wind, the Maruts or the terrible storm Gods and Rudra, the howler, attending on him.

VARUNA :

He is the God of the Sea and a very important God too. He is identical with the Greek *Ouranos* and *Ahura Mazda* of the *Avesta*. The name Varuna is derived from the root 'VAR' to encompass or cloak. He is said to cover or enfold the entire universe with a robe. Mitra is his constant companion. At his command the rivers flow, the seasons march in regular order, and the Sun and the Moon and the stars are all on their routine course. He is so powerful ; yet he is not a quixotic or capricious God. He is a Dhritavrata, a person of fixed resolve. Other gods obey him and his orders. The Sun is his eye, the sky is his garment and the storm is his breath. He is also omniscient. He is the supreme God, the God of gods, very firm to the guilty, but gentle to the good and the suppliants. He forgives the sinners, if they confess. He is always considerate to those who repent and pray. In fact the later Bhagavata cult and the theism of the Vaishnavas can be traced to this God. Prof. Macdonell says "Varuna's character resembles that of the divine ruler in a monotheistic belief of an exalted type".

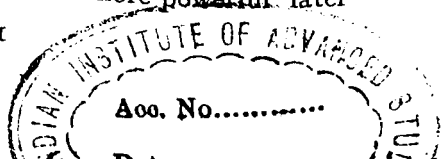
Varuna is continually addressed in the hymns as the healer of illness and remover of sin. The most deeply religious hymn of the vedas is in fact to be found in the Atharva-veda (V. 4-16) and that is addressed to Varuna. It is in the hymns addressed to Varuna that the moral element in the vedas is mostly found.

Varuna is considered in the vedas as the apostle of justice, virtue and righteousness in the universe. He is the chief guardian of 'Rita' in the vedas.

Rita is cosmic order, the ordered course of things in the universe, as revealed by the regular alterations of day and night, the pageantry of the seasons, and all other disciplines in the universe as represented by the Laws of uniformity of nature and universal causation.

Rita also means moral order in the individuals and in society. It is the Truth, the Truth of the world, men and matter included. The contrast of Rita is Anrita, Lie, untruth or falsehood. Rita is satya and Dharma, truth, justice and equity. The vedic Gods are not only the maintainers of the cosmic order, but also the upholders of the Moral Law. They have the double responsibility of maintaining both physical and moral orders. God Varuna is considered the accredited trustee of this Rita. He has fixed the laws of the physical universe. The sea does not flow back into the rivers nor does the wind cease to blow. So also he is holding the reins of righteousness in men. He is the guardian and champion of Rita.

Unfortunately Indra becomes more powerful later



and Varuna is neglected. (perhaps that is the fate of the universe)

AGNI :

He is the 'IGNIS' of the Hindus. He is the terrestrial God generally represented as the mediator between gods and men, as the priest who summons the other Gods to the sacrifice and bears the oblations to them in his flaming tongues. He is second in importance only to Indra. He is considered the chief priest, *purohita* (posted in front) and also the wise one.

He is also viewed as a God in the following three forms :—

1. As a terrestrial God, he represents the vital warmth and earthly fire as manifest in the altar and in the homes of men,
2. As an atmospheric God, he represents atmospheric fire, namely lightning.
3. As a celestial God, he represents the Heavenly Fire, namely the Sun and the Stars.

He is thus regarded as a deity with three forms or manifestations.

SURYA :

He is the Sun. Though alluded to, as a form of Agni, he is also taken apart and frequently addressed as a pre-eminent deity. Gayatri hymn is addressed to Surya in the form of Savitar, the inspirer, life giver or enlivener (*Hueter* or *Huetios*). Mitra, Varuna and Agni are sometimes referred as the three eyes of the

Sun, the great illuminator. Sūrya in the form of Vishnu is said to support all the worlds. The seven manifestations of the Sun are enumerated in the Rīgveda under the title of Adityas (Suns), namely Surya or Savitar, Mitra, Bhaga, Daksha, Aryaman, Varuna and Amsa (It is generally presumed that there are twelve Adityas (Suns) corresponding to the twelve months).

The mother of these Adityas is Aditi, who seems to represent mother earth or nature.

ADITI :

She is the sweet all-embracing mother, the all-encompassing universe. She is said to be space, air, mother, father, son and everything. Literally Aditi means 'unbound, unlimited' as opposed to Diti, the bound, the limited. Aditi thus signifies the endless expanse beyond the earth, the clouds and the sky, the endless expanse, the invisible space that envelops us.

ADITIR DYĀUR ADITIR ANTARIKSHAM
ADITIR MATA, SA PITA, SA PUTRAH
VISVE DEVA ADITIḤ PANCHĀ-JANA
ADITIR JĀTAM, ADITIR JANITVAM

R. V. I-89.10

Aditi is the sky, Aditi is the intermediate region,
Aditi is the father, the mother and the son,
Aditi is all the five Gods and the five tribes,
Aditi is whatever has been born
Aditi is whatever shall be born.

Aditi thus anticipates the future prakriti of Samkhya philosophy. Along with Aditi, there are many other Goddesses mentioned in the vedas.

USHAS & OTHER GODESSES :

The Goddess Ushas, the Greek *Eos* and *Aurora*, represents the dawn and is the maiden of the morning. She is loved and adored by the Asvins and the Sun. Vac in the Rig-veda is the Goddess of speech and from Vac, the vedas are said to have issued forth. Aranyani is the Goddess of the forests. The Rivers Sindhu and Saraswati are also Goddesses.

MITRA :

Mitra is the constant companion of Varuna and generally invoked along with him. He represents sometimes the Sun and sometimes the light. Mitra is the God of light. He is the defender of Truth and Justice, the protector of righteousness, the mediator between *Ahura Mazda* and men. Mitra and Varuna are the joint trustees of Rita and forgivers of sin. They are given the greatest prominence in the hymns and they are akin to *Mithra* of the *Zend Avesta* and the *Ouranos* of the Greeks respectively. Mitra seems to be more associated with the day and the morning light and Varuna with the night sky. Varuna and Mitra are also called the Adityas, the sons of Aditi, along with Aryaman and Bhaga. Mitra is an all-seeing and truth-loving God.

VAYU :

Vayu, the wind is hardly to be distinguished from Indra. But the Maruts are very commonly regarded as the attendants of the major God Vayu.

ASVINS :

The Asvins are the inseparable twins. They are celebrated as the precursors of the Dawn and the Dusk. They possess remarkable healing powers and thus are considered as the physicians of Gods and men. They are the protectors of conjugal love and life. They relieve mankind of all suffering and pain.

PUSHAN :

Pushan is another solar God. He is evidently a friend of man and the beasts. He is a pastoral God and the guardian of cattle. He is also the God of travellers. He knows all the roads and tracks. He is adored both by husbandmen and the journeymen.

TVASHTRI :

Tvashti is the architect, the God who forms and frames all things. He is the 'Maker', or the 'constructor' of the world. He is sometimes identified with Savitri.

SOMA :

Soma is the God of inspiration. He is the giver of immortal life analogous to the *Haoma* of the *Avesta* and *Dionysos* of Greece.

YAMA :

Yama is the son of Vivasvat (the shining) answering to *Yima*, the son of *Vivanhvant* of the *Avesta*. He is said to be the first of the mortals to die, the first to tread the path of the Fathers. He is the chief of the Dead, not so much a God, but a ruler of the Dead. He is there in his abode to receive the others.

PARJANYA :

Parjanya is the Sky God. In the vedas, Parjanya is another name for the sky. He is the God of clouds and the rains. In the Atharva-veda, earth is characterised as the wife of Parjanya.

BRAHMANASPATI :

Brahmanaspati is the Lord of prayer, the leader of hymns and the organiser of rites and rituals. To begin with, he was only a lord of prayer. Gradually he becomes the God of sacrifices.

VISHNU :

Vishnu is just another minor deity and represents only one of the three forms of the vedic Sun and his three steps. It is presumed that this idea of Vishnu as a form of the Sun and his three strides, that is later developed into the Dwarf Avatar of Vishnu and his three steps in the epics. Anyway in the vedas, Vishnu is just an ordinary Sun-God of the three strides and holds a subordinate position.

RUDRA :

Rudra is just an ordinary minor deity and appears to be identified with Agni. He is not yet given the high status of Siva in the Vedas, as in the later mythologies.

These Gods of the Sky, of the Earth and of the Clouds are innumerable. There is no settled system in this pantheon. The same natural phenomena are often represented by different divine agents and different phenomena are often represented by the same divine agencies. We have bunches of Gods like the Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas, the Maruts and the Visve devas. In their anxiety and enthusiasm to find out the causes for the natural phenomena, the vedic people have peopled the beyond of nature with a host of Gods, whether three in number, or thirtythree or three hundred and thirty-three or even three thousand three hundred and thirty-nine Gods.

HENOTHEISM :

The vedic people were themselves tired of this motely crowd. The functions of this plurality of Gods were not clearly defined. Gods were many, their roles confused. But, the world they ruled was only one, with the realms of the earth, the atmospheric region and the Heaven, all guided and illumined by more or less the same deities. They were themselves baffled at this medley of bright beings. They were harassed by sceptical tendencies. Questions were raised with an undercurrent of cynicism and satire, 'to what God shall

we offer our oblations in this pantheon and plethōra ?' Kasmai Devaya Havisha Vidhema ? Who is the real God ? Who is this Indra ? Who ever saw him ?

Several Gods sometimes acted the same roles. For Example Agni not only acted with Indra and Savitri, in certain of his duties Agni was Indra and was Savitri. On other occasions, three Gods and even more were praised together. The concept of Visve devas itself marks the early attempts at classification and striking a note of unity amidst variety. The vedic seers began slowly to shed the angularities of these many Gods and pick up similar Gods of common functions. We have the dual Gods Indra-Agni, Mitra-Varuna, Agni-Soma, the two Asvins, etc. We have also the trios like Aryaman, Mitra and Varuna or Agni, Soma and Gandharva working together. Deities presiding over groups of natural phenomena became identified. The various Sun-gods, Surya, Mitra, Savitar and Vishnu tended to be looked upon as one. Vishnu with his three strides represented originally the same heavenly being as rising in the morning, climaxing at noon and setting in the evening. The same Agni was identified in his three manifestations as celestial fire, as Atmospheric fire and as earthly fire in the hearths and homes of men. Goddess Aditi was not only identified with Earth but with the Sky and Air also, with all the Gods and five races of men, with the past and the future also. Indra, Agni and Varuna were identified. This attempt at harmonisation and compromise is sometimes referred to as the phase of Syncretism in early vedic

religion.

Obviously the vedic people began to feel slowly the difficulties of worshipping many Gods at the same time. They therefore thought of a convenient plan of making only one God the greatest for the moment of worship. At each time of worship, one of the Gods would be selected as if he were the highest and even the only God at least for the time being. At the next moment of worship the previous God may be lowered and some other God raised to the highest level. This practice of making only one God the highest and the best for a particular worship, again degrading him and making another the highest for the next worship is already referred to as characterised by Maxmuller, Kathenotheism or Henotheism. Indra, Varuna and Agni shared alternatively this honour for a long time and each reigned supreme for the time being as the only great God in existence, to the complete oblivion of all the other Gods. Henotheism marks another milestone in the progress towards uniformity and unity.

MONOTHEISM :

By and by the vedic people were not even satisfied with this arrangement of making one God temporarily the greatest. They wanted to have permanently a supreme God, the God of Gods. This belief in one only God, a supreme personality, being one and without an equal is called Mono-theism. The yearnings towards monotheistic tendencies are repeated again and again in the vedas. As an answer to the question

often posed 'who is the God to whom we should offer our sacrifices?', the hymn X-121, called by Maxmuller, the Hymn to the unknown God may be recalled. It is He, who established the earth and the sky, who gives life, who gives strength, whose command all the bright Gods revere. It is He, who through his power became the sole being of this breathing and slumbering world, who governs all, man and beast. A supreme monotheistic deity, the one only God, the Lord of all created beings, is established, though the existence of other Gods is not given up. This supreme being, is sometimes identified with Viswakarma, sometimes with Prajapati, sometimes with Brihaspati and some other times with Hiranyagarbha.

Visvakarma means 'Maker of everything', the architect of the universe. This name was originally simply a descriptive epithet of Indra and Varuna. Later on the sheer logical abstractions of the valour and piety of these Gods are moulded into a concrete Godhead, namely the Viswakarma.

Prajapati means the Lord of creation, the father God, personifying the creative powers of the Universe. To begin with, the term Prajapati, Lord of living beings was applied as only an epithet to Gods like Savitri, the vivifier. Later on it assumes the character of an independent God, as the God above all Gods responsible for the creation and governance of the universe. This monotheistic God Prajapati occupies the first place in the Brahmanas.

Brihaspati and Hiranyagarbha are also described

as the supreme Gods of the monotheistic status and standing. Hiranyagarbha, the golden embryo, is considered as the supreme being, as the creator, controller and supporter of the universe. The Atharva-veda presents Hiranyagarbha as the Heavenly Gandharva, as a ruddy one, Rohita, as Time, Kala and also as the vital principle, Prana.

Apart from these appellations, we also find other names for this supreme being, Ekadeva, like Purushan (man), Prana (breath or spirit), Skambha (Support), Dhatri (Maker), Vidhatri (Arranger), Namadha (Name-giver of Gods), etc., etc.

PANTHEISM :

Monotheism leads to monism, tracing the whole of existence to a single impersonal source. In this passage from Monotheism to Monism we find the lurking phase of pantheism. Pantheism denies the difference between God and nature and thus identifies nature with God. God is conceived not as transcending nature but as immanent. God is the inner dwelling principle of every being whatsoever, living and non-living, of everything of nature. The world does not proceed from God, but is itself God.

The hymn of the cosmic man, Purusha Sukta (R.V. X. 90) brings about this idea clearly. The world is produced by the Gods from the sacrifice of the primeval purusha (person), the cosmic man. This person is all that has been, is and shall be. He is given huge dimensions in terms of sturdy anthropomorphism. He has a

thousand heads, eyes and feet, has filled the whole universe and extended beyond it too, by the length of ten fingers. Sa Bhumim Visvato Vritva Aty Atishthad Dasangulam.

When sacrificed, this cosmic Purusha has furnished the material for the entire variety of the universe. The limbs, blood, hair etc., of the sacrificed and dismembered primeval being are themselves transformed into the constituents of the universe. The moon was born from his mind ; from his eye, the Sun ; from his mouth, Indra and Agni, from his breath, Vayu. From his naval came into being, the Mid-region ; from his head, the sky ; from his feet, the earth, from his ear, the quarters. Thus everything of the universe is a part of God himself, the cosmic man. All is God, because everything has the divine element in it. From the purusha, Virat was born and from Virat again purusha.

Though Purusha, by his sacrifice becomes this world, the world is not a complete expression or manifestation of the divine reality. It is only a partial expression of the supreme Lord, a fragment of the divine. Having become the world, He has stood apart by a length of ten fingers (dasangulam). Only a fourth of his nature is this Universe. The other three-quarters are immortality in Heaven. Padosya Visva Bhutani Tripad Asyamritam Divi. This clearly indicates that God is transcendent also. He is both immanent and transcendent.

The world is thus the result of a sacrificial act. The first principle is manifest in the whole world. God

is all and all is God. All the things of this Universe together constitute just one quarter of him. That is pantheism.

MONISM :

As the vedic seers were led gradually from polytheistic conceptions to henotheism, monotheism and pantheism, they proceeded still further to find out the source of this entire Universe, of all being and existence. They were not even satisfied with a monotheistic ideal. They wanted to find out the primary cause of all created things, an unlimited and absolute power as the cause. They wanted to have a super-Personal Cause, an impersonal principle as the ultimate reality. This one, they called 'TADEKAM', the 'That One', neither male nor female, sexless and neuter.

'ANIT AVATAM SVADHYAYA TAT EKAM

TASMAT HA ANYAT NA PARAH KIM KAMA ASA'

'That one breathed breathlessly by itself, other than it, there nothing since has been'—R. V. X. 129.2.

The Nasadiya Hymn suggests that in the beginning there was neither being nor non-being. There was nothing save the ONE which breathed breathless of its own accord and by its own power. By means of austerity, Tapas (Heat) there came about the first stir of activity, the first antithesis between Being and non-being, through desire (Kama) which is the germ of the mind, Manasoretah. Then issued forth the rest of creation all deeply immersed in the divine Desire, the sign of self-consciousness, which is of course said to be the

bond, binding the existent and the non-existent. But it is not evident why the original being, Tadekam, the primal unconditional ground of all existence, develops into the antithesis of an active creator and passive chaos. That is the mystery and a permanent question mark. The hymn itself concludes with an expression of doubt, 'Ko veda?' 'who knows?'.

That one, the ultimately real, the learned call it by different names, Agni, Yama, Matarisvan,

EKAM SAT VIPRAH BAHUDAHA VADANTI

AGNIM YAMAM, MATARISVANAM AHUH

—R. V. I, 164 : 46.

The different Gods, Indra, Varuna, Agni, Mitra, Soma, Savitri, the heavenly bird Garutmat, are nothing but names of a higher power which at first was without any name at all, called simply as Tadekam. Later on, this nameless being came to be underlined as Brahman or Atman. This is pure and simple Monism.

There are varied references to Monism in the vedas. In the hymn of the Dirghatamas (the author called Dirghatamas, long darkness) I.164, there is the reference to the ONE unborn, Tadekam, as having established the six spaces of the Universe.

The ONE, is sometimes referred to as the God Apam-Napat (son of the waters) and all things of the universe are just His ramifications.

In another hymn of the Rig-veda X.82.6 it is said that this 'ONE', is placed in the nave of the unborn where all beings rested.

In the hymn to the visve Devas III 54.8, it is

stated "that the ONE rules over all that is unmoving and that moves, that walks or flies, being differently born".

The two Skambha-suktas of the Atharva-veda also speak of the ONE and of Monism.

Thus the vedas represent at an early stage in the story of man, the worship of the great powers of nature personified. We not only find polytheistic tendencies and details of the modes of worship and rituals, we also find the early attempts of the Aryans at metaphysical truths and approaches to Monistic principles through monotheism and henotheism. The Hymns of the Rig-vedas are just the songs of an early period of civilisation. We find some fine outbursts of poetry as for example in the hymns addressed to the Dawn. Of course there are many obscure constructions and startling ellipses. There are allusions to many similes and metaphors. There are many contradictions also in the personality of the Gods and details of their roles. The Gods are not clearly defined. We do not at all find the great triumvirate of the Hindu religion, the famous later triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara, the creative, preserving and destroying powers.

In the vedas, Brahma does not appear at all as a deity. Vishnu although named, has nothing in common with the Vishnu of the Puranas. No allusion to the Avatars (incarnation) of Vishnu occur, not even to his famous incarnation or manifestation as Lord Krishna

and the author of the Gita. Far from being one of the supreme Triad, he seems to be only one of the minor forms of the Sun (who is himself a phase of Agni) and his three steps. The three steps of the Sun are simply compared to the positions of the Sun on the horizon as, the first leg on the eastern mountain, the second in the meridian sky and the third in the Western mountain, that is, at his rising, culmination and setting. Or, it is some other times explained in the vedas as simply representing Agni in his three-fold manifestations, 1. as Terrestrial Fire, 2. as lightning in the firmament and 3. as the Sun in the Heavens. Vishnu rises in importance in the Yajur-veda. The Satapatha Brahmana makes him the personification of sacrifice. The Taittiriya Aranyaka identifies Vishnu with Narayana.

As a divinity Siva is not named nor his type, the Linga (phallus) even averred to. Rudra (the howler) seems to be identified only with Agni though in later mythologies he appears to be a form of Siva. Siva makes his appearance in Kaushitaki Brahmana and is referred to under different names. It is this same vedic Rudra (just a form of Fire) that is presumed to have developed into the later Great Siva, in the same way as the Dwarf Avatar of Vishnu (Vamanavatar) and his three strides, is presumed to have arisen from the vedic Vishnu (a form of the Sun) and his three steps.

We don't find in the vedas mention of prominent female deities like DURGA or KALI. We have just the minor Goddesses like Ushas and Aditi, the Goddess of speech (Vac) and the Goddess of Forests (Aranyani) as

also the rivers Sindhu and Sarasvati celebrated as Goddesses. Sarasvati is also referred to as the Goddess of learning (It is now presumed, she has either dried up or gone underground!) Primarily the vedic poet-priests were enamoured of male Gods. The major Gods of the vedas were Indra and Varuna. It is in the worship of Varuna that we can observe the rudiments of Bhakti, Self-surrender and the spirit of dedication, the makings of the highest theism. The theism of the later Bhagavadgita is just an idealisation of Varuna worship.

Apart from the worship of the Devas, the bright familiar powers of nature, we also find in the vedas the worship of the fathers, Pitaras or the ancestral spirits (X. 15 & X. 54). It is just a mark of respectful gratitude to the manes. In the Brahmanas and Sutras also we find full descriptions of the worship due to the kind ancestors. This should not be taken to mean that there was at any time the religion of the worship of the dead during the vedic period.

In the vedas we do not find any references at all to the worship of animals, birds and trees although we see quite a different picture altogether in later Hindu thought. It is only in the epic period that we find many influences of the non-vedic and mostly Dravidian cultures. Early vedic culture was primarily a village and city civilisation. Forests played no part in the pre-upanishadic vedas. There were no temples and no idolatry, nor even phallus worship. Worship would take place in a room or in the courtyard of a house.

To begin with vedic religion was one of prayer where the Gods were simply looked upon as friends of the worshippers. Later on, it became a religion of rituals and sacrifices. There was just the element of communion with the Gods. The relation was one of intimacy, utter dependence even for daily bread and absolute submission. The Gods were pleased by flattery. The offering of Soma formed the chief feature of the sacrificial religion, along with the favourite food of man like grains, milk and clarified butter. Vedic worship was purely utilitarian. It was just a domestic and village institution. The motive of worship was just to secure ordinary material gains or as thanksgiving if already secured.

The vedic people and their living conditions are also very important to be noted. There were different groups and families each called a clan or a tribe. Each clan had a head of its own. Above these clans there was a king whose post was hereditary. The king could be dethroned anytime, if he were to go against the wishes of the people. The main occupation of the men of the vedic period was farming and cattle-grazing. They knew the use of the various implements like the plough and the harrow also. Normally they would take vegetarian food only. But on occasions of feasts and sacrifices they would have special preparations of flesh. More than meat-eating the poet-priests of the vedic period were very fond of liquor and particularly the Soma juice. They knew many other crafts also like carpentry, smithy and weaving.

During the early vedic period caste system was not very much developed. But by the time we come to the Brahmanas the caste system with the four prominent varnas, namely the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra are well defined. The Purusha Sukta has the first reference to the division of society into the four classes. Originally there was only the distinction between the Aryans and the Dasyus, the conquerers and the conquered. This was not a caste division, but only a racial one being based on blood and descent. The term Vaisya referred to the whole people because all were practising some trade or other. It was only when the vedic religion developed into a regular ceremonialism, that the cleavage became varied and rigid. Even then casteism was originally purely occupational though the division soon became hereditary. Brahmins became the intellectual aristocracy, the kshatriyas became the protectors and rulers (Kshatra means Rule or Dominion). The rest were all classed as the people, the vaisyas. The Dravidians formed the fourth estate.

During the early Mantra period itself the three great responsibilities for every individual were clearly recognised. They were called the Rina-trayas, the three debts :

1. The first Rina or debt to be discharged is by way of offering sacrifices to Gods. Rituals are referred to as debts to Gods.

2. The second debt is those due to the manes or pitris. It is a mark of one's gratitude to the sages of the previous generations for the cultural heritage and

also to one's own ancestors.

3. The third important duty is the obligation to the race. Every one should become a householder and beget children so that the race shall continue.

Men are said to owe debts or duties not only to the Gods, seers, manes and men but even to those of the lower creation like animals. Hospitality is considered a great virtue. Kindness to all is enjoined. Apart from the duties owed to Gods, moral obligations to fellow-beings are very much emphasised (R. V. X. 117). The ideal of the Rig vedic man is to become like Gods not only through worship but also by a way of life. One can become a devata, a deity, by one's own deeds. Virtue is obedience to the Law of God, which includes the love of man also. Vice is disobedience to this law. Rita furnishes the measure of morals. It is Satya. Anrita is the opposite of Rita, the opposite of truth. It is disorder and disquietitude. An ordered conduct is Vrata. Expressions like 'guardians of Rita (Gopa Ritasya), born of Rita (Rita Jata), practicers of Rita (Ritayu), are very common in the samhitas. A Dhritavrata is a person of uniformity and consistency in his behaviour. Varuna is the guardian of Rita and himself a person of unalterable ways. All good habits like speaking the truth, self-restraint, benevolence to neighbours, charity, kindness, etc., are considered as virtues. All malpractices like adultery, seduction, sorcery, witchcraft, etc., are considered as evils. Even gambling is denounced.

Sin in the vedas is simply estrangement from God

and divinity. It is transgression against the divine ordinance. vii. 86.6 ; vii. 88.5.6. There are both ritual sins and moral sins. It is analogous to the Hebrew theory. The Gods will be terribly upset if honesty and integrity are not maintained, particularly Vac, the Lord of speech and Agni the Lord of vows. Repentance and confession are extolled as very efficacious in the atonement of sins and God's forgiveness is assured particularly in the concept of Varuna. Truthfulness is extolled as a very great virtue.

Asramadharma (the stages of toil) is also enunciated in the vedas. At the Brahmacharya stage one should pass through the student career. At the Grihastha or the house-holder's stage, he must fulfil both his sacrificial and social obligations. At the third stage of the Vanaprastha he has to go through the rigorous of fasting and penance. At the last stage of the Sanyasin he has to be an ascetic, should have no belongings and no fixed abode even. He must peregrinate and preach.

In the early vedic period the priestly class represents a profession but does not form a caste. There is no heredity and rigidity of the caste system as yet. Any Aryan can embrace any profession, even the priestly one if he so desires.

Tendencies towards asceticism are also to be found. Ascetic practices are believed to bestow supernatural powers on the practicers. Indra himself is said to have conquered Heaven by asceticism. Ecstatic states as produced by the effects of the Soma juice, or during the

chanting of hymns and performance of sacrifices may also be interpreted as the anticipators of the future yogic states. Vestiges of Yoga are to be found in the Rig-veda X. 136 and also in the Aitareya Brahmana VII. 13.

Rig-veda raises the question of the nature of the human soul. 'Ko nu Atma?' I 164.4. It is the controller of the body, the unborn part (Ajo Bhagah X 16.4) which survives death. It is distinguished from Jiva, the individual soul. Death is not considered as the end of the Soul. Rather it marks the beginning of a new journey for the soul.

The vedic Aryans do not seem to worry much about the after-life and its problems. Post-death problems are vaguely hinted at. The idea of rebirth (punarjanma) is not very much emphasised in the vedas although some suggestions are given in the Brahmanas. There is no reference to rebirth as such in the Rig-veda, though its elements are found. The passage of the soul from the body, its dwelling in other forms of existence, its return to human form, the determination of future existence by the principle of karma are all mentioned. There is recompense and retribution for good and evil deeds in a life after death. Good men go to Heaven and others to the world presided over by Yama. The individual's deeds (Dharma) decide his future (X. 16.3). The departed spirit is asked to go among other places to the plants and 'stay' there with bodies. The Brahmanas in particular contain all the suggestions necessary for the development of the doc-

trine of metempsychosis. Phrases like 'punar-mrityu' 're-death', 'punar-asu' coming to life again, are to be met with in Satapatha and Taittiriya Brahmanas. The Gopatha Brahmana mentions 'punar Ayati' rebirth. In the Samhitas, emphasis is given more to life than to death. The vedic people prefer this world to the other world (panchavimsa Brahmana 22.12.2). They show even occasional distrust of the other world as revealed in the Kathaka and Taittiriya Samhitas. They are very fondly attached to this world and their constant prayers are for a full hundred years of life and all its blessings. They dote on the joys of living and wish to continue for ever through their progeny. (R. V. V. 4.10 and Taittiriya Brahmana I 5.5.6). In the Satapatha Brahmana rebirth is offered by Gods as a reward to a good soul. It is considered as a blessing sometimes and not an evil, though the most dominant view is of course immortality in Heaven, the abode of Gods.

There are vague references to Heaven and Hell. The kingdom of the dead is in Heaven and it is the place of refuge for all the departed souls (R. V. IV 53.2; X 12.1). In the funeral hymn (R. V. IV. 113) the departing soul is asked to go forth along the ancient pathway tread by the ancestors. The soul will enjoy the reward of its good deeds in the company of its forefathers. The Heaven is ruled by Yama who was the first to depart from the world, enter the realm of the dead and be its king.

In the early vedas we don't find mention made of Hell. We have vague hints. We hear of Varuna thrust-

ing the evil-doers down into the darkness of the abyss from which they never return. It is only in the Taittiriya Brahmana that Hell is mentioned for the first time as the abode of permanent darkness. Yama is made its permanent ruler. This hell is the destination for all the unholy and the unrighteous.

The great doctrine of Karma is yet in its infancy in the vedas. The term Karman appears significantly in the Atharva-veda (II. 7. 17). According to the Satapatha Brahmana (6. 2. 2. 27) a man is born into the world he has made. One's good or bad deeds are weighed in the other world by placing him in a balance (XI 2. 7. 33). There is the idea of proportionate recompense in the Satapatha Brahmana (10. 6. 3. 1). Merits of sacrificial acts and charitable deeds accrue to the departed in Heaven (Vajasaneyi Samhita 18. 6. 4. Rig-veda 10. 14. 8). The later doctrine of Karman is just a streamlined form of the Vedic Rita, the law which prevades the whole world, which all Gods and men must obey.

In the Vedas we find speculations about Cosmogony and Cosmology. The Vedic seers recognise the hard core of existence and point out unequivocally that the world is real. There are absolutely no references in the early hymns to say that the world we live in is unreal, that it is only an appearance or just the product of Maya or Cosmic illusion. We of course do meet with the term 'Maya' in the Samhitas. But, the term Maya is never used in the vedas to point out the illusory character of the world as connoted in the later

vedantic system of Samkara.

In X. 129 we find the most remarkable hymn of creation in the vedas, wherein an account of the superpersonal Monism is given. The whole universe is said to have evolved from 'the ONE-Tadekam'. But 'the one' is no longer a deity, not even the Prajapati, let alone Indra, Varuna or Visvakarma.

To begin with, it is said, there was the 'THAT ONE' and nothing else. All over, there was utter darkness, an impenetrable void, a chaotic cataclysm, the primal chaos, "neither being nor non-being, neither air nor sky, neither death nor immortality, neither day nor night". There was nothing else except the 'That ONE' which breathed breathless by its own power.

Then by the fervour and passion of austerity, through creative heat, the 'That ONE', by itself evolved into a determine self-conscious being. Thus came about, for the first time an active creator, a manifest being, a God, out of the original unmanifest chaos. Then there began the march of creation.

Desire, Kama (Manso Retah) is said to be the only reason for this self-manifestation on the part of the 'That ONE', the absolute and the subsequent pageantry and march of creation. The reason for this Desire, on the part of the 'That ONE', the vedic seers are helpless to explain and simply exclaim 'KO VEDA', 'Who knows'.

So, it is not the vedas as such, but this expression of exclamation, this 'KO VEDA', that is perhaps responsible for the later weaving of the MAYA doctrine.

2

THE UPANISHADS

The growth and general character of Upanishadic Literature. Its importance for later Indian Thought

Atman and Brahman, Maya or Avidya and Prakriti

Jiva. Gross and Subtle Bodies. Prana. Manas. Vijnana. Waking, Dream, sleep and Turiya.

Origin and Nature of Evil. Conception of Moksha. Qualifying Discipline. Place of Morality in the Upanishadic Scheme of Life

Upanishadic Religion : Conception of Isvara. Creation and Absorption of the World. Classification of Created things. Doctrine of Karma. Its Origin and Value

THE UPANISHADS

As already referred to in the previous chapter, the Upanishads are truly called the Vedanta. Literally 'vedanta' means 'vedasya antah', the end and the aim of the Vedas. The substance of the Upanishads is Vedanta vijnana, the wisdom of the vedanta. They are philosophical discourses, generally in prose with occasional snatches of verse, but sometimes in verse altogether.

The Upanishads are short treatises which frequently form part of an Aranyaka ; but many of them are detached works. Two of the Upanishads in particular, namely the Isa and the Sivasankalpa are found in the Samhita portion itself of the white Yajur-veda. The majority of the Upanishads belong to the Atharva-veda. Most of the Upanishads are modern in composition. A few of them of course are of very high antiquity. These older canonical upanishads are definitely pre-buddhistic and the earliest of them might have

been compiled by about 500 B. C. Unlike the earlier ones, the later Upanishads are mostly sectarian in character, closely connected with the puranas and the exclusive worship of Siva or Vishnu.

The Upanishads are also taken to belong to 'SRUTI' or the class of revealed literature, by the orthodox. They are considered immemorial (Sanatana), timeless and eternal (Nitya). They are also considered as Apaurusheya, impersonal and authorless. They are said to be the authentic records of intuitions experienced by the ancient mystic seers and sages in their concourse with truth. But we can easily see they are not revealed literature, but thought out and composed. They are all written in classical sanskrit. They run mostly in the form of intimate dialogues between father and son, husband and wife or teacher and pupils, sometimes in the form of informal discussions and many other times in the form of stories and parables. We often find in the Upanishads resumes of reported public disputations where royal rewards were bestowed on the victors. The king would promise sometimes a thousand cows with ten padas of gold fixed to their horns. The vanquished would be humiliated and sometimes even decapitated. It happened in the case of Sakalya. It is said, his head fell off (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. III. 9-26).

The Upanishads are no systematic treatises on philosophy, but just philosophical poems, though not always necessarily in verse, often revealing the highest truths and noblest thoughts, through metaphors and

allegories. We do not find any system or logical method in their presentation of ideas. Often we meet with emotional unrestrained utterances in a high flown irregular style. The Upanishadic thinkers are more of poets than philosophers. We find poetic imagination always at work in their rhapsodies and rigmaroles. In their wild extravagance of ecstatic enthusiasm we often find incoherent and inconsistent utterances in their wordy long-winded rambling discourses. We meet with innumerable symbolic expressions, mystic explanations of certain abstruse terms and profuse punning on words. Not only is the language symbolic, the style is often highly elliptical. In spite of these extravaganzas, we can easily mark the boldness of speculation and the spirit of adventure in the formulation of new ideas as in the earlier hymns of the Rig-veda.

The brave upanishadic speculations are often under-taken by members of the warrior class, while the brahmins of the so-called intellectual aristocracy are found wallowing in ritualistic frivolities and deeply immersed in the protocol and punctilios of ceremoniously receiving Gods for sacrifices and later despatching them back to their abodes with a profusion of thanksgiving. That is the striking peculiarity of the Upanishads wherein we find the absence of brahminical exclusiveness in intellectual and spiritual enterprises. Some of the greatest teachers are at least not brahmins by birth. They are Kshatriyas, members of the spirited military nobility with a zest for new adventures and new ideas. Most often it is these kshatriya think-

ers that have seized the initiative and provided the initial thirst for metaphysical speculations. Gayatri, the most sacred symbol of the Dvijās (the twice-born) was given by a saint born a kshatriya and later claiming admission into the brahminical fold. It was a kshatriya thinker who later initiated Buddhism and provided an opposition to the rigidity of caste, creed and credulity. Equally so, it was the kshatriyas that boosted Jainism and preached Non-violence as the fulcrum of life and living.

There is a significant passage in the Chandogya Upanishad (V. 3) where the learned sage Gautama sends his son Svetaketu Aruneya to visit king Pravahana Jaivali. The king sets forth before him five questions about the journey of the soul after death. The son though very well qualified, cannot answer the questions of Pravahana and returns to his father. Even Gautama is perplexed and cannot answer. Gautama himself then proceeds to Pravahana to be instructed. The king though complying with his request quips "This knowledge before thee never came to the brahmanas; therefore hitherto in all worlds, the right of teaching it has belonged exclusively to the kshatriya caste".

Similarly we find different anecdotes, where kings enlighten brahmanas. The king Janaka of Videha and king Ajatasatru of Kasi (Benaras) are acclaimed as the accredited repositories of the highest metaphysical wisdom. They are often found presiding over many great philosophical councils and seminars. Many

brahmanas approach king Asvapati Kaikēya and make themselves his pupils; by request King Ajatasatru imparts instructions to the brahmana Balakīśa. We have many stories of princes taking active parts in the intellectual life of the times, as in the stories of Balakī, Gargya and Ajatasatru in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (II. 1) of Svetaketu and Pravahana (Jaivalin) in the Chandogya (V. 13) and Brihadaranyaka (VI. 2) Upanishads; of Aruni and Asvapati Kaikēya in the Chandogya Upanishad (V. 11), etc. Some of the chief doctrines of the Upanishads are associated with names of renowned sages such as Aruni, Asvala, Arthabhaga, Asvapati Kaikēya, Balakī, Bhrigu, Sandilya, Svetaketu, Yajnavalkya and a host of others. We also find many prominent women participants such as Gargi, the daughter of Vakaknu, Maitreyi, the wife of Yajnavalkya, and many others. Philosophical pursuits and the love of wisdom were not confined to the male members of the community only. Women of note also provided pep and vigour to the debates and discussions. We find sometimes philosophical dialogues between Gods and men such as between Indra and Pratardana, Sanatkumara and Narada (representative of man), Yama and Nachiketas, as also between Prajapati, Indra and Virocana in the different Upanishads. The term 'Upanishad' is itself derived from the three words 'Upa' (near), 'ni' (devotedly) and 'śad' (sitting). It means sitting devotedly, close to a Guru (teacher) and receiving the secret doctrines of instruc-

tion. The Upanishads are considered to be secret and sacred knowledge meant only for the few initiated, interested in high spiritual wisdom. In some Upanishads we come across expressions like 'paramam guhyam' 'the supreme secret', (Katha Upanishad), 'Guhya ade-sah' 'the secret teaching or the secret texts', (Chandogya Upanishad), 'Rahasyam' (the noble or mysterious secrets) etc. etc., indicating thereby that they come under the class of esoteric culture and cannot be made widely public. They abound in many mysterious secrets like accounts of the mystic significance of the Syllable AUM, explanations of mystic words like TAJJALAN and many other key passages like 'Satyasya Satyam' the Real of the Real, 'Tat Tvam Asi'-'That thou art' and so on which can be intelligible only to a select few.

Samkara derives the word Upanishad as a substantive from the root 'Sad'-to destroy and interprets the term as Brahma-knowledge by which the ignorance of the individual is destroyed. The Svetasvatara upanishad states that the sage Svetasvatara had the revelation of the upnishadic truths through his austerities and contemplation (Tapah Prabhava) and also through the grace of God (deva prasada). It is variously emphasised in the upanishads that the vision of truth can be obtained only through a devoted way of life and dedication to truth. Unless the teachers satisfy themselves of the sincerity and seriousness of the disciple and his capacity to know, they won't impart instructions about the secret lore. For example, according to

the Prasna Upanishad six pupils go to a great teacher by name the revered Pippalada, seeking instructions in respect of the Higher reality. The guru asks them to live with him for a year before instructing them just to satisfy himself of their earnestness and ardent love for study. Similarly when Nachiketas, according to the Katha Upanishad, desires to know whether or not the soul survives after death, Yama does not reply till he has tested the sincerity and strength of the inquirer's mind.

Though cherished for long as a guarded secret and kept unknown to many, the Upanishads saw the light of day through an historical accident. Darashiko, an enlightened Moghul prince and the eldest son of the emperor Shajehan heard of the upanishads for the first time while at Kashmir in the year 1640. He later invited several pandits from Benares to Delhi and got nearly fifty upanishads translated into Persian. In the year 1775 Anquetil Duperron (who brought to light the *Zenda Avesta*) received manuscript copies of the Persian translations from a friend of his Le Gentil, the French resident in Faizabad at the court of Shujau-ddaulah. Anquetil translated them into Latin and published them in 1802. This latin translation was read by Schopenhauer, the German philosopher. It was through Schopenhaur and the German scholars that the Upanishads became widely popular throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Raja Ram Mohan Roy founder of the famous Brahmo Samaj also translated many of the Upanishads into Bengali, Hindi and English.

It is very difficult to say how exactly the Upanishads came to be evolved. Many scholars are of the opinion that probably originally they referred to a few key passages like 'Tat Tvam Asi-That thou Art'; 'So ham Brahma-I am that Brahman'; 'Satyasya Satyam-The Real of the real; etc., etc. These had to be explained and the text and the explanations together formed the complete Upanishads. The spirit of the Upanishads is completely opposed to the Rituals and the sacrificial cult of the Brahmanas. In fact the Aranyakas have paved the way for the Upanishads with the substitution of allegorical interpretations for a literal interpretation of the sacrifices. The Upanishads emphasise the path of knowledge (Jñāna marga) unlike the Vedas which deal primarily with the performance of sacrifices and the path of works (Karma marga). According to tradition, the Vedas give us commandments to perform certain actions (Vidhis) and also injunctions not to perform certain actions (Nishedhas). While the Vedas and Brahmanas deal exclusively with Duties and sacrifices, the Upanishads give us a knowledge of the ultimate truth and reality, helping us thereby towards emancipation. The Upanishads generally decry the ways of works, the sacrificial lore and the ritualistic cult of the Brahmanas. They even make very sarcastic references to them and apply scathing remarks. For example the Chandogya Upanishad while pooh-pooing the idea of rituals and the Karma Khanda of the Vedas, compares the priestly procession in a very derogative way to a

procession of dogs chanting 'Aum, let us eat, Aum Adama ; Aum, let us drink, Aum pibama', etc.

The Mundaka upanishad (I ii 7-10) compares the sacrificial forms to unsafe boats and regards those who value them as fools overtaken repeatedly by old age and death.

The Brihadaranyaka upanishad points out that he who worships a divinity other than the SELF can be described as a domestic animal of the Gods (I. iv. 10). It also substitutes an allegorical interpretation for the horse-sacrifice (Asvamedha). Similarly in the Chandogya Upanishad the entire life of man is symbolically explained away as a Soma sacrifice.

However in a few upanishads like the Svetasvatara, we can observe a compromising tone. The path of rituals is contained as a necessary prelude and qualifying discipline to the higher path of wisdom. The learning of the hymns by heart and the assiduous performance of the rites are a preparation for true enlightenment. They discipline the mind and prepare it for the proper reception of the sublime upanishadic truths, the Brahma Jnana or pure spiritual knowledge.

PARA & APARA VIDYA

In fact the upanishads make a distinction between two types of knowledge, PARA and APARA vidya, higher and lower wisdom. The Mundaka upanishad points out that that alone is higher knowledge which relates to the Imperishable, Akshara-(I. i. 4-5). The lower knowledge, Apra vidya relates only to a knowledge of

empirical things, of nama-rupa prapaneca. The higher knowledge may not enlighten us about the details of particulars but does provide an insight into the principle of their very being, just as the knowledge of a lump of clay for example is enough to explain every other thing made of clay. It is the knowledge of the original source of all manifestations, of the Absolute Self, in comparison with which, the lower knowledge becomes Ne-science, Avidya, false wisdom (Chandogya Up. VI i. 4). Higher wisdom, Paravidya, is true knowledge whereby what has not been thought of becomes thought of, what has not been understood becomes understood (Chandogya). The same upanishad characterises all the knowledge of Narada as mere name (Nama eva). Even the four vedas are relegated to the class of Aparavidya, the knowledge of the empirical sciences and arts, relating to material and ephemeral pleasures.

The philosophy of the upanishads is primarily a monistic approach. Its dominant note is either Monism or monotheism. The EKAM SAT, one only reality of the Rig-veda becomes in the upanishads 'Ekam Eva Advitiyam'-the one only without a second. The monistic tendencies can thus be seen in the samhitas themselves as pointed out in the previous chapter (R. V. I. 164-46). Questioned about the number of gods in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (III. ix) Yajnavalkya starts with the huge number 3306, then gradually reduces them to thirty-three, six, three, two, one and a half, finally to ONE. That one God is Brahman, and the

other Gods are just the appellations of his varied powers. The Vāsus, Rudras and Adityas are differently identified with the different cosmic processes and the natural phenomena like the Sun, the Moon, the Stars and so on. In the Maitrayani Upanishad, the Gods Brahma, Rudra and Vishnu are characterised as the principle manifestations of the Supreme, the Immortal and incorporeal Brahman (iv. 5-6). The Katha upanishad says the different Gods carry out their duties because of the fear of Brahman.

“Through fear of Him, the wind blows,
Through fear of Him, the Sun rises,
Through fear of Him, Agni (the God of Fire),
Indra (the causer of rain and storm, king of
the Gods),
And Death, the fifth, all hurry (to perform
their respective tasks)”.

Even Prajapati, the highest God of the Brahmanas is subordinated to the Brahman. In the Kausitaki upanishad, Prajapati is made a door-keeper along with Indra at the abode of the Absolute (i. 5). In the Kena upanishad, Brahman is made the Glory of the Gods and the source of their power.

Thus Brahman gradually becomes the Supreme Reality, the one and the only ultimate reality.

In fact it is from these upanishadic treatises that the later vedanta systems of philosophy are developed. The Brahma Sutras of Badarayana are just an aphoristic summary of the teachings of the Upanishads. Two prominent but divergent views of Brahman, are made

out in the Upanishads namely, the Cosmic and the Acosmic views, the Saguna and the Nirguna Brahma ideals. These views are recognised by Badarayana also in his Sutras on the Upanishads. The later Advaita Vedanta of Samkara insists on the Acosmic view of Brahman. In the theistic systems of Ramanujacharya and Madvacharya dilate on the cosmic view of the upanishads.

The Chandogya Upanishad frames the central question in philosophy, thus-“What is Atman? What is Brahman? Ko nu Atma? Kim Brahma?”. The two fundamental ideas of the upanishads are

1. The doctrine of Atman.
2. The doctrine of Brahman.

ATMAN :

The term Atman is derived from ‘An’, ‘to breathe’. As alluded to in the Rig-veda VII 87.2, ‘ATMA TE VATAH’, it is the breath of life. (Samkaracharya gives a different root meaning and means by Atman ‘to eat, enjoy or pervade all’ It also means ‘to obtain’).

The Rig-veda speaks of ‘Ajo Bhagah’, the unborn part of man (X. 16.4), which is unlike the born parts of man such as the body, mind etc., and which survives death when everything else is eliminated. The Atman or self is pure consciousness (caitanya). It is the expression for the Soul or the Self of a living being, especially of man. It is the inner essence of man. This self or soul is free from sin, free from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst. It desi-

res nothing but what is ought to desire, imagines nothing but what it ought to imagine. 'That it is', every one should try to understand (Chandogya Up. viii 7.1).

It is the subject that persists throughout all the changes, the common factor that continues unaffected in the different phases of waking, dream, sleep, death, rebirth and final deliverance. (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad iv 4.3). Death cannot destroy it nor sin pollute it.

The Brihadaranyaka upanishad (3.7.1) explains it as follows. The Self, "that thread by which this world and the other world and all things are tied together is the timeless controller within. He dwells in the breath; he is within the breath; the breath however does not know him; the breath is his body, he controls the breath from within. He dwells in the mind; he is within the mind; the mind however does not know him. The mind is his body; he controls the mind from within".

"He is likewise within speech, the eye, the ear, the skin, the understanding and the semen. Moreover in like manner, he is within the elements of the Macrocosm". "This self dwells in the element earth and controls it from within: the earth is his body; yet the earth is unaware of this principle inherent in its atoms (Earth is the most tangible of the five elements). In water, fire and air and in ether (the most subtle of the five elements) too, the self is equally unknown".

"The self dwells in all beings, he is within all beings; the beings however do not know him; all beings

are his body ; he controls all beings from within ; he is unseen, yet seeing ; unheard, yet hearing ; unthought of and yet the thinker (Mantar). He is unknown and yet the knower (Vijnatar, the inner principle of awareness). There is no seer, but him ; no one to hear, but him ; no one thinking, no one aware, but him. He is the Self, 'the ruler within', the one immortal"-So to say, the Self is the actual agent of every sense and thinking process, the organs merely serving him as instruments.

Speaking to his wife Maitreyi, sage Yajnavalkya says (in the same upanishad, 2.4.5), not for the sake of the husband is the husband loved, but for the sake of the Self is the husband loved. Not for the sake of the wife, is the wife loved, but for the sake of the self is the wife loved. Not for the sake of the sons are the sons loved, but for the sake of the self are the sons loved not for the sake of all, is all loved but for the sake of the self is all loved. The self is what is to be, beheld, heard, reflected upon and meditated upon with inner concentration. Verily by beholding, hearing, reflecting upon and by the intimate knowledge (Vijnana) of the Self, all of the visible and tangible universe becomes known".

BRAHMAN :

In the Rig-veda Samhitas the term Brahman is used in the sense of "sacred knowledge or sacred speech, a hymn or incantation". Vac, the holy utterance is personified as Brahman. Visvakarman is said to be the

‘Lord of holy utterances’. Thus by Brahman is meant Mantra, Prayer. Brahman is identified with the mysterious power and potency of prayer, of vac.

Sometimes, in the Samhitas, this supreme Brahman is also conceived of as Light, Jyotisham Jyotih, the Light of lights.

In the Brahmanas, Brahman is identified with the Ritual and is regarded as omnipotent. It is often stated that he who knows and worships Brahman, can control the whole Universe.

In the Aranyakas and the upanishads, Brahman is considered as the ultimate source and essence of the whole universe. Brahman is taken to be the cosmic principle and the entire universe of living and non-living beings is said to be the product of Brahman. Everything is Brahman. Brahman is the ground of all existence. Brahman is the primordial and primeval entity. All that is, has grown out of Brahman.

Samkara derives the word Brahman from the root ‘Brihati’ which means ‘to excel, to exceed’. It is generally taken to be, that the word Brahman is derived from the root ‘Brih’ which means ‘to burst forth, grow, expand, swell or increase’. Brahman is that ultimate reality which has bursted forth and swelled into this ever expanding Universe. Brahman is the First cause and the ultimate principle of the Universe, of all that is, that was and that shall be.

The Upanishads speak of Brahman as TAJJALAN, as the ultimate principle from which all things spring forth, into which they are all finally resolved and in

which they live and have their being.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad refers to Brahman as 'Satyasya Satyam', the Reality of the real, the source and ground of all existence. It maintains that the ultimate reality is 'Being' 'San matram hi Brahma'. This ultimate reality, Brahman, is not only Infinite existence (Sat), it is also the absolute truth (Chit) and Pure Bliss (Ananda). Brahman is Sac-cid-ananda.

The same Upanishad also defines Brahman as Consciousness and bliss-Vijnanam anandam Brahma (III. ix. 28).

The Taittiriya upanishad affirms that Brahman is Reality, consciousness and the Infinite-Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma. (ii. 1.)

The Chandogya upanishad (VII. xx. iii) describes Brahman as the Infinite, which alone is Bliss. Yo vai bhuma Tat sukham—Brahman is the Infinite (Bhuma) which also is Bliss (Sukham). Brahman, the Infinite, is Happiness.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad compares this Brahman, the ultimate reality of the Universe and the supporter and the sustainer of all things in the universe, to the axle and felly of a wheel in which all the spokes are contained.

The Katha Upanishad points to Brahman as that ancient tree whose roots grow upward and whose branches go downwards. It points to Brahman as the Bright and the Immortal.

All the worlds are said to be contained in Brahman and nothing is said to go beyond it.

The Svetasvatara Upanishad defines Brahman as the subtler than the subtle and at the same time as the greater than the great. 'Anor Aniyam Mahato Mahiyan' (iii. 20).

The Isa Upanishad caricatures Brahman as that which moves and at the same time which does not move ; as that which is far and at the same time near ; as that which is within all this of the Universe and without all this of the Universe (V).

IDENTITY OF ATMAN & BRAHMAN :

Although the concepts of Brahman and Atman, the Universal and the Individual souls are distinguished for purposes of analysis and understanding, the main thesis of the Upanishadic seers is that the two are essentially one and the same, that Atman is Brahman, Sa va yam Atma Brhma--as stated in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (iv. iv. 5). It is the doctrine of identity between Brahman and Atman that is the most remarkable discovery of the ancient seers and sages of India. That itself is their greatest contribution to the world of philosophy. The upanishads often point out that these two ultimate principles of the Outer and Inner universes, namely Brahman and Atman are one and the same. They are identical in essence. The famous quotations from the upanishads like,

“That thou art – Tat Tvam Asi,
I am Brahman – Aham Brahmasmi,
I am that Brahman – So ham Brahma,
That is the real – Om tat sat, etc., etc.,

are pointers to their essential inner identity.

This essential identity between the cosmic self and the Individual self, between the macrocosm and the microcosm, between Brahman and Atman, is very well brought about in a famous dialogue in the Chandogya upanishad (6.1; 6.12.13) between a father and his son, between Uddalaka Aruni and Svetaketu Aruneya. At the beginning of chapter 6 in the upanishad, the father prefaces his teaching by saying, just as, my dear son, by one piece of clay everything made of clay can be known, just as by one nail scissors everything made of iron may be known, so also my dear is this teaching.

He then begins to teach him that, whereby what has not been heard of, becomes heard of, what has not been thought of, becomes thought of, what has not been understood, becomes understood. In short he teaches him the essential doctrine of the identity of the inner essence of the individual soul with the essence of the Universal spirit, of Atman with Brahman. He directs his son as follows :

“Bring hither a fig from there”.

“Here it is, Sir”.

“Divide it”.

“It is divided, Sir”

“What do you see there”?

“These rather fine seeds, Sir”.

“Of these, please divide one”.

“It is divided, Sir”.

“What do you see there”?

“Nothing at all, Sir!”

“Verily my dear, this finest essence which you do not perceive, verily my dear, from that finest essence, this great sacred fig tree thus arises. Believe, my dear, that which is the finest essence, this whole world has That as its SELF. That is reality. That is Atman. That art thou. Tat Tvam Asi-Svetaketu”.

On another occasion he directs his son as follows :
“place this salt in water (in the pot). In the morning come unto me”.

“(Next morning) That salt you placed in the water last evening, please bring it thither”.

(He could not find it as it was completely dissolved).

“Please take a sip from this end. How is it?”

“Salt”

“Take a sip from the middle. How is it?”

“Salt”

“Take a sip from that end. How is it?”

“Salt”

“Set it aside ; then, come unto me”. He did so, saying it is always the same.

“Verily indeed my dear, you do not perceive being, here, verily indeed, it is here. That which is the finest essence, this whole world has that as its SELF. That is reality, That is Atman, That art thou, Tat Tvam Asi-Svetaketu”.

Thus Uddalaka identifies ‘Sat’ which is the ground of all existence and the original source of all being, with the self of Svetaketu. This truth of identity of Atman and Brahman, Uddalaka repeats nine times, to impress the importance.

This identity of Atman and Brahman is again very finely delineated in the Taittiriya Upanishad. The son Bhrigu approaches his father Varuna for instruction about the nature of Brahman. Varuna gives his son a formula and asks him to discover it for himself through his own austerities. In this quest of Bhrigu we get, beautiful inquiries into the nature of the Self through an analysis of the sheaths (Kosas) that cover the soul.

To begin with, Bhrigu is impressed by the physical phenomena, the material factors (Anna or matter), Annamaya Kosa. He soon realises that matter cannot account for life. He then hitches upon prana, the vital force that transforms the food into blood, bones, muscles and life. He is soon dissatisfied with the Pranamaya Kosa as he finds it to be inadequate to explain the phenomenon of consciousness. So he then posits Manas (mind) as the substratum of life. He again realises that this Manomaya Kosa is also inadequate to explain logical consciousness. He then probes still further within himself and pierces through this envelope of Manomaya Kosa into the region of Vijnanamaya Kosa, the region of discursive reasoning, intellectual acumen. He then well realises that even intellectuality implies a duality, the double factors of the knower and the known. He is dissatisfied. He proceeds still further in his quest and finally penetrates into the blissful region of Anandamaya Kosa, wherein all distinctions are resolved, where the knower, the known and the knowledge, all become one. This Ananda, this ecstasy of blissful identity is not a mere negative factor or em-

ptiness, but the acme of self-realisation, the apex of happiness, Delight, Ananda. His thoughts are quelled. He feels the calm, the poise and the perfection of himself within himself. He floats in the Anandamaya Kosa, in the region of Braman Bliss. He has realised the identity of Atman and Brahma within himself. He is in an ecstatic contemplation, in an experience of complete and concrete identity. His doubts are stilled in this blissful experience of Brahman, the self-evident principle. Even his thoughts are quelled. His quest is terminated.

The Mandukya upanishad, in its terse twelve verses makes a precise analysis into the four states or Avasthas of the Self, namely, waking, dream, sleep and Turiya, the fourth state (caturtha) of ecstatic bliss. It begins with an inquiry into the mystic symbol AUM and identifies it with Brahman. The Upanishad finally emphasises the identity of Atman and Brahman by significantly pointing out that Brahman is Ananda which is itself just Atman as realised in the Fourth or Turiya state.

That Brahman and Atman are one in essence and identical in nature, all the upanishads emphasise. Scholars are of the opinion that this non-dual Brahman-Atman is conceived in different ways in the various upanishads, sometimes as the all-inclusive ground of the Universe (the Cosmic view) and some other times as the only ultimate reality of which the universe is but an appearance only (the acosmic view). The former view of Cosmism is styled differently as the Sa-prapan-

ca ideal, the Suguna Brahma ideal and the ideal of Brahma parinama Veda. The latter view of Acosmism is designated variously as Nishprapanca ideal, the Nirguna Brahman ideal and the ideal of Brahma Vivarta Veda. Occasionally we find both the views of Cosmism and Acosmism juxtaposed together in one and the same upanishad, as for instance in the Mundaka upanishad (I. 1.6). Sometimes both the views are synthesised and a compromise advocated as in the Isa Upanishad. Anyhow the view of Cosmism is broadly well explained in the Chandogya upanishad and the ideas of Acosmism are well brought about in the Brihadaranyaka upanishad. Anyway it is the difference between these two views of Cosmism (which views the world as an emanation from Brahman and therefore real) and Acosmism (which views the world as only an appearance of Brahman and therefore un-real) that has been responsible for the divergence of beliefs in the Theistic and Absolutistic schools of later vedanta.

THE COSMIC VIEW :

According to this view, everything in the universe is born out of Brahman and is as real as Brahman himself. Everything is born of Brahman ; everything is sustained by Brahman ; finally everything is re-absorbed in Brahman. The world is real. It is both identical with Brahman and also different from Brahman. It is called the Saprapanca ideal because according to this view the world is as real as Brahman himself (Saprapanca). It is called as the Saguna Brahmana ideal

because, according to this view, Brahman is a person, the Supreme person, God with all the attributes. (Sri Madhvacharya defines Brahman as 'Brihanto hy asmin Gunah'-the person in whom the qualities dwell in fullness. The Ultimate reality is not a mere concept, a logical abstraction, but a concrete person, the repository of all the highest values and attributes). Brahman, the God is Omnipotent (all powerful), Omniscient (all knowing) and Omnipresent (all present). This God is in everything and is everywhere. He is immanent (Antaryamin). He is also transcendent (He is above everything and by Himself).

This view is also called as Brahma Parinama Vada, because everything is said to have evolved out of Brahman (The world is an effect, parinama, of Brahman which is the cause). Brahman is considered as both immanent and transcendent. He is both the material and the efficient cause of this world. The Upanishads employ many similies and metaphors to explain the evolution of Brahman into the world, the emergence of the many from the one. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad explains (I. iv-7) how the world was at first unmanifest, how later on it was made manifest through names (naman) and forms (Rupa). Having manifested the world, the Self entered it, even to the nail-tips as a razor would be hidden in a razor-case or fire in a fire-holder. The manifestation of Brahman into the world is likened to the ejection of the threads from a spider, the scattering of sparks from fire, the sproutings of herbs from the earth and the growth of

hairs on the head and body of a person. (Mundaka upanishad I. 1.7.9 also Brihadaranyaka Upanishad II 1.20).

THE ACOSMIC VIEW :

According to this view only Brahman is real. Everything else is false, unreal. Everything in this world is only an appearance of Brahman. This appearance is unreal. Brahman itself looks as many. The many are all unreal. They are just appearances and look as real because of our ignorance (Avidya or Maya). The only real thing is the One and the only Brahman. This is called as the Nishprapanca ideal because according to this view the world is unreal (Nishprapanca as opposed to Sa-prapanca). It is called as the view of Nirguna Brahman because, according to this view, Brahman is an impersonal principle which has no qualities or attributes (Nirguna as opposed to Saguna). It is also called Brahma vivarta vada because according to this view the world is only an appearance super-imposed on Brahman.

Brahma Parinama Vada and Brahma Vivarta Vada are just later vedantic terms not found in the upanishads as such. Vivarta vada maintains that Brahman does not change into, but merely appears as the world. The Absolute is just regarded as the mere ground of both the subject and the object. All the objects of the world and of common experience are just the phenomena of the Universe. Brahman on the other hand is the Noumenon. This is obviously oppo-

sed to the view of Brahma Parinama Vada which point-blank declares that the world has emerged from Brahman, is a mode of Brahman and is as real as Brahman himself.

The Brihadaranyaka upanishad, while describing Brahman as the real of the real, Satyasya Satyam, splits the word SATYAM into the three syllables 'Sa', 'Ti' and 'Yam' (V. 5 . 1). The upanishad then points out that the first syllable 'Sa' and the third syllable 'Yam' mean Truth, while the second 'Ti' signifies untruth (Madhyato'nritam). Just as the untruth (as indicated by the middling 'Ti') is enveloped on both sides by Truth namely the syllables 'Sa' and 'Yam' so also, it is argued that the world is unreal though enclosed on both sides by the real and enveloped by the true Brahman.

The Maitri upanishad also explains that there are two forms of Brahman, namely the Formed and the Formless. That which is Formed is said to be unreal (a-satyam) and that which is formless is said to be the only real (satyam). Brahman is defined as Light.

The Mundaka upanishad also explains Brahman as the Light of all lights (Jyotisham jyotih), that which is Self-luminous.

The Brihadaranyaka upanishad gives a negative description of the Absolute Brahman as 'Neti, Neti'. It simply means that the mental categories of man can neither approach it nor cognise it; not at all that Brahman is a blank (IV, ii, 4). Rather Brahman is defined as Reality (Sat), Intelligence (Cit) and Bliss

)Ananda). Brahman is underlined as Consciousness and Bliss. Vijñanam Anandam Brahma (III. ix. 28).

COSMISM & ACOSMISM RECONCILED :

It is in the Mundaka upanishad (I. 1. 6) that the two views of Cosmism and Acosmism are reconciled. The upanishad states that 'what is invisible, intangible, colourless, nameless, eyeless, and earless, devoid of hands and feet,—that is what is coeval with time and space, is all-pervading, subtle and changeless, which the wise know to be the source of beings'. The Nishprapanca ideal is given a positive tone and the Saprapanca ideal is given a negative twist. The intention is just to point out that though Brahman furnishes an explanation for the entire universe and its cause. He is not exhausted by it. Brahman is not just identical with his creation. He is something more. He is also transcendent.

MAYA :

From the standpoint of Acosmism there cannot be real creation, as Gaudapada, the spiritual grandfather of Samkara later refers to. Gaudapada in his Karika iii 15 argues that the illustrations of clay, metal, sparks etc., as given in the Chandogya and other upanishads, though they may point out that the objects of the universe are just the modes of Brahman, their ultimate aim is just to emphasise the truth of non-difference between Brahman and the universe. That is the interpretation that Gaudapada gives according to his con-

venience. Similarly the metaphors of the spinning of the web by the spider, the bearing of the child by the mother, the production of notes from musical instruments, are all argued to be the means by which the upanishadic thinkers are said to point out the oneness (Tadatmya) between cause and effect, Brahman and the Universe, their mutual integral and intimate relationship. They are just the effective ways of proving the unity of Brahman, as the only ultimate ground of all being, the sole source of all living and existence, the single thread that binds together the plurality of the Universe into a single unitary principle, not that plurality and difference are real and can exist independently beside Brahman. That is exactly the angle from which Acosmism interprets the theory of creation and dispenses with the modal nature of the Universe as after all finally false.

Acosmism is of the opinion that this entire universe can never be ultimately real because only Brahman is real and nothing else can be real alongside Brahman. The world is not real, though it appears to be so. It is 'Maya' that makes the Nishprapanca appear as saprapanca, that makes the unreal appear as the real.

The doctrine of Maya is not to be found in its full-fledged form in the Upanishads as such. The upanishadic seers are not aware of the concept of Maya anyway and there are many casual references to it mostly indirectly.

The term 'Maya' occurs in the Svetasvatara upa-

nishad (iv 10) :

Mayam tu prakritim viddhi,
Mayinam tu Mahesvarahi;
Tasyavayava-bhutais tu vyaptam
Sarvam idam jagat ;

“Know then that Prakriti is Maya and the wielder of Maya is the great Lord. This whole world is pervaded by beings that are parts of Him”.

Maya is cosmic illusion. The term can be traced to the Rig-veda itself where the assumption of many shapes by Indra through his illusions (Maya) is mentioned (Rig-veda VI. 47.18).

In the Maitrayaniya upanishad VI-24 the Absolute Brahman is compared to the Fiery circle, a wheel of Fire (Alatacakram iva sphurantam). This same analogy is later developed by Gaudapada in his famous Karika (IV 47-52). Just as a spark of fire when made to revolve in quick rotation creates apparently a fiery circle (alata cakra) which is an illusion, so also this universe is just an appearance, an illusion only.

The Chandogya upanishad is said to suggest indirectly that the modifications of Brahman are just mere names arising from speech (Vacarambhanam vikaro namadheyam), variations of verbal expressions and thus illusory in the last resort. The world of plurality is only seemingly real, apparently real, but not true.

The same upanishad points out (VIII. 3.1.3) that just as the hard crux of the earth hides the golden treasures beneath, so also a cap of untruth hides the

element of truth beneath ; Rita hides Anrita. Illusion eclipses the Brahman.

The Brihadaranyaka and Isa upanishads also speak of the veiling of truth by a disc of gold. The Svetasvatara upanishad also speaks of the veil of illusion. But they all recommend the grace of God for the removal of the veil and seeing the Truth as such. In fact the Svetasvatara (I. 10) points out that pradhana, primary matter is perishable. What is imperishable is the Lord Hara. By meditating on Him and His being, complete cessation from the illusion of the world (Visva-Maya-nivrittih) is possible.

AVIDYA :

The term 'Avidya' is an equivalent of Maya. Just as Maya refers to cosmic illusion, Avidya normally refers to Individual ignorance. The term occurs in various upanishads like the Katha, Chandogya, Prasna etc. The Katha upanishad (I. 11 . 5) speaks of people living in ignorance (Avidya) but thinking themselves to be learned and going about in search of truth like blind men being led by another who is himself blind.

The Chandogya upanishad makes a distinction between Vidya or knowledge which is power and Avidya or ignorance which is decrepit.

The Prasna upanishad (I. 16) tells us that only those can reach the stainless Brahman who are rid of crookedness, falsehood (anritam) and illusion (Maya) in themselves.

While Maya is cosmic in significance and magni-

tude, Avidya is individualistic and subjective. It is the individual's share of ignorance which prevents him from knowing the oneness and unity of Brahman and makes him believe in the plurality and multiplicity of the universe.

The upanishads invariably invoke the blessings of God for the riddance of Avidya and they advocate uniformly religion and worship, what they call 'Tapas', austerities. The famous invocation to God in humble prayers,

' Lead me from the unreal to the real,
Lead me from darkness to light,
Lead me from Death to Immortality".

is very relevant here.

The Isa upanishad (6-7) explains that he who has got rid of Avidya in himself sees all beings in his own self and his own self in all beings. It then exclaims "what delusion and what sorrow can he have who has seen the oneness? Ko Mohah, Kah Sokah ekatvam anupasyatah !"

PRAKRITI :

Whichever the view, whether Cosmic or Acosmic, whether the world is the actual mode of Brahman or only an appearance, the world of reality is called as Nama Rupa Prapanca. That the manifestation of the world is a marvel, is what terms like Maya or Avidya denote. Any way the manifestation of the pluralistic universe from the unmanifest Brahman in no way affects the integrity and absoluteness of Brahman.

Brahman can in no way be exhausted in his manifestation. "That is full; this is full; the full comes out of the full. Taking out the full from the full, the full itself remains".

The Upanishads do maintain that the world of phenomena is real. It is real as based on Brahman. It is unreal by itself. Maya is the power or Sakti of Isvara, from which the world emanates. The term is used for Prakriti, the Pradhana, the objective principle which God uses for purposes of creation. Prakriti is said to be the Maya of God and God is called the MAYAVIN in the same sense in which it is used in the Rig-veda. Maya is the Potency of Isvara, the inherent power in Him (like oil in the oilseeds) by which He creates images of Himself, the prototype. That the world is dependent on God, is well explained in the Chandogya upanishad, in its concept of TAJJALAN. The Taittiriya (III), the Brihadaranyaka (III. 8) and many other upanishads point out that the universe ultimately owes its existence to Brahman. The different metaphors used in the Mundaka upanishad clearly point out that the plurality are parts of Brahman even as the waves are parts and parcel of the ocean. The whole universe is the manifestation of the unmanifest, an emanation from the Supreme, an emergence from Brahman. Creation is an expression. The Svetasvatara describes God as 'MAYAVIN', the wonder-worker who creates the world by his powers.

The dominant note of the upanishads is pantheism. Their one and only aim is to emphasise the oneness of

Brahman. In the process of explaining this integrity of Brahman different corollaries may be drawn and are drawn indeed by the differing vedantins.

JIVA :

The Soul or Atman is given physical properties. It is then called the 'Jiva' and is said to dwell in the cavity of the heart. (Hridaya or Hritapadma). It is said to be of the size of a grain of Barley or rice. It is sometimes referred to as of the measure of a span or of the size of the thumb. There are innumerable references in the different upanishads like Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Katha and Svetasvatara, to the measure and size of the Soul.

The term 'Jiva' is derived from the root 'Jiv' which means 'to continue breathing'. Jiva therefore literally means 'that which breathes'. The name thus gives prominence to the biological aspect of man's nature, the unconscious activities such as respiration, digestion, blood circulation that go on throughout life in waking, dream and even in sleep when the mind is completely inactive. It is often expressed as Purusha in the upanishads and the term Purusha is explained as 'puri-shaya', 'that which dwells in the citadel of the body'. This emphasis on the biological aspect further leads to the psychical aspect of the soul, that which survives the death of the physical body and thus prepares itself to eat the bitter or sweet fruits of its deeds done while in the biological home. The Upanishads thus give two other names to the soul, namely 'Bhoktr'

the experient and 'Kartr' the doer, the agent of actions (Prasna upanishad IV 9. Katha upanishad I 3.4).

Every Jiva has the threefold aspects of its personality, namely, 'prana' the biological aspect representing the vital functions and the unconscious activities, 'Manas' the psychological aspect representing all the conscious side of the activities and Deha the material body, representing a tenement to reside. These three together form the empirical home for the soul or Atman.

The relation of this soul, Jiva, to Brahman is somewhat differently conceived in the two separate views of the absolute conceived in the upanishads. According to the Cosmic view it is an actual transformation of Brahman and as such is both identical with and different from Brahman. But according to the view of Acosmism it is Brahman itself appearing as the Jiva and thus not at all different from it. The later vedantic thinkers have of course precisely defined this relation of the universal Self to the individual self according to the convenience of their convictions. Samkara says that the two are identical. Ramanuja is of the view that the individual Self is eternally one with and also different from the universal Self. Madhvacharya is of the opinion that the individual Self is eternally different from the universal Self. Whatever be the differences of these later vedantic thinkers, all the upanishadic seers have admitted the plurality of the individual selves or souls. Each Jiva is different from the other because of its distinct association with Buddhi.

Each Jiva has its own reason and consequently its own freedom of choice. Every one of them has its own Avidya (ignorance) and its own Ahamkara too (Egoity). The basis of its egoity or individuality is of course vijñana (consciousness) which rallies round itself mind, life and a body.

Whatever be the relation of the soul to Brahman, whether an actual mode of Brahman or Brahman itself (in the sense of identity), this much is certain that the 'Jiva-hood' of a soul consists precisely in its not knowing its own source or forgetting itself and its own identity with Brahman. As a Jiva, the soul is cashiered and caged in a body. It is broken in, tamed and habituated to obedience in a routine of duties. It has to carry on both the unconscious and the conscious activities of life and living.

THE DOCTRINE OF SHEATHS (KOSAS) :

According to the upanishads every individual is a complexus, a complicated system of five elements, namely,

Anna (matter),

Prana (life),

Manas (mind),

Vijñana (intelligence) and

Ananda (Bliss equated with Atman in its original nature).

The last (Ananda) is the basis of all the other four. These form the different layers in succession covering the Soul, the different sheaths or kosas enveloping the

soul namely,

Annamaya kosa,

Pranamaya kosa,

Manomaya kosa,

Vijnanamaya kosa and

Anandamaya kosa,

as referred to in the Taittiriya upanishad.

The first and the outermost cover is the substantial annamaya kosa, the sheath sustained and nourished by food (anna). It corresponds to the world of gross matter and represents the gross body, *STHULA Sarira*. This also corresponds to the state of wakeful consciousness (*Jagritha avastha*) as described in the *Mandukya upanishad*.

The second sheath, *pranamaya kosa* the sheath made of the vital forces (*prana*), the third *Manomaya kosa* (the sheath made of mind and the senses [*Manas*]) and the fourth, *vijnanamaya kosa*, the sheath made of understanding, all the three together form the subtle body, *Linga Sarira*, *Suksma Sarira* (*Etat kosa-trayam linga sariram*). They once again correspond to the plane of dream consciousness (*Svapnavastha*) in terms of the *Mandukya upanishad*.

The fifth, *Anandamaya kosa*, the sheath made of bliss (*Ananda*) represents the causal body, *karana-sarira*. Once again it corresponds to the plane of deep sleep (*Sushupti*) according to the *Mandukya upanishad*.

Thus every *Jiva* lives in the home of a body. It is embodied Soul and its body is nurtured and maintained by food, *anna*. It has *prana*, the life-breath

which looks after all the unconscious vital functions that go on in the body. The conscious side of the soul's activity is carried on by Manas, the conscious principle with the aid of the ten indriyas (organs), five of perception (Jnanendriyani) and five of action (Karmendriyani).

The five sense organs, organs of sense perception are the following :

1. Cakshus—organ of sight.
2. Srotra—organ of hearing.
3. Tvak—organ of touch.
4. Ghrana—organ of smell.
5. Rasana—organ of flavour.

The five motor organs, organs of action are the following :

1. Vac—organ of speech.
2. Pani—organ of grasping (the hands).
3. Pada—organ of locomotion (the feet).
4. Payu—organ of evacuation or excretion.
5. Upastha—organ of generation.

In the Brihadaranyaka upanishad, it is definitely stated that 'Manas' is the central organ of consciousness. Manas controls both the sensory organs and motor organs. It co-ordinates the different impressions received from outside through the sense organs and also directs actions. Manas usually translated as the mind, is really 'the rallying point of the senses, the sensorium commune'. It is so to say the controller that receives impressions and also issues the necessary briefings. Anyway the position and role of manas are not clearly de-

finer in the upanishads. Various other faculties of Manas are also mentioned like understanding (vijnana), egoity (Ahamkara), desire (kama), imagination (samkalpa), doubt (vicikitsa), faith (sraddha), resolution (dhriti), irresolution (adhrity), shame (hri), reflection (Dhri), fear (Bhi) and so on and so forth. In fact the role of the Manas is very comprehensive.

While the realm of Manomaya mostly deals with all the psychological factors and transactions of the mind with the organs of sense and of action, the region of vijnanamaya is primarily concerned with the logical aspects of the soul, with understanding and consciousness.

The Anandamaya kosa reveals pure and non-dual bliss, the essential nature of the Atman. That is the true Self.

There is the parable of the chariot mentioned in the Katha upanishad (I. 3.3). The Self or Atman is compared to the owner of a chariot (Rathin). The body (Sarira) is the chariot. Intuitive discernment, understanding and awareness (Buddhi) is the charioteer (Sarathi). The thinking function, mind (Manas) is the bridle and the reins. The sense forces (Indriyani) are the horses. The objects of sense perception, the sphere of the senses and their activity are the ranging ground (Gocara). The Bhoktar (eater or enjoyer) is the individual in whom the Self, the sense forces and the mind are all instituted and together conjoined. In him, whose Manas (conscious mental faculty) is not disciplined, and whose Buddhi (Intuitive awareness) is

not properly controlled, the senses become unmanageable like the wicked horses of a charioteer. But in him, who is a vijnanavant, full of intuitive awareness and whose mind is properly yoked and harnessed, the senses are properly subdued like the good horses of a charioteer that would never run amuck. The good charioteer definitely reaches the goal of his journey, although far beyond, namely the abode of Vishnu the Supreme, the third region of his three gigantic cosmic strides, his third step (Vishnoh paramam padam), Vishnu's celestial paradise. He no longer tips over into the whirlpool of death and rebirth (Samsara).

The concept of the Kosas clearly indicates, that though the soul of man is finite and different from Brahman, yet it can rise to its own self-awareness by breaking through the different layers or sheaths and finally reaching the Anandamaya level. There are the possibilities of self-transcendence. Only, Anandamaya cannot be called Moksha because it is only a passing phase, purely temporary and momentary, not permanent. Moksha on the other hand is permanent. It is not a transitory mood or Avastha.

The Upanishads study the Self, also under the four states of consciousness or Avasthas, namely, waking, dream, dreamless sleep and the fourth, the State of Bliss.

1. Waking State-Jagirthavastha: This is the state of consciousness when a person is wide awake and all his faculties are turned outward, experiencing everything with a gross body.

2. Dreaming state—Svapnavastha : This is the state intermediate between waking and deep sleep. The senses all turn inward, become wholly quiescent and united with Manas, the mind. In dreams, the Manas forms a world of its own, with revived impressions, memories of the waking state. The dream stuff is mostly borrowed materials of the waking state. But dream experience is not a mere reminiscence. It is felt as real as the waking state. There is the immediacy of experience, as in the present tense. In a way dreams are explained as 'perceptions without veritable sensations'.

3. Dreamless sleep : This state is otherwise known as Sushupti. In this state even the Manas will become quiescent along with the senses. There will be a pause for all activities of the mind, a temporary cessation of all normal empirical consciousness. There will be so to say, a temporary union of Atman with Brahman. This state of oneness cannot be called Moksha because it is not final deliverance or release. It is only a temporary state or Avastha that is to relapse into wakefulness any moment. Though the awareness of Egoity or individuality is lost during deep dreamless sleep, there is continuity and the fact of persistence before and after sleep. The individual will have the awareness of having gone to sleep and also of having got out of sleep. Awareness of continuity before and after sleep is always there. The temporary character of Bliss in deep sleep is compared to the transitory mood of Anandamaya, whence there will be a passing phase of

Blissful experience, a temporary union of the Self with the Absolute; but there will be no awareness of the Union. Consciousness at this stage is neither inward-turned nor outward-turned but dormant. It will be in the form of an undifferentiated omniscience, an undifferentiated mass, a homogeneity of bliss feeding on bliss. It is drawn in blank and is therefore negative. It is a state of torpidity. Only there is extended awareness after sleep of having had a dreamless sleep.

The Fourth State : This is the state of positive bliss. It is called the state of Turiya. Here also we find, calm, quiescence, rest and repose. But it is altogether different from Sushupti. It is a mystic state not within the reach of the common man. It can be achieved only through yogic practices. It is the positive side of Anandamaya if Sushupti is its negative aspect. There is the awareness of the joy of blissful union. It is the acme of religious perception consisting in passive and uninterrupted contemplation in the serenity of inward silence. It is the unruffled placid silence that follows OM. It is a controllable experience for the skilled practitioner of yoga. He can make the state come and go at his will. He can devalue himself from the experience of the gross body, retract into the subtle form of inward vision, fix it up and retain it as long as he likes and then according to his wish, return temporarily back into contact with the exterior world. Thus this Fourth is at the opposite end of the series. To the yogin this deep zone of Turiya becomes the bedrock of existence, the real stand point from

which the experience of the other three states can be reinterpreted and revalued. Even this state can never be called Moksha because it is only temporary and commanded at will. This is just the topmost rung in the stairway of the four states of consciousness—waking, dream, dreamless sleep and this fourth, the Turiya. The individual is still in the muddle of going up and going down the stairway. Though the topmost pedestal is continuous into the region beyond of the unmanifest, and though he treads into the region, he is fond of the stairway still and often gets down. The stairway is to be kicked away. Then only he won't step down.

These four states form the backbone of self-analysis in the upanishadic psychology.

The Upanishads are of the opinion, that the Soul by itself is resplendent in its glory and has no evil in itself. This pure unsullied Soul, a mode of Brahman, or a spark of the Divinity or Brahman itself, has its fall when encased in a body and cloathed with the different sheaths of Anna, Prana, Manas and Vijnana. It has then the two dominant traits of Avidya (Ne-science) and Ahamkara (Egoity). These two underline the evil in man and reveal the fall and its finiteness. But the fall is only a temporary lapse and the finiteness is due only to a temporary eclipse. As the Chandogya Upanishad very clearly points out, the liberated individual can release himself from mortal bondage and come back to his original form and glory just as the moon comes out entire, after having undergone an eclipse

from Rahu. His works, Karmic effects can be burnt away like reed stocks in the fire. Just as the water drops cannot stay on permanently on the lotus leaf, works cannot cling to him. The soul can be easily freed because there is always the scope and ample hope. The Mundaka Upanishad says that a liberated individual can go to any world he may choose. He is like a blind man, who has his eyes restored, a sick man completely recovered.

What is it that binds the soul to evil? What is it that makes evil possible? What exactly is evil?

ORIGIN & NATURE OF EVIL :

The origin of evil lies in 'egoity (Ahamkara) and all the selfish desires that are consequent on egocentricity. This egoity is itself rooted in Ne-science, Avidya, ignorance, the darkness of amnesia. The soul has forgotten its own source or its own identity, due to the fall, its descent into the dungeons of the gross world and its dark affairs. So long as an individual is deeply absorbed in the routines of his gross and subtle bodies, the question of resurgence and resurrection does not arise at all. It is only when a Jiva qualifies itself to be capable of rising to the level of the blissful state, Anandamaya Kosa, and the Turiyavastha, through the efforts of self-transcendence, that the question of release arises. The problem of Moksha becomes a reality only to those who are well qualified for it, not for all. There are various ways of qualifying oneself at least to face the problem. The disciplines prescribed, form

the ethics of the Upanishads.

The primary evil is a 'Metaphysical error'. Whether the view of Brahman held is cosmic or acosmic, Error lies in not knowing the ultimate unity and oneness but believing in multiplicity, diversity as the ultimate reality. It is forgetfulness of the one and the only original source namely, Brahman. That is the first slip, the fall away from Brahman. Thereafter the the sliding down is hastened on the incline of life and living, birth and rebirth with all their accessories and exigencies. This declension should be rendered ineffective and further decline halted. The trend of the soul should be turned the other way about and made to move in the opposite direction. It has to be pushed backwards and upwards, and finally brought back to its original state. This restitution to be made, requires hard struggle and incessant toil. One has to make one's way by one's own strong efforts. The entire life period of a spiritual aspirant is therefore divided by the Upanishads into four stages of toil, hard struggle, called the Asramas. They are ;

1. The state of student discipline—Brahmacaryasrama.
2. The stage of the householder, that of the family man,—Grihasthasrama.
3. The stage of the anchorite or Forest-dweller—Vanaprasthasrama.
4. The stage of Renunciation—Sanyasasrama.

THE FOUR ASRAMAS :

The first state is that of the pupil, eager to receive instructions from his teacher, the Guru. He must show complete obedience and absolute submission to the Guru, the master. This is the period for Sraddha, blind faith and devotion and Susrusa, the will and desire to hear (Sru) and to learn by heart. Perfect continence should be followed and any violation of the inderdict means dismissal.

The pupil having completed his course, comes of age for marriage. He then marries and gets into the stage of Householdership. He then takes over the paternal craft or the profession of his father, begets children, supports the family. He identifies himself with the joys and worries of a married life and pursues the traditional ideals of life namely Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. He also perpetuates the orthodox sacramental cycle of Rituals under the aegis of a Guru or a family priest. He also takes over the roles and ideals of the traditional *Pater familias* i. e, head of the family and thus becomes a full-fledged member of society.

Having done thorough justification to his family, social, secular and religious obligations and having installed a successor in the person of a son, in the late middle of his life he steps away from the joys and burdens of the world and enters upon the third Asram, that of the Departure to the Forest, Vanaprastha. He gives up all his relations to the ancestors and to the Gods, to family, friends and relatives, to property,

wealth, life and its joys and sorrows. He enters upon the path of the quest for Self—This is the end and the aim of the third of the four life stages.

The man and wife, sufficiently old, rid of all the cares, duties, joys and worries that linked them to the world, now begin their inward quest, in their retreat to the forest. Even this life of holiness in the forest with its happy innocence and rusticity is not an end in itself but only a preparation.

Sanyasa is a break away not only from all social obligations but also from religion and its institutions. Shaving off his head and donning an ochre-coloured garment, a raiment of disgrace and contempt, he becomes a sanyasin, a homeless wanderer, no longer linked to any routine duties, no longer linked to any place or anything as such. This homeless beggar mendicant with no fixed place to place one's head, no regular road to traverse, no goal and no belongings, is in fact a wandering non-entity. As a pilgrim mendicant he is often likened to the wild goose or swan (Hamsa), always migrating from place to place. His only aim is to realise his own inner self and finally attain moksha, release from the cycle of birth and death. As a monk he is dead to all social, professional and family interests, nay even to religious complacencies. He is thoroughly divorced from all the ordinary human bondages and insured in his own insusceptible isolation. He has no cravings, no pleasures and no pains either. He is ever ready to eject the mortal coil, the casing of the soul.

Though the four asramas are clearly recognised, exemptions are permitted under exceptions. For instance the Jabala Upanishad gives the freedom to renounce and become a sanyasin whenever one feels a call for it. Many young Brahmacarins leap over Grihasthasram and straightaway become sanyasins. There are innumerable instances of young men in Grihasthasram with many family and social obligations still to be fulfilled, accepting the call of Sanyasa and taking on to it. Even such passover may be reconciled with, if only they are meant for a nobler cause. But renegades from Grihasthasram into a subjective sanctuary of sanyasasram can only be called either irresponsible delinquents or calculative rogues. No man is permitted to run away from the unfulfilled responsibilities of life and don the ochre-coloured robe. If temerity to face the problems of life and living is the propelling force to drive one into Sanyasa, it is condemned. Also, there can be no return, no regression from Sanyasa.

Caste distinctions are also mentioned in some of the Upanishads like the Brihadaranyaka. Everyone is born into a caste, a set pattern of svadharma, (inherited and accredited duties). There is varnadharma, (caste distinctions) just as there is Asramadharm. The four classes of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra are accepted. But this much is definite that in the Upanishads caste system is not crystallised and hardened into a rigid social system. There are various anecdotes in the different Upanishads as already referred

to, wherein Brahmins have sought sometimes valuable instructions from Kshatriyas. Sanatkumara, the representative of the Kshatriyas instructs Narada. The doctrine of rebirth is taught by Pravahana Jaivali to Aruni with the jab that the brahmins had never before had this knowledge. Ajatasatru of Kasi teaches Gargya Balaki the nature of Brahman. There are other innumerable instances like those of King Janaka, Asvapati Kaikeya, etc., etc. It is King Asvapati Kaikeya that gives instructions in regard to the vaisvanara Atman. In the Chandogya upanishad there is the anecdote of Satyakama being initiated into the sacred lore by Gautama, son of Haridrumat. Jabala, the mother of Satyakama could not locate the father of her son when he asked her of what family he was. But yet, Satyakama was initiated. This clearly indicates that the upanishads insist that brahminhood does not depend on birth alone, but on character. It is not birth, but being, that is more important. Bad being doubly insults one's birth, if perchance it is of the highest order.

QUALIFYING DISCIPLINE :

These stages of toil and discipline well groom a person for the reception of higher knowledge. Even the process of learning and understanding is to be according to a prescribed pattern. The course of the spiritual candidate runs gradually and methodically through a graduated series, from the most primary, preliminary and preparatory stage of listening, to the most advan-

ced stage of self-absorption, the final stage of Samadhi.

The first of these fourfold stages of schooling is known as 'Sravana'. It is just proper study, listening to the Guru most attentively with all devotion and trust and thereby learning the revealed texts. It is just the stage of hearing (Sravana).

The second stage is that of 'Manana'. Having heard of the great truths, the ardent disciple should reflect on them in his own mind. This is the stage of mental absorption (Manana). His understanding should be charged to the fullest extent possible with what he has learned at the feet of the Guru through consistent cogitation and inward reflection.

The third stage of spiritual progress is through Nidhidhyasana—technically it is directing one's exclusive attention to what has been heard and understood and thus drawing the thoughts towards a common centre of one-pointed Kaleidoscopic inner vision. It is intense concentration with an emotional warmth of relish and realisation. The different things he has learnt and understood, he puts them into an interrelated coherence and realises them in a convenient and knowledgable system of his own. That is Nidhidhyasana, meditation.

The final stage is of course Samadhi. This is not within the reach of an ordinary student as it requires special training in yogic practices. It is a highly technical and advanced art of going into a trance, into an ecstatic and exalted state of self-absorption, self-realisation. In the state of Samadhi, there is a temporary

suspension of all sensations and cognitive consciousness. It is a state of voluntary spiritual catalepsy, self-imposed through careful training and planning. It is a state similar to deep dreamless sleep when consciousness is held in check from its subject-object relationship, whence the distinction between the on-looker and the thing looked upon is destroyed. There is then the profound and prolonged feeling of the inner identity of essence, the unity and oneness of Atman and Brahman. It is wrong to think that during Samadhi, consciousness is thoroughly lost. Rather it will be in high tension as all its load is removed through complete abstraction. It will be vastly alive and widely awake. As all its strains and stretches are relieved, there will be an uneasy and threatening calm. It is then supercharged and polarised, given unity of direction towards the realisation of unity, conforming to the wellknown formulas like, Tat Tvam Asi, So ham Brahma, Aham Brahmasmi, etc. It is similar to the Turiya state, the Fourth of the Mandukya Upanishad. This stage and state is the exclusive privilege of a trained yogi. The ordinary student of the upanishads is content to pass through the first three stages of Sravana, Manana and Nidhidhyasana and wait for death to take its own course and make its own arrangements.

Ordinarily yogis return from Samadhi according to a schedule prepared beforehand. But there may be instances of no schedule and no return.

Thus through these qualifying disciplines, a spiritual aspirant, may atleast have a peep into a knowl-

edge of Life eternal. He can at least have a glimpse of Truth, which alone is virtue. Ignorance of the Truth, ne-science is vice. Ultimately it is Truth alone that prevails, not the untruth—*Satyam eva Jayate nan-ritam*, as the *Mundaka Upanishad* says (iii. 1.6). By truth is laid out the path leading to Brahman, the supreme abode of Truth (*Satyasya paramam nidhanam*). This path of Truth leading to salvation, that is incessantly tread by the sages having their desires fulfilled, is indeed like the sharp edge of a razor, difficult to cross and hard to tread (*Katha Upanishad* i. 3.14). Therefore the *upanishad* gives a shout of warning to the torpid, inert and apathetic souls still wallowing in the morbid drowsiness of ignorance, *Uttishthata, Jag-rata prapya varan nibodhata*. (Arise, awake, having attained thy boons, understand them). The same *upanishad*, extols not only the teacher of Truth (Brahman) but also the pupil who can understand it. It says "He who cannot even be heard of by many, whom many, even hearing do not know, wondrous is he who can teach (Him) and skilful is he who finds (Him) and wondrous is he who knows, although instructed by the wise".

Ascaryo Vakta Kusalosya labdha,

Ascaryo Jnata Kusalanu-sishtah.

—(*Katha Up.* i. 2.7).

CONCEPTION OF MOKSHA :

The conception of the life-eternal, of release, salvation or Moksha is very vague in the *upanishads*.

There are different views advanced in the different upanishads and sometimes in one and the same upanishad.

Moksha literally means 'Release'. It is release from bondage, from suffering, from the cycle of samsara, from rebirth and re-death. It is a state of Ananda, supreme bliss. Ananda is perfection, the highest ideal. Release is a state that is above hunger and thirst, above oldage and death, above sorrow and confusion. It is a return from plurality to unity, from divorce to re-union, from duality to oneness with the Divine. The ideal of man is definitely God-realisation. To think of God, love Him, adore Him and be with Him, these are the marks of the enjoyment of the Supreme. It is a state of ecstasy and rapture, supreme Ananda, ecstatic bliss, when the individual soul has returned to its nativity of perfection and fulness of freedom. There is no more subjection to time and no question of redeath (birth and death are just symbols of time). There is complete freedom from subjection to the law of Karma even as it ceases to have any hold any longer. The liberated condition is the fullest expression of the Self. The Self has countered the evils of Avidya (ne-science) ahamkara (ego-centricity) and is itself now in its full blossom and bliss. Although the liberated state can be distantly compared to the bliss of the fourth state, of Turiya state, the divine bliss, the Brahma-bliss is something enormous, incomprehensible and inexpressible. The ordinary bliss of this life is a faint apology to this superhuman holy bliss. It is after all a dull and

dim shadow of the gorgeous happiness in Heaven. The enormous proportion of Brahman Bliss is given in the Brihadaranyaka upanishad (iv. 3.33). The same type of inquiry into the forms of bliss and proportionate Brahma Bliss is given in the Taittiriya upanishad (II 8.1). The Kausitaki-Bramhana upanishad also gives details of description of the course to the Bramha world and the attendant joys of reception there.

The ideal of the upanishads is that every individual soul should become one with God. For that the knowledge of Bramhan is a necessary pre-requisite. The Mundaka upanishad rightly emphasises it as follows :-

“What is luminous, what is subtler than the subtle in which are centred all the worlds and those that dwell in them, that is the imperishable Bramhan. That is life, that is speech and mind. That is true, that is immortal, Oh beloved, that is to be known; know (that) - Tad etat satyam, Tad amritam, tad veddhavyam, Saumya, viddhi.” - ii. 2.2.

Such an enlightened soul, when liberated becomes one with the Supreme.

Yathodakam suddhe suddham asiktam tadrig eva bhavathi,

Evam muner vijanata atma bhavati Gautama - Katha up. ii. 15.

“Just as pure water, poured forth into pure becomes the very same, so also the self, Oh Gautama, of the sage who has understanding becomes one (with the supreme).

According to the upanishads, the entire universe has issued from God himself. The world is not for itself. It has no purpose of its own. It has therefore to seek its own refuge and rest finally in God, as the Mundaka and prasna upanisads emphatically point out with the analogy of the flowing rivers and their destination, the ocean.

The doctrine of Moksha is peculiar to the upanisads. In the Vedas there is no recognition of any metaphysical error, nor even the cognisance of an ultimate well-defined Bramhan. In the Vedas there is only the question of moral evil. Virtue is conformity to the vedic precepts and injunctions. Vice is just non-conformity. The ideal of the vedic seers is mostly earthly. They aim at a full length of life on this earth, peace and plenty, more of crops, more of milk in the udder and more of children. In the Bramhanas, the sacrificer wants not only the rewards of his rituals on this earth but also a promise of fellowship with the pitris in the other world and the pleasant company of Gods in their abodes.

It is only in the upanishads that the concept of Moksha, liberation and life eternal is rightly formulated and seriously attempted at. Even there, its connotation is not given a univocal definition. There are divergent views quite consistent with the two different views of Acosmism and cosmism as found in the texts of the upanishads. While some of the passages in the upanishads pronounce that Moksha is just the impersonal absorption of the individual soul in the absolute

with the outright loss of its identity and without the least vestiges of any surviving individuality, there are other passages which outline Moksha as life with the divine, with the supreme person, the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God, the one only without a second, Ekam eva advitiam. The 'Ekam Sat', the one God of the vedas, has become 'Ekam eva advitiam', the one only God without a second, in the upanishads. That is all. There does not seem to be any other fuss about it.

MOKSHA IN TERMS OF ACOSMISM

According to the view of Acosmism in the upanishads, evil is not offending God or going against his will or even digressing from the path of rituals and sacrifices. Rather evil is a metaphysical error of failing to see unity amidst variety. It is the mistake of not knowing that Bramhan alone is real and that everything else cannot be real. It is the lapse of not knowing that atman and Bramhan are one and indential with each other. It is the fault of not realising that Atman is Bramhan and Bramhan is Atman. The poor soul misunderstands that everything is real because of the two factors of Ahamkara and Avidya as already stated. So Moksha is just a technique of transcending the senses and even the mind in order to discover, know and dwell in the highest region of timeless non-dual reality. As the Isa Upanishad says 'when unity is realised and every being becomes our very self, how can there be any delusion or sorrow, then?' Moksha is just

a feat of self-transcendence. It is a journey inward only, from diversity to unity, from multiplicity and the unreal to unity and oneness, to the real. Katha upanishad clearly describes the path and the goal of the journey.

“Beyond the senses are the objects (of the senses) and
Beyond the objects is the mind.
Beyond the mind is the understanding and
Beyond the understanding is the Great Self.
Beyond the Great Self is the unmanifest,
Beyond the unmanifest is the Spirit.
Beyond the Spirit, there is nothing.
That is the End of the Journey
That is the Final Goal-Sa Para gatih.”

Katha. up. I. 3. 10-11.

Only the Infinite is bliss. There is absolutely no bliss in things finite as the Chandogya upanishad says. So wise men knowing the nature of what is immortal, do not at all look for anything stable amongst the world of things all unstable (Katha Up.). They seek only Bramhan and none else. That one only real, the Bramhan, they find nowhere else except in their own Atman. It is only then that they realise their own inner identity of essence. That itself is Moksha. This inner realisation is thus possible while one is yet alive. One need not wait for death and the dissociation of the body.

The Brihadaranyaka and Mundaka upanishads point out in particular that he who knows Bramhan, becomes Bramhan. Moksha or liberation is identity,

oneness with the Absolute Bramhan. It is "impersonal absorption in the transcendent divine" as indicated in the Prasna Upanishad. It is a state where there is no desire, no passion, not even consciousness. The self rises above the level of empirical consciousness, subject-object relationship. Not that consciousness is altogether obliterated and reduced to an oblivion, but that it is upshot into a super region of illumination, an unconditioned, unmanifest absolutistic state. It is similar to the fourth state, the Turiya state. Even self-awareness has turned a somersault and gone into a region of amnesty free from thinking and thus landed in silence, poise and peace. It has made a vertical landing in the region of Bramhan and has merged in it. It is similar to Asamprajnata Samadhi as explained in the Muktika upanishad - II 54.

According to acosmism, even the God is unreal in the last resort. It is only immanence and absorption in the Nirguna Bramhan that marks complete realisation and liberation. So Samprajnata samadhi though it registers the last wrung of the ladder, is still the ladder. It is only at the level of asamprajnata samadhi that one has stepped out of the ladder and stepped into the region of the Absolute, Ananda or Supreme bliss.

The Mundaka Upanishad (II. 3-4) gives the simile of the bow and the arrow. It states that the weapon of the upanishads is the syllable AUM. The self sharpened by meditation and engaged in the contemplation of Bramhan is the arrow. The Imperishable Bramhan is the target.....The target is to be hit.....

The target is to be hit without a fault. It is thus that Atman becomes united with Bramhan, as the arrow with the target-Saravat Tanmayo Bhavet. One's deeds one's self consisting of understanding, all these become one in the highest imperishable and immutable Bramhan - (Mundaka up III 2.7) - Karmani Vijnanamayas ca atma parevyaye sarva eki bhavanthi. The individual Atman becomes merged, established in the Supreme undecaying Atman, i.e. Bramhan - Sa Parekshara atmani sampratishthate (Prasna up. I. vii) He becomes omniscient, becomes all and enters into all. Sa Sarvajnah sarvo bhavati sarvam evavishanti (Prasna. up. I. vii)

The Mundaka upanishad reiterates that just as the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean casting off their names and shapes, even so the knower, freed from name and shape, attains to the divine person, higher than the high - Tatha vidvan nama-rupad vimuktah paratparam purusham upaiti divyam (iii 2.8). The same analogy is repeated in the Prasna Upanishad also (VI 5).

Yajnavalkya tells his wife Maitreyi "as a lump of salt which is thrown into the water dissolves and cannot be gathered up again but wherever water is drawn it is salty, so truly is it with this great being, the endless, the unlimited, the fulness of knowledge"

"Where there is duality of existence, one can see the other, one can smell the other, one can speak to the other, one can hear the other, one can think of the other, one can apprehend the other. But where every-

thing has turned into his Atman, by whom and whom shall he see, by whom and whom shall he smell, by whom and to whom shall he speak, by whom and whom shall he hear, think and and apprehend? By whom shall he apprehend him, through whom he apprehends this universe? Through whom shall he apprehend him, the apprehender?" .

Thus the view of salvation in terms of Acosmism delineates the negative side of the released state. When the individual soul attains liberation it will be devoid of all ordinary consciousness, of subject-object relationship, of mental or cognitive activity, of perception and even of action.

JIVANMUKTI :

The Katha upanishad gives the suggestions of a Jivanmukta, a person released (Mukta) while yet alive (Jivan). Jivanmukti is deliverance during the life time itself of an individual whereas Videhamukti is deliverance after death, when out of the bodily form (videha). Jivanmukti is just oneness with the Absolute even while alive in a bodily form and frame as a state where there is no desire, no passion, not even consciousness (pretya samjnanasti). The sage liberated-while-yet-alive, has overcome 'the metaphysical evil', the errors of ne-science and egoity, Avidya and Ahamkara, and has simultaneously out-stepped the spheres of phenomenality. He is completely free from all the ties of bondage, though yet in his bodily frame, because, he is standing firmly in the universal self which

he has realised whithin himself. Karma, deeds, cannot stain him as he has snapped all the bonds of conditioned existence. He is himself Bramhan. He sees everything in himself and himself in everything. This divine man on earth, though he appears to be active, is at root inactive.

MOKSHA IN TERMS OF COSMISM :

According to the view of cosmism in the upanishads, Moksha or liberation is not identity with the Supreme. Brahman is Saguna Brahman, God. To know God is to love God. The liberated soul is not lost in its pursuit like salt in water. Its individuality is yet retained. The soul freed, is just divested of all its limitations, finiteness and is made perfect. The liberated individual just becomes a perfected being, cleansed of all his imperfections, avidya and ahamkara. The individual soul's original splendour is restored. It shines ever bright as before in its native glory. There are different facets of this restored state and there are different passages explaining the different aspects of Moksha.

Some of the passages speak of companionship with the Supreme, the all powerful and all merciful God. For example the Chandogya upanishad says that Moksha or liberation is life with the Supreme person whom we love and adore in this life. The upanishad says that Immortality, life eternal, is just going to the land of the supreme deity and remaining in the region of Brahman (ii. 23). Those who perform the three duties

of sacrifice, study and alms-giving, go to the world of the virtuous, the region of God. He who stands firm in Brahman attains life eternal-Sarva, etc. Punya-loka bhavanti brahma-sam-sthomritatvam etc. - (ii. 23)

The Taittiriya upanishad (III. 10.5) says that he who realises the truth, can assume any form he chooses. Having realised the self which consists of bliss, he goes up and down these worlds, eating the food he desires, assuming the form he desires. He sits in joy singing the chant Ha vu, Ha vu, Ha vu - Oh : wonderful. Oh: wonderful ! Oh: wonderful! "Etam ananda mayam atmanam upa samkramya, iman lokan Kamanni kam-arupy anusancaran, etat sama gayannaste, Ha vu, Ha vu, Ha vu",

The Mundaka upanishad also speaks of liberation or release in terms of companionship with God - III. 2.6.

The ascetics who have ascertained well the meaning of the vedanta knowledge, who have purified their natures through the path of renunciation, they (dwelling) in the worlds of Brahma at the end of time, being one with the highest immortal (paramritah) are all liberated -

Vendanta vijñana suniscitarthah sannyasa-yogad

Yatayah suddasattvah,

Te Brahma lokeshu Parantakale paramritah

Parimucyanti sarve.

This is exactly the concept of SAMIPYA, intimacy with the divine as in the later vedanta. Conscious co-existence with the divine on the same plane, is some-

times referred to as SALOKYA by the later vedantins.

In the same upanishad, in a different passage iii.1.3, absolute likeness with God, SARUPYA or SADHARMYA (similarity of nature with the divine, reflecting his glory) is suggested. It says, 'when a seer sees the creator of golden hue, the Lord, the Person, the source of Brahma then being a knower, shaking off good and evil and free from stain, he attains supreme equality with the Lord.

Yada pasyah pasyate rukmavarnam Isam
Purusham Brahma-yonim, tada vidvan punya-
pape

Vidhuya niranjanah paramam samyam upaiti.

Moksha-life eternal, eternal life is said to consist in attaining the absolute likeness to God and enjoying a life of personal immortality. This communion with the divine bordering on identity is sometimes referred to as 'SAYUJYA' by the later vedantins.

In Cosmism, the positive aspect of Moksha is emphasised. The liberated soul is looked upon as a perfected individual with a status of absolute equality with the Supreme soul-Paramam Samyam upaiti (M. U. iii. 1.3.). To make room for individual action, it is said the individual becomes like God. The freed soul seems to have an active existence - 'Traversing these worlds, having the food he likes, taking the form he likes, he sits singing songs-has a feeling that he is one with God (Taaittiriya iii. 10.5).

The Katha and the Svetasvatara upanishads in particular have all the suggestions of Monotheism in the

making. All the requirements of theism are to be found in the Svetasvatara upanishad. God is conceived as both immanent and transcendent. God is clearly differentiated from the individual soul. He is not only pictured as the Supreme person omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, he is also taken to be all-merciful. Devotion to the Lord is considered as the true means of salvation and divine grace is taken to be a very important contributing factor, in fact the most decisive factor. Complete ostensible belief in God, Soul and the World, is to be found.

KRAMA MUKTI

As contrasted to Jivanmukti, Videhamukti, (bodiless liberation), is emphasised. Complete release can only be attained after the death of the body and in the region of God. It can never be, while yet on this planet and while yet residing in the mortal coil. Salvation is KRAMA MUKTI - Regulated release, release in gradual stages. Brahma realisation is said to take place only after dissociation from the physical body. This upanishadic ideal of attaining Moksha after death, is actually borrowed from the views of the vedic Mantras and Brahmanas, according to which the individual continues to live in an exalted form after the death of the physical body. First a person should understand the truths of Atman and Brahman, that Brahman is in everything and also by Himself in his own Heaven. While yet alive, he must follow the path of Nishkama karma, disinterested action. He must realise that Brahman is

God and as such transcendent, and that He is also the Antaryamin, immanent in everything of his creation. When such a person dies, his self is separated from the body, he reaches the Abode of God and lives there in eternal peace and bliss. He will have no more births and deaths. This is the meaning and significance of Krama mukti.

PLACE OF MORALITY IN THE UPANISHADIC SCHEME OF LIFE :

Though the upanishads emphasise knowledge as an essential means of self-realisation, they consider that it is not the only means. They insist on right living also. There is an important place for morality in the upanishadic scheme of life. The Mundaka and Katha upanishads rightly point out that the self cannot be gained by the knowledge of the vedas alone, by mere understanding or much of learning only. They insist that both knowledge (jnana) and works (karma) are necessary for the realisation of the Soul (liberation).

The Katha upanishad remarks - 'Not he who has not desisted from evil ways, not he who is not calm and serene, not he who has no concentration of mind, not even he whose mind is not collected and composed, can reach this Self through right knowledge'. - (i. 2.24). The Self cannot be attained by mere instruction nor by intellectual capabilities only, nor even through much hearing. He is to be attained by the one whom the Self itself chooses. To such a one, the self reveals his own nature.

Nayam atma pravacanena labhyo no medhaya, na
bahuna srutena; Yam evaisha vrinute tena labhyas
tasyaisha atma vivrinute tanum svam - (Mundaka
up. 3.2.3.)

Similarly mere austerities and a blind code of ethical behaviour, mere works will yield no fruits, unless the individual's intellectual nature is purified by the light of knowledge (Mundaka up. iii. 1.8). Only when thought is purified, does the self shine forth in its own splendour. Yajnavalkya tells Gargi in the Brihadaranyaka upanishad (iii. 8.10) 'whosoever in this world performs sacrifices, worships and practises austerities without a knowledge of Brahman, is to be disappointed as his works will cease one day. Whosoever departs from this world without knowing the imperishable Brahman feels miserable. But he is truly a Brahmana (a knower of Brahman) who departs from this world, having known the Imperishable, the Brahman. The same upanishad continues to say that works have no value without a knowledge of Brahman and that Brahman is Truth. He who speaks the truth, speaks justice and he who speaks justice speaks the Truth, because verily that which is justice is Truth - Yo vai sa dharmah satyam vai tat. Therefore there is nothing higher than Dharma, justice-
Tasmad Dharmad param nasti - (i 4.14-15).

The Katha upanishad points out that the self cannot be perceived by the sheer force of intellect alone, by logical reason only. He who is child-like and humble, who has subdued the intellect and at rest in oneself, calm, collected and composed, only he can see the self

just in the Self itself. (Brihadaranyaka and Subala upanishads). The Taittiriya and Chandogya upanishads point out that even the knowledge of the Vedas falls under the category of Apra vidya and belongs to the Monomaya Kosa. This inferior wisdom cannot lead us to the knowledge of the Imperishable, the Brahman, the real of the real. So the advice of the upanishads is to turn the mind inward and adopt the means of meditation and concentration. Only through meditation can the mind be cleansed. The Katha upanishad says that it is only with a sharp and subtle mind that Brahman can be beheld, although the path is as sharp as the edge of a razor, hard to cross and difficult to tread. Only he who has a teacher can know as the Chandogya upanishad says - Acaryavan purusho veda. While the Mundaka upanishad also points out the need for concentration and logical abstraction, the Mandukya upanishad suggests meditation on the PRANAVA. Mere vidya or knowledge is of no use. ANUBHAVA or personal experience through meditation is very important.

To avoid the double evils of ne-science (avidya) and selfishness (Ahamkara) and to have the experience of self-realisation within oneself, enlightenment (Jnana) as also spiritual detachment (vairagya) are both necessary. The two are complementary and supplementary to each other. While knowledge removes ne-science, it cannot by itself cleanse the soul of its venial sins. Vairagya is the true purgatory of the soul and can easily purge the evil of Ahamkara. This vairagya is to be cultivated. It is signified by the two important fac-

tors of austerities (Tapas) and renunciation (Tyaga). Tapas, austerity or asceticism is marked by severe self-discipline. Stern self-discipline consists in self-analysis-severe fasting, and silent prayers, sexual abstinence, self-imposed poverty, self-mortification and finally self-abnegation. In fact renunciation, Nyasa is definitely superior to Tapas or austerity. The latter is only a means to the former, not an end in itself. Tapas or austerity is just freedom from desire. It is giving up of all false desires and developing a true desire for salvation as the Chandogya upanishad says. The Brihadaranyaka upanishad also states that, 'he who has no desire, who is beyond desires, whose desire is the soul, such a person, being Brahman as such, achieves Brahman - "Brahma-iva san Brahmapyeti" (IV 4.6). The Mundaka upanishad also repeats the same idea - "He who is all-knowing and all-wise, whose austerity consists of knowledge, from him are born this Brahma (Hiranyagarbha), name, shape and food". Yah Sarvajnah sarva-vid yasya jnanamayam tapah; tasmad etad Brahma nama-rupam annam ca Jayate (I 1.9).

The Taittiriya upanishad (I 9.1.) while emphasising the study and teaching of the sacred syllable AUM, as the most important of all duties, points out that 'that verily is austerity' - Taddhi tapas Taddhi tapah. Incidentally all the ethical concepts like the Right (Ritam), the Truth (Satyam), Self-control (Dama), Sama (tranquility) and other cognate virtues are all mentioned. The same upanishad in its address to the convocation of departing students exhorts, 'Let there be

no neglect of (Na pramaditavyam), of the moral concepts of Truth (Satyam), Virtue (Dharman) Welfare (Kusalan), prosperity (Bhutyai), Study and Teaching (Svadhyaya and Pravacana) and duties to Gods and manes (Deva-pitr-karyabhyam). It further enjoins the students to see God in one's own parents, in the person of a Guru and a guest. The Chandogya upanishad (III. Section 17) compares life to a sacrifice and points out that the fee to the priest of the sacrifice, shall be the following gifts (Taasya Dakshinah) namely, austerity (Tapas), Alms-giving (Danam), uprightness (Arjavam), Non-violence (Ahimsa) and Truthfulness (Satya-vacanam). It further advises that in the final hour, one should take refuge in the following three convictions (etat trayam partipadyet) :

1. Akshitam asi—"Thou art imperishable"
2. Acutam asi—"Thou art indestructible"
3. Prana-samsitam asiti—"Thou are the very essence of life".

Such persons are sure to reach the highest light (Ajanma jyotir uttamam iti). The upanishad recommends meditation on the syllable AUM as the panacea for all the ills of life as it is the sole song of the soul. "AUM iti etad aksharam udgitam upasita, aum iti hrid gayati."

The Brihadaranyaka upanishad, in its second Brahmana of Chapter V, enunciates the three principal virtues of self-restraint, liberality and mercy. "Tad etad trayam Sikshet, Daman, Danam, Dayam iti". It says one should practise this same triad (of virtues), Self-control, Charity and Compassion. It is the same as

the Heavenly voice of thunder repeating DA, DA, DA. DAMAYATA - control yourselves - DATTA ITI - Give; and DAYADHVAM iti-be kind.

Even Dana or giving cannot be unrestrained. There are restrictions imposed, regulating the eleemosynary dispositions. The Taittiriya upanishad pronounces- 'Give with faith and not without faith-Sraddhaya deyam-asraddhaya adeyam.' There are other mandates such as, what is to be given should always be given in plenty (Sriya deyam), with modesty (Hriya-deyam), with timidity, fear (Bhiya deyam), and also with utmost sympathy (Samvida deyam),

The upanishadic code of ethics thus clearly aims at the annulment of selfishness and achievement of self-transcendence. The acosmic view inculcates the theory of renunciation. It believes that Moksha is primarily meant for those retired into the forest (the Vanaprastha) and for the mendicant wandering sages (Sanyasins). Restraint and austerity (i. e., Tapas) are meant for the Vanaprastha. Nyasa, spiritual renunciation, is meant for the sanyasins, that fraternity of holy mendicants without caste and without any possessions. The Narayaniya upanishad says 'Not by Karma, not by offsprings, not by wealth, but by renunciation, can immortality be gained'. The cosmic view which believes in all the three - namely a God both immanent and transcendent, the individual souls and the world of reality, advocates not renunciation, but Nish kama-karma, disinterested action. 'Only by performing works, one should desire to live a hundred years, not at all

by giving up works, by renunciation.' The Brihadaranyaka upanishad says 'To love God is bliss, to love God is to possess knowledge and immortality. Not to love Him is to be lost in doubt and delusion, sorrow and death'. The Isa upanishad strikes a note of compromise and gives a happy synthesis of both the views. It inculcates both renunciation and practical activity. 'Renunciation in action' and not 'Renunciation of action' is the ideal preached by the upanishad. Actions must be performed for the sake of duty and dharma, without the least motive of any selfish ends, profits or benefits. It encourages mankind to enjoy through renunciation and restraint. The same tone of restraint and reconciliation is copiously illustrated in the other upanishads also. For example, the Katha upanishad warns us not to allow the wicked horses of the senses to run amuck but hold them properly in reins. The Brihadaranyaka also insists that everything should be loved and enjoyed not for its own sake, but for the sake of the Self. True enjoyment always lies in temperance and self-control.

THE UPANISHADIC RELIGION : The Taittiriya Upanishad mentions the three important pre-requisites for the attainment of immortality, namely

1. devotion to truth
2. penance and
3. vedic study.

Performing faithfully the orthodox devotions and special obligatory rites, practising all the special austerities that conduce to the expiation of sin, including the

worship of God in the form of personifications, a person may qualify himself to go to either the heaven of the ancestors (Pitr-Loka) or the higher domain of truth (Satya-Loka). But the stay in these blissful regions is conditioned by time after all and therefore temporary. There is certainly the necessity to return to the world of rebirth and re-death, to the round of samsara. The student of the upanishads is not therefore enamoured of the beatitudes of Heaven. He seeks liberation in terms of non-return. The upanishadic religion is therefore slightly different from the Vedic religion although it incorporates within itself the elements of vedic religious pursuits.

The Vedic mantras, addressed to the various powers, follow the paths of Sraddha and Upasana - faith and worship.

The Brahmanas deal with rites and rituals by which performance we are said to gain our ends.

The Upanishads do not give up either. They follow the inherited forms of Religious worship as means for the realisation of the Supreme. Both are taken up but reinterpreted. Karma or Works, the different forms of Sraddha or faith, Upasana or Worship and practices of Yoga are treated as means to the Supreme end or goal of Atmadarshana or self-knowledge.

The Upanishads describe the three stages in the growth of Religious consciousness. The three stages of Sravana (listening or hearing), Manana (reflection) Nididhyasana (contemplative meditation) are said to prepare one to have the God-vision which is a hidden

Truth (Nihitam Guhayam). God vision or God-realisation is Brahmasakshatkara.

The distinction between Sravana and Manana makes all the difference between Direct experience and traditional interpretation, between what is heard (Sruti) and what is remembered (Smriti).

Nididhyasana is contemplation. It is different from upasana or worship. Worship is not itself contemplation, but an aid to contemplation. It leads to and helps contemplation. In fact the highest form of religion is deep spiritual meditation on God and the Absolute and realisation of the oneness of God and man, God and the world. Both God and Brahman are one. That itself is Isvara, the personal aspect of Brahman. Practice of goodness, pursuit of Truth and worship of God truly lead to the realisation of the oneness of Atman and Brahman.

Upasana or worship is the basis of the later doctrine of Bhakti or devotion. The Katha and Svetasvara upanishads look upon the Supreme as a personal God who responds to devotion and bestows grace on the supplicants and the devotees. Devotion to a personal God is definitely recommended as a means for attaining spiritual enlightenment. The svetasvatara upanishad says that Svetasvatara spoke about Brahman the supreme and the pure to the advanced ascetics by the power of austerity and the grace of God; - Tapah prabhavad deva-prasadac ca - Brahma jnana and Brahma realisation are meant only for the high-souled who have the greatest devotion to God and to Guru as God

himself.

Even the practices of yoga are referred to in the upanishads. For instance the Svetasvatara upanishad gives detailed directions on the practice of yoga. In the Katha upanishad, the method of yoga is referred to in 1.3, 12-13. The wise man is asked to restrain speech in mind, restrain mind in the understanding self, sink understanding in the Great Self and the Great Self itself in the Tranquil Self. The highest stage is said to be attained when all the five senses, the mind and the intellect are at rest.

CONCEPTION OF ISVARA : CREATION AND ABSORPTION OF THE WORLD :

The two dominant views of the Upanishads, namely the Nishprapanca ideal and the Saprapanca ideal, are already discussed. According to the former, the world is just an appearance of the Absolute Brahman and therefore false in the last resort. According to the latter view, the world is just an expression of God and is therefore as real as God Himself. Brahman, the individual souls and the world together constitute a unity in diversity. As Brahman, the ultimate reality is one; but as souls and the world, it is many. According to this view of cosmism therefore, the whole universe actually emerges from Brahman and thus necessarily imbibes all the characteristics of reality. This complexity, richness and variety of Brahman is sometimes manifest and at other times unmanifest, latent, avyakta. The former represents the period of creation (Srishti)

and the latter represents the period of dissolution (pralaya). Thus creation in the Upanishads is just the evolution of Brahman into the variety and multiplicity of the world of reality. Dissolution is just reabsorption into the original unity, namely, Brahman Himself. In the upanishads, this emergence of the world from Brahman is just a cosmic process, a creative act of differentiation into names (nama) and forms (rupa) and a third factor, activity (karma) also, according to the Brihadaranyaka upanishad - Tryam va idam, nama rupam karma - the threefold character of name, form and activity (1.6.3)

Whether the view held by the upanishads is cosmic or acosmic, this much is indubitable, that Brahman is the Final source from which the universe in all its organic and inorganic aspects comes into being. Brahman is the ground of all existence. He is the first cause and the final cause. He is the inner controller, immanent principle. He is Sac-cid-ananda; He is the sole reality, absolute truth and pure bliss. This Absolute when thought of as a personal God, creating, protecting and destroying the Universe, He is called Isvara. This Isvara becomes Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, when his three roles of creation, sustainment, and destruction are viewed separately. Isvara is both transcendent and eternal, only directing the play of the Universe in the three cosmic acts. This dependence of the world on God entirely, is clearly illustrated in the mystic concept of TAJJALAN (Chandogya Upanishad). The Taittiriya and many other upanishads, as already

pointed out, clearly announce that whatever exists in this Universe, owes its being to Brahman and Brahman only. In the earlier upanishads no specific mention of the repetition of the cycle, alternating between creation and destruction is made. However in the Svetasvatara and many other later upanishads, ample references are made to the repetition of the cycles of Srishti, Sthiti and Pralaya, creation, preservation and destruction. In the Svetasvatara, Rudra the lord, it is said, after creating all beings withdraws them together at the end of a specific time - Sancukocanta - kale samsrija visva bhuvanani Gopah - (iii 2). It is further stated in the same upanishad that God repeatedly spreads the net one after another in various ways and draws it together in that field and thus exercises His Lordship over all - Sarvadhityam kurute mahatma - (V.3)

Brahman as the world, the sum-total of all existence is called the VIRAT. Virat is just Brahman as the cosmos. He is the manifest God and His body is made of all the material objects of this universe. But behind this Virat, there is the world - Soul, the Sutratman, the cosmic intelligence, called by the grand name of Hira-nyagarbha. It is this world-soul, Hiranyagarbha that is subject to the Cosmic changes of the Universe. Hira-nyagarbha arises at the beginning of each Kalpa (world-cycle), and is dissolved again at the end of each kalpa, world series. Hiranyagarbha is not Isvara, as Isvara cannot be subject to any changes. Isvara is anterior to the world-soul, to Hiranyagarbha. He is the Supreme creator, the Lord directing the show.

Creation is just the free expression, Icha matram, of Isvara. In short, the world is the creation of Isvara and the manifestation of Hiranyagarbha. Isvara is Karana Brahman, the causal God, the Brahman of *Natura Naturans*. Hiranyagarbha is Karya Brahman, the Effect God, the Brahman of the *Natura Naturata*. Brahman as Transcendent, is Isvara; Brahman as immanent, is Hiranyagarbha. It is all the difference between Brahman by Himself and in Himself and Brahman in the Universe.

According to the Upanishads, God is both immanent and transcendent. The Svetasvatara Upanishad gives a good description of Him in chapter VI, its concluding chapter. It says that it is by the greatness of God in the world that this Brahma-wheel is made to revolve. 'Devaisyaisha mahima to loke yenedam bhramyate brahma-cakram'. This entire universe is always enveloped by divinity. He is the possessor of all qualities and all knowledge. He is the author of time. It is by His control and authority that this Universe made of earth, water, fire, air and ether unfolds itself. He is the beginning and the source of all causes. He has many forms. He is the Lord of prosperity, BHAGESAM and the support of all things, VISVADHAMA. He is the Supreme, the Lord of Lords, the highest deity of deities. He is the transcendent and the supreme master of masters,-patim, patinam paramam parastat. There is nothing in this Universe equal to Him or better than Him. For Him, there is neither a progenitor nor a Lord - na casya kascij janita na cadhipah. This

One God, according to His own nature covers Himself, like a spider with threads produced from PRADHANA (unmanifest matter). He is the one God hidden in all beings. He is the inner self of all beings. He dwells in all beings, as their inner self, the witness and the knower. He is the only one and the ordainer of all deeds. Not only is He the ONE controller of the many, He is the person who makes the ONE seed manifold - Ekam bijam bahudha yah karoti. The wise persons, who come to know that this God abides in their own self, they surely attain eternal happiness. He is the ETERNAL among the eternal, THE INTELLIGENT among the intelligences, THE ONE among the many, who grants desires. By knowing this God, the cause, through discrimination (Samkhya) and discipline (Yoga), one is freed from all fetters. Tat Karanam Samkhya-yogadhi-gamyam jnatva devam mucyate sarva pasaih. He is the one bird in the midst of this world - Eko Hamso bhuvanasyasya madhye. This indeed is the Fire that has entered into the ocean - Sa evagnis salile sannivistah. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death, tam eva viditvatimrityum, etc. There is no other path leading there, nanyah pantha vidyate yanaya.

He is the creator of all, the omniscient, the self-caused, the knower, the author of time, the possessor of all attributes, the knower of everything, the Lord of nature and of spirit, the master of qualities, the cause of the cycle of worldly existence (samsara), of liberation, of continuance and of bondage.

Sa visva-krid visva-vid atma-yonir

Jnah kala-karo guni sarvavidyah
Pradhana-kshetrajna-patih gune sah
Samsara-moksha-sthiti-bandha-hetuh.

He is the Guardian of this world, Bhuvanasyasya Gopta. To such a God, who shines by the effulgence of His own intelligence, atma-buddhi-prakasam and by whose light everything is illuminated (tasya bhasa sarvam idam vibhati), to Him all those eager for liberation (Mumukshur) resort to for refuge.

CLASSIFICATION OF CREATED THINGS :

So whether God or Brahman, the Self is the ultimate source of this Nama - Rupa prapanca, the world of name and form. It is the source of both the inorganic and the organic components of this world.

The order of evolution of the world of both non-living and living beings from Brahman is referred to in various ways in the different upanishads and sometimes differently in one and the same upanishad.

Vac is personified as the one Brahman. Brahman is Mantra or prayer and Brahman is referred to connote ceaseless growth (Brihatvam). Visvakarman is taken to be the Lord of the holy utterance.

In the Brihadaranyaka upanishad, water is said to be the material source of all things whatsoever. It is presumed that from water came the concrete existent, SATYA. It is described that the primal being spontaneously produced the primeval water. From water was produced subsequently the primordial GOD, the Golden germ of the world, Hiranyagarbha, 'the first seed resting

on the navel of Brahman.'

The Chandogya upanishad says, that Fire is the first to evolve from the primeval being. It says further that from Fire came water and from water the Earth. Thus it refers to the three elements of Fire, Water and Earth as emerging in succession from Brahman. (VI. ii 3-4). At the time of dissolution, it is contended, the earth will be dissolved in water, water in fire and fire in the primeval being.

The Katha upanishad also tells us that Fire is the first naturalistic element to evolve and having evolved it entered the Universe assuming all forms.

According to the Upanishads, the original elements that evolved from Brahman are not the same as the gross elements (sthula bhuta) which are palpable and which we experience, such as the earth, water, fire, etc. The original elements are said to be subtle elements (sukshma bhuta) that are beyond the reach of our senses. These original subtle elements are pure elements and what we actually experience are the mixed ones and therefore gross (sthula).

In some of the Upanishads, only three basic subtle elements, Fire, water and earth are recognised. By a process of intermixture of these subtle elements, a threefold manipulation (TRI VRITA or TRIVITKARANA) everything of this world, is said to have been evolved. The Chandogya Upanishad makes it clear, that IT made each of these threefold (Tasam Trivritam Trivritam ekaikam akarot) - This threefold character of the world is well emphasised in the Brihadaranyaka

Upanishad also.

The Prasna Upanishad not only increases the number of elements from three to five (Panca Bhuta) but also enunciates the distinction between the subtle elements and the gross elements. The five subtle elements (TANMATRA), pure infinitesimal substances are enumerated as follows :-

1. Prithivi - matra (the subtle element of earth)
2. Apo - matra (the subtle element of water)
3. Tejo - matra (the subtle element of Fire)
4. Vayu - matra (the subtle element of Air)
5. Akasa - matra (the subtle element of ether)

The Taittiriya Upanishad also mentions the five original pure subtle elements of Earth (Prithivi), Water (Ap), Fire (Agni), Air (Vayu) and Ether (Akasa).

“Tasmad Va etasmad Atmana akasas sambhutah,
akasad

Vayuh, Vayor agnih, Agner apah, adbhyah
Prithivi.....”

The gross elements of Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether which we actually experience, everyone of them is itself a combination of all the five subtle elements, with a predominance of that subtle element which gives it its name as a particular gross element. For instance there is the gross element (sthula bhuta) Prithivi. It is a compound of all the five subtle elements (tanmatra) of Prithivi-matra, Apo-matra, Tejo-matra, Vayumatra and Akasa-matra. In this admixture, because of the predominance of the subtle element of Prithivimatra, it has become the gross element (sthula bhuta)

of Earth (Prithivi). The same principle of operation and constitution is to be found in the other four gross elements also namely, of water, Fire, Air and Ether. This process of intermixture of the five subtle elements in each one of the five gross elements is called by the later Vedantins as the principle of Pancikarana or the principle of quintuplication, on the model of the Trivrita or Trivritkarana, the threefold manipulation.

Strictly speaking, the upanishads mention only of Trivritkarana with reference to the first three elements only, although they make mention of all the five elements. It is only the later vedantic thinkers that make mention of Pancikarana.

The Upanishadic classification of the five elements is clearly based on the five-fold character of the sense organs, namely those of smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing. Each one of the five gross elements has its own distinctive quality. Earth is characterised by odour (gandha). Water is characterised by taste (rasa). The element of Fire is characterised by colour (rupa). The element of Air is characterised by touch (sparsha), and the element of Ether (space) is characterised by sound (sabda).

This entire universe as evolved from these five elements, has provided the souls (Jiva) with the objects, instruments and locations of enjoyment (experience). It is these five gross elements (panca bhuta) that form the nuclei for this world of experience and it is these five elements that have erected the platform and set the stage for the souls to enact their drama of living and

experiencing in their roles of KARTA and BHOKTA (doer and enjoyer).

Thus the Brahman desiring to be many created the elements (Bhuta). Then the self-existent Brahman entered into them and it is by their combination that all other bodies are formed. The Aitareya Upanishad III 1.3. states :

“Esha brahmaisha Indra, esha Praja-patir
ete sarve deva imani ca panca mahabhutani
Prithivi Vayur Akasa Apo Jyotimshity,
etani-mani ca kshudra-misraniva, bijanita-
rani cetarani candajani ca jarujani ca sveda-
jani codbhijjani ca.....”

“He is Brahma, he is Indra, he is praja-pati, he is all these gods; and these five great elements, namely Earth, Air, Ether, Water, Light; these things and these which are mingled of the Fire, as it were, the seeds of one sort and another; those born from an egg, and those born from a womb and those born from sweat, and those born from a sprout.....”

The organic bodies are classified into the following three groups, as those born of eggs (Andaja), those born of germs or living beings (Jivaja) and those born of sprouts (Udbhija).

“Tesham kalu esham bhutanam thriny eva bijam bhavanti, andajam, jivajam, Udbhijjam iti”

The Chandogya upanishad thus mentions only three classifications of living beings and the Aitareya upanishad includes the fourth namely Svedaja, those born of sweat or heat. Having created them, the Divin-

ity is said to have entered into them by means of the living self and developed names and forms (anenaiva jivenatmananupravisya nama rupe vyakarot).

So according to the Upanishads, every being on this earth whether living or non-living has its final source in Brahman and Brahman only. That Brahman is none other than the Supreme Cosmic Self, and the Aitareya Upanishad categorically asserts that Brahman is in its nativity consciousness and consciousness only.

“Sarvam tat prajna - netram prajñane pratisthitam, prajna-netro lokah prajña, prajñanam brahma”.

“All this is guided by intelligence, is established in intelligence. The world is guided by intelligence. The basis is intelligence. Brahma is intelligence” - (III. 1.3)

Thus the Upanishads having given the details of creation, finally point out that the root cause of this entire material universe is spirit and that ultimate spirit is Brahman himself. This Brahman is in everything, living and non-living. Everything is a mode of Brahman, a part and parcel of Brahman himself.

KARMA AND RE-BIRTH :

The law of Karma is just a replica of the vedic Rita. Rita is the law of the Vedas and Varuna is the guardian of Rita in the Vedas. Karma in the Vedas refers to the unvarying action of the Gods. Rita literally means ‘the straight line’. Maxmuller points out how Rita in the Vedas applies to

the straight line of the Sun in its daily course, to the straight line followed by day and night, to the straight line that regulates the seasons, to the straight line which, in spite of many momentary deviations, was discovered to run through the whole realm of nature. In a general sense, Rita refers to the Law of nature, the laws of uniformity of nature and of Universal causation. When applied to the moral world the same Rita signifies the moral law, 'the law on which our life is founded, the eternal law of right and reason that which makes for righteousness both within us and without'. Rita in the morality of the Vedas is just the unerring inner voice of man, the voice of conscience in each and every individual. When, within us, the divine voice of conscience tells us 'this is Rita', it means simply 'this is right', 'this is true' and nothing more.

Just as the Vedic Gods are considered as the guardians of Rita, the God is equally the ordainer of Karma as stated in the Svetasvatara Upanishad. God is Karmadhyaksha - God is the custodian of the moral law.

The upanishadic morality is based on complete Freedom of will for the soul. Man is free to act and as he acts, so he earns Karma. The Brihadaranyaka upanishad says (iii 2.13) 'every one becomes good by good deeds and bad by bad deeds - *Punyo vai Punyena Karmana bhavati, Papah Papaneti* - Every one has to reap what he sows. He has to make a harvest of either good or evil. The same upanishad in its next chapter (iv 4.5) continues to say as follows :

Yathakari yathacari tatha bhavati
Sadhukari sadhurbhavti Papakari
Papo bhavati; Punyah punyena Karmana
bhavati, Papah papena.....karmamaya
Evayam Purusha iti, sa yathakamo
Bhavati, tat Kratur bhavati, yat Kratur
Bhavati, tat karma kurute, yat karma
Karute, tat abhisampadyate.

As one acts, as he behaves, so does he become.
The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil
becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action
bad by bad action. Others, however, say that a person
consists of desires. As is his desire, so is his will; as is
his will, so is the deed he does; whatever deed he does,
that he attains.

The same idea is expressed in the Chandogya
upanishad also-

Atha khalu kratumayah purushah
Yatha - kratur asmini loke purusho
Bhavati tatheah pretya bhavti, sa
Kratum kurvita - III 14.1

Man is a creature of his will after all. As he wills
while in this world, so will he be when departed.

Selfish activity leads to Karma and it is Karma
that forges the fetters. The Maitri upanishad (also
called as Maitrayani upanishad) points out that man
forges his own fetters of karma by his own desires and
actions. He is then doomed to Samsara, the cycle of
births and deaths. The self is affected by the bright
or dark fruits of actions, enters a good or evil womb so

that his course is downward or upward and he wanders about affected by the pairs (of opposites like pleasure and pain). Every self is thus affected by the fruits of action – Karma – Phalair abhibhuyamanah karma. Desire is the root cause of all. Karma clings on to the Self that has desires. It is the tendency, the samskara, the Vasana that prompts us to repeat the deed once done. If on the other hand, a life of disinterestedness and detachment (vairagya) is lived, karma does not cling to the self - Na Karma lipyate nare.

Those who know the self while on this earth, when departed they are free in all the worlds because they have found the real desires. But those who perish without having found the real self, have no freedom in all the worlds when they perish.

Ya ihatmanam ananuidya Vrajanty

Etams-ca Satyan Kaman

Tesham sarveshu lokeshu Kama - caro bhavati.

Ya ihatmanam anuidya Vrajanty

Etams-ca satyam kaman,

Tesham sarveshu lokeshu kama - caro

Bhavati.

Chando. up. VIII 1.6,

The state of each existence (in a bodily form) of the soul is conditioned according to the upanishads and is thus determined by two factors in its previous existence namely :

1. Its knowledge (vidya)

2. Its behaviour (karma)

Punyena punyam lokam nayati

Papena papam (Prasna upa. iii.7)

The Brihadaranyka upanishad makes a pointed reference to the fact that it is 'desires' that condition the birth and being of the soul in a particular bodily form. "Having reaped the full fruit (lit. gone to the end) of the karma that he does here, he returns back to this world for doing karma. So it is in the case with those who have desires. He who has no desires, who had no desires, who has freed himself from all desires, is satisfied in his desires and in himself, his senses do not go out. He being Brahman, attains Brahmahood. Thus when all the desires that are in his heart are got rid of, the mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahma here". (IV. iv 1-7).

The Mundaka upanishad also emphasises the same fact of 'desires' as the primary cause of birth and being in a particular form. "He who knowingly desires, is born by his desires in those places (accordingly), but for him whose desires have been fulfilled and who has realised himself, all his desires vanish here." (III. 2.2)

So, it is karma that makes possible rebirth. This karma is itself rooted in Avidya, ignorance. Avidya leads to kama, desire and desire pushes the soul into karma. Unless and until desires are wiped out by vidya, rebirth remains a permanent feature for the soul. The soul has to circulate in a round of re-births and re-deaths, dressed according to its karma and harnessed to a material body.

This doctrine of karma thus leads to the kindred doctrine of the Transmigration of the soul. What exactly is the concept of rebirth according to the upanishads,

what is metempsychosis and how does Transmigration take place for the soul?

The question 'Does the soul survive bodily death?' is very frequently raised in the upanishads and is invariably answered in the affirmative. The question is put by Arthabhaga to Yajnavalkya. "If verily one becomes good through good deeds, evil through evil deeds, what becomes of the man after death? If after death, the spirit goes into fire, his breath into wind, his eyes into the Sun, his mind into the moon, his ear into the direction of space, his body into the earth, his self into the ether, the hair of his body into plants (herbs), the hair of his head into trees, the blood and semen into water, what then becomes of the man?"

A similar question is put in the Chandogya upanishad (chapter V section 3) by Pravahana Jaivali to Svetaketu Aruneya when he goes to an assembly of the Pancalas, "Do you know to what place men go from here? Do you know how they return again? Do you know where the paths leading to the Gods and leading to the fathers separate? Do you know how that yonder world never becomes full? Do you know how in the fifth libation, water comes to be called a person?"

The same is repeated in the Brihadaranyaka upanishad also in its sixth chapter.

It is significant, there is no mention of Metempsychosis in the Rig-Veda Samhitas. It is equally noteworthy that the doctrine was mooted for the first time by the Kshatriyas and instructed to the brahmins. It is only in the Atharva-Veda that we find

the preliminary signs of the doctrine.

The idea of rebirth is definitely laid down in the Sata-patha Brahmana. The idea of being born again after death and dying repeatedly is linked with that of retribution. The kaushitaka Brahmana (XXV.1) also gives the idea of Punarmrityu (repeated death).

The belief in a renewed existence in another body after death is thus present in the Upanishads. In the Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya and Kaushitaki upanishads, migration into animal bodies and other forms of existence are specifically mentioned

According to Upanishads the soul was never born and therefore it can never die. It has obviously no death with the body in which it is encased. There is neither death, nor rebirth for the soul. The term rebirth is only a misnomer. Rebirth is just a process of changing the body, the cloathing for the soul. The so-called rebirth is just a migration. The so-called death just helps emigration from the present habitat and later immigration into a new abode or settlement. This two-fold movement of exit and entry, of emigration and immigration of the soul in frequent intervals under the operation of the so-called 'Death' and 'Re-birth' is called the doctrine of Metempsychosis, the transmigration of the soul. This migration need not be confined to bodies of the same species. In fact the soul may change, it is presumed, from the body of man to that of a Quadruped or even of a fly or of a bug or of a tree.

According to the Upanishads, the soul is never

born with the body nor does it perish therewith. "The wise one (i. e., the soul) is not born; nor does it die. This one has not come from anywhere; nor has it become anyone. Unborn, constant, eternal, primeval this ONE is not slain when the body is slain".

The soul is thus said to migrate from 'life' to 'life' i. e., from body to body. The instrument of migration is of course the subtle body. The cause of migration is naturally 'Karma' rooted in avidya or ignorance. This transmigration doctrine is well discussed in many major upanishads. In the Brihadaranyaka upanishad asked about what happens to a dead man after the different components of his body are resolved into the elements like Earth, Fire, Water, etc. Yajnavalkya is reported to have taken the questioner aside and discoursed on rebirth to him in private. 'What they said was Karman. What they praised was Karman. Verily one becomes good by good deeds and evil by evil'. III ii. 13.

In a later context the same sage explains more fully his views on rebirth. "On death, the soul shuffles off its present body and enters a new one as a caterpillar, having come to the end of a 'blade of grass' draws itself together and takes a leap to another blade. This process is also comparable to a Goldsmith's making a newer and more beautiful form like that of the fathers or of the Gandharvas or of the Gods or of Prajapati or of Brahma or of other beings. The kind of form that the soul takes would depend on its previous karman. The soul having thrown away its body and

having dispelled its ignorance gets into a more beautiful abode fashioned by its good deeds of Karma. "As is a man's desire, such is his resolve; as is his resolve, such is the action he performs; what action he performs, that he procures for himself." Bri. up. IV. iv 3-5.

The Rebirth of the human soul in sub-human and more inferior species is equally possible, if during its life time, it has done all evil acts only. The Katha Upanishad, for instance says of rebirth - 'A mortal ripens like corn and like corn is born again -

Sasyam iva martyah pacayate

Sasyam iva jayate punah - I 1.6

"Some souls enter into a womb for the embodiment of a corporeal being. Others enter into stationary objects according to their deeds, according to their thoughts" II 2.7

The Chandogya Upanishad also emphasises the same view-point. V x 7 "Those whose conduct has been good (Ramaniya - caranah) will quickly attain a good birth. But those whose conduct has been an evil (Kapuya caranah), will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, the birth of a hog or the birth of an outcaste (candala).

The upanishads speak of the journey of the soul after the death of the body. They give the details of its itinerary too. They make mention of two paths namely, the path of light and the path of darkness.

THE PATH OF LIGHT : This is also called by the names of DEVAYANA and ARCIRA MARGA. It leads to the place of Brahma or Satyaloka through the regions of

Agni, Vayu, Varuna and also the worlds of Indra and Prajapati. As soon as the soul reaches Satyaloka, Brahma himself runs up to him and receives him with all the protocol. Brahma is said to address the soul with the welcome speech. "It is on account of my glory, verily, he has reached the river, Ageless. He verily will not grow old." Kaushitaki Brahmana upanishad i. 3.

Tam Brahma habhidhavatah,
Mama yasasa vijaram va
Ayam nadim prapan nava
Ayam jaraisyatiti".

Kau. Brah. up. i.3.

Good souls go this way never to return.

THE PATH OF DARKNESS: This is the other path of ordinary mortals. It is known by the two other names of pitriyana and Dhuma marga. This path runs up to chandra-loka only, the region of the moon, through the spheres of smoke, night etc. The moon is verily the door of the world of Heaven. 'Etad vai Svargasya lokasya dvaram'. Having eaten the fruits (of karma) and after exhausting all the deposits in the bank of karma, the soul prepares itself for a return journey. 'Him having become rain, it rains down here (on earth again) - Tam iha vrishtir bhutva varshati - either as a worm or as an insect or as a fish or as a bird or as a lion or as a boar or as a snake or as a tiger or as a person or as some other in this or that condition. He is born again according to his deeds, according to his knowledge - Yatha-karma Yatha-vidyam" Kaushitaki upa-

nishad i. 2.

Thus the message of the Upanishads is that the Eternal which rests in the SELF should be known. Truly there is nothing beyond THIS to be known. Svetasvatara Up. I.12. They who know their own Atman and thereby realise Brahman within themselves, they do not return. That is the End. “Etasman na punar avartante, ity esha nirodhah.” – PRASNA Up. I.10.

So the Mundaka upanishad counsels the spiritual aspirants to make a bow of the syllable AUM, place in it the arrow of one's own SELF (of course sharpened by meditation) and shoot without a fault at the grand target namely, the Brahman. As the arrow in the mark, Atman shall become one with Brahman. Saravat tanmayo bhavet – II. 2.4

3

EARLY POST - VEDIC PERIOD (Hinduism & the Gita)

Hinduism :

THE MAHABHARATA

*Different Currents of thought. Saivism.
Vaishnavism*

*The Metaphysics and Ethics of the Gita – Karma,
Bhakti and Jnana Margas*

HINDUISM

THE BHAGAVADGITA

The Post-Vedic period is marked by a variety of thoughts. We find different currents of thoughts crossing each other and sometimes mingling with each other. On the one hand the orthodox views become well organised, classified, codified and crystallised in the form of SUTRAS or Aphorisms. On the other hand there are also to be found heterodox views upsurging and providing both an impetus as also a check to the predominance of the orthodox views. The uprush of the heterodox views seems to have put the orthodox views under a strong defence of logic. At the same time it has also baulked the arrogance of irrefutability on the part of the Srutis.

It is during this period that we thus find innumerable texts provided by authors, unlike the Srutis which had no authorship and which were considered as

primarily revealed and heard. These innumerable creations of literature by master minds are usually classed as the SMRITIS. This Smriti class of literature forms the tradition of the period. These Smritis are not just what are heard and repeated, but what are remembered, re-called from the memory of previous super-natural observations made, retold and written by the Maharshis of the time, the master saints and sages. The very word 'Smriti', literally means 'what is remembered' just as the word 'Sruti' means 'what is heard'. These Smritis together with the Srutis form the great Treasure-house of Hinduism. These Smritis are considered as next in importance only to the Vedas. While the Srutis are the Four Vedas proper, with the Mantras, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakasa and the Upanishads, all these Smritis as a class are considered as the Fifth Veda, the Veda of the Laity, according to SAYANA. It is further contended that the authority of any Smriti cannot be valid if it is in contradiction with the Srutis. Obviously these Smritis are of course later than the Vedas in composition and their period of formation is generally considered as about 500 B. C. The father of these Smritis is believed to be VEDAVYASA, the great sage, the Maharshi, the 'compiler' or the 'Arranger' of these traditions said to be remembered and transcribed.

It is said that in the Dvapara Yuga, the great rishi or sage Krishna – Dvaipayana also called as PARASARYA, the son of Parasara and Satyavati, divided the single VEDA into the four vedas, namely

the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharvaveda. Hence he was called Veda-vyasa or Vyasa-the Compiler or the Arranger. Having classified the Veda into the four categories, he entrusted each one of them to his four disciples, PAILA, VAISAMPAYANA, JAIMINI and SUMANTU. Thus Paila became the teacher of the Rigveda to mankind, Vaisampayana of the Yajurveda, Jaimini of the Samaveda and Sumantu of the Atharvaveda.

Having arranged the Vedas, Vyasa it is said, recalled from his memory all the other anecdotes that had taken place and compiled a 'Purana Samhita', which literally means a collection (Samhita) of all the ancient (purana) lores, tales, anecdotes and songs. This collection he entrusted to his fifth disciple SUTA the 'bard', also called by the name Romaharshana or Lomaharshana. Having completed the puranas, he then, it is said, composed the great Epic Mahabharata and entrusted this Itihasa also to his fifth disciple Romaharshana. This same Vyasa Maharshi is also reputed to be the author of the famous Vedanta Sutras, also called as the Vyasa-Sutras or the Badrayana Sutras. Thus it is this famous Vyasa Maharshi that laid the triple foundations or Prasthanaya to the future vedantic systems with his compilation of the Vedas and with his compositions of the Mahabharata (Particularly the GITA) and the Vedanta Sutras.

Under the Smriti Class of literature, which form the foundations for the post-vedic orthodox views, the following texts may be enumerated as the chief

sources of information.

1. The Epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata
2. The famous Puranas
3. The Smartha Sutras.
4. The Dharma Shastras
5. The Niti Shastras
6. A few minor Upanishads
7. The Vedanga

THE RAMAYANA

The Ramayana is the smaller and the earlier of the two epics. It consists of twentyfour thousand couplets composed by Valmiki in the ordinary epic metre called Sloka 'which consists of two hemistichs of sixteen syllables, with an iambic cadence'. It is very interesting to note that of the 24,000 verses, each thousand verse begins with a letter of the famous Gayatri Mantra.

Ramayana is acclaimed as 'the First Epic, ADI-KAVYA, and its author Valmiki (BHARGAVA or PRACETASA) is naturally declared as the first Epic Poet, - Adi-Kavi. It is a literary monument in a simple and elegant style, a model Kavya that has inspired other famous Sanskrit Poets like KALIDASA and BHAVABHUTI and HINDI Poets like Tulsidas. The hero of the Kavya is none other than God Vishnu Himself incarnate as Rama. The Heroine is of course Sita, who appears in the Rigveda as the 'Personified Furrow', invoked as an agricultural Goddess. It is

said in the Ramayana that Sita was collected from the earth when Janaka was ploughing and later adopted by him as his daughter. In the last book of the Ramayana, it is once again mentioned that she was finally received into the arms of Mother Earth.

Many scholars are of the opinion that the original Ramayana came into existence by about the middle of the fourth century B. C., very much before the epic nucleus of the Mahabharata had assumed any definite shape. They are also of the opinion that the hero of the Ramayana would in a way represent the vedic Indra and that the fight between Rama and Ravana was in a way a modification of the conflict of Indra in the Vedas with VRITRA, 'the demon of drought.' Prof. Macdonnel speaks of Ramayana in the following terms. "Probably no work of world literature, secular in origin has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thoughts of a people as the Ramayana. The nobility and magnanimity of Rama's character and the conjugal devotion and fidelity of his wife Sita have for a great many centuries exercised a far-reaching moral effect as Paragons of imitation among Indians."

The Ramayana has set up the Hindu Ideals of Manhood and womanhood for generations, cherished by one and all. The ends of human existence, the Purusharthas, the motives that activate human endeavour, according to the Ramayana, are three in number. They are collectively called as the TRI-VARGA-namely DHARMA, the spiritual ideals and aspirations, the tenets of Truth and Virtue, ARTHA, the Material

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advantages such as wealth and KAMA, pleasure and gratification of desires. Of these three, DHARMA is acclaimed as the supreme and the other two are subordinated to it. There are innumerable statements and epigrams made, extolling DHARMA such as 'Dharma guards one, who guards it (Dharma),' 'Those who are devoted to truth and Dharma have no fear of death', etc. etc. All the ethical virtues such as Truthfulness, chastity, charity, kindness and tolerance, purity in thought, feelings and actions, are incorporated to such an extent in the Ramayana that it is virtually designated as 'Ethics turned Poetry'. Self-control and Forbearance, devotional regard for the parents, the teacher, the elder brother, the husband and the master, and many such other virtues are highly extolled. No wonder, Ramayana is highly popular among the Hindus.

Almost all the Vedic deities are anthropomorphised in the Ramayana and a host of new deities are introduced. The Traid of Super--deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara with their cyclic functions of Srishti, Sthiti and Laya, creation, preservation and destruction, appear on the scene. They are bestowed with the superhuman epithets of Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence. The vedic mode of worship is augmented by Idolatry and Image worship in temples.

In the Ramayana we find strains of fatalism emphasised. We also find references to Materialism. The Materialists are condemned as Nastikas (Nihilists).

In the speech of Jabali to Sri Rama, we can easily observe materialistic and hedonistic ideas that smack of the views of the later Caruvaka Philosophy. But Caruvaka is not mentioned by name and in fact no philosophical schools of thought are mentioned by name except of course ANIVIKSHIKI indulged in by the Lokayatikas.

THE MAHABHARATA

This is the longest single poem in the world. It is the famous epic poem of India in eighteen books. It consists of a hundred thousand stanzas. There is also a supplementary book, the HARIVAMSA of sixteen-thousand stanzas. Its author is of course VYASA MAHARSHI, as already said. The epic proper contains about twenty-thousand stanzas 'embedded in and embellished by moral, political, religious and metaphysical dissertations, the whole forming a heterogenous mass of tale and teaching, which gradually accumulated around the epic kernel.' In fact, it is believed that Lord Ganesha took down the dictation of the epic by Vyasa, on condition that the author's peroration should be uninterrupted. Vyasa in return had stipulated that the scribe should first understand the import of the sentences before expressing them in writing. To gain time for thoughtful dictation, and to make Ganesha go slow, Vyasa it is said spun out a number of riddless (Kuta Slokas) to tease him with suspense and that is how nearly 8,800 slokas are said to be inter-voven into the epic. In a way, it may not

be a systematic treatise. But it definitely provides a kaleidoscopic vision of events and thoughts. It embodies important geographical and historical data, dating from about the second century B. C. to about the second century A. D. It is partly narrative and partly didactic. It is a memorable poem as it contains the famous Bhagavad Gita, the song of the Lord. No wonder it is considered as the Fifth Veda, as it is an unsurpassed treasure-house of ancient Indian Culture, customs, manners and everything else possible. It is a rich storehouse of philosophic ideas and Hindu religious lore. The chapters that are well known for their high philosophic value from the orthodox point of view are the following:-

The SANATSUJATIYA in the UDYOGA PARVA
The BHAGAVADGITA in the BHISHMA PARVA
The MOKSHA DHARMA in the SHANTI PARVA.

A dozen so-called Gitas, the Narayania Section and the Anugita in the Asvamedha Parva are also famous.

In this Epic we find both philosophic and religious ideas pleasantly blended. It is primarily eclectic in nature and we find in it a digest of all the known schools of thought of the times. The epic directly mentions the then current five schools of philosophy namely the Vedas, the Samkhya, the Yoga, the Pasupata and the Pancaratra. The cosmic view of the Upanishads is generally emphasised although references are made to the Acosmic view also. The Epic does not seem to be aware of the specific teachings of the Nyaya-vaisheshika School. We find mention made

just of Kanada's name, but not of Gautama as the teacher of the Nyaya. The sources of knowledge (Pramanas) acknowledged in the epic are only three, namely Perception (Pratyaksha), Inference (Anumana) and Traditional Wisdom (Agama or Amnaya). But the epic lays emphasis on divine grace for final and full enlightenment.

There are the germs of the later Samkhya Philosophy with the dualism of Purusha and Prakriti. There is also reference to the theory of emanation or Vyuha. Pantheism has been incorporated into the Dualism of Samkhya. The later theistic tendency as represented by the Yoga Philosophy is also to be found not only in the Bhagavadgita and the Anugita portions but also in the philosophical chapters of the twelfth and thirteenth books. Anyway the basic ideas and the terminology used are those of the later Samkhya System. We sometimes come across the concept of 'the four causes' of the later Nyaya School. The vedic scriptures and sacrifices, the puranas, the Itihasa are all accepted by the Epic. Image worship, temple worship, Durga worship, Pilgrimage to sacred places are all accepted. But the chief interest of the religious doctrine lies in the Bhakti Cult, in the insistence upon the loving devotion of the worshipper and the saving grace of the Supreme Spirit. The special sectarian cults as advocated in the Puranas are also to be found. The traditions of Rudra-Siva, the cult of Vasudeva-Krishna are advocated. The cult of Siva as that of the only God (Monotheism) and of

Vishnu as that of the Pantheistic All-God are delineated. Finally there is also the portrayal of the one God with three forms, namely Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara. There is also to be found importance given to Sun worship, the Sun exalted to the highest position as a Supreme God.

The Epic makes mention of innumerable heterodox views current at the times. There are references to the Jains and the Buddhists, to the schools of the Lokayatikas (Naturalists), the Hetumats (Rationalists) and the Pashandas (Revilers of the veda). Adrishtavada, Yadricchavada or Animittavada, the school of Accidentalism is alluded to. So also Svabhavavada, the school of Naturalism attributed to the demon Prahlada is referred to.

Thus we find that the epic Mahabharata gives a cross section of the period, a clear picture of the entire landscape of the ideas of the times. "Whatever is worthy to be known in matters relating to the welfare of man is here and whatever is not here, is no where else to be found". In short the Mahabharata is a veritable encyclopaedia of the thoughts of the period.

THE PURANAS :

'Purana' literally means 'ancient'. The term refers to 'ancient lore'. Purana Samhita therefore means a collection of ancient lore. The author of the puranas as already alluded to, is Vyasa Maharshi himself. It is generally acceded to that there

are eighteen major Puranas called the Mahapuranas.

These eighteen puranas are classified according to Vaishnava tradition into three categories, namely, Rajasic, Satvic and Tamasic. Each category is said to exalt a particular deity of the Trinity. But this classification is not desirable. No Purana is dominated by a single Guna. We find varying emphasis put on all the three Gunas as demanded by the occasions in the anecdotes. So also about the members of the Trinity. Any preference shown to a particular individual of the Trinity is in full accord with the circumstances only. For instance, in the Bhagavata Mahapurana which is acclaimed as a Satvic Purana, the role of Krishna (Vishnu incarnate) is not all Satvic. It is all diplomacy (Bhedopaya) primarily and diplomacy is certainly not Satvic. It is definitely characterised by Rajasic and Tamasic qualities. Anyway in the Padma Purana (Uttara Khanda, 263.81-84) we find the following classifications made, in terms of Guna predominating and God (member of the Trinity) preferred.

The Rajasic Puranas dominated by the quality of RAJAS (Active virtues) and relating to Brahma are the following:

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|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 BRAHMA Purana | 4 MARKANDEYA Purana |
| 2 BRAHMANDA Purana | 5 BHAVISHYA „ |
| 3 BRAHMA VAIVARTA „ | 6 VAMANA „ |

The Satvic Puranas dominated by the quality of SATVA (Fineness) and relating to VISHNU are

the following:

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|---|---------------|---|---------------|
| 1 | VISHNU Purana | 4 | VARAHA Purana |
| 2 | PADMA „ | 5 | GARUDA „ |
| 3 | NARADIYA „ | 6 | BHAGAVATA „ |

The Tamasic Puranas dominated by the quality of TAMAS (Coarseness) and relating to SIVA are the following :

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|---|-------------|---|-------------|
| 1 | SIVA Purana | 4 | AGNI Purana |
| 2 | LINGA „ | 5 | MATSYA „ |
| 3 | SKANDA „ | 6 | KURMA „ |

Of these eighteen Major Puranas or Mahapuranas, it is generally conceded to that the Vishnu Purana is the most attractive and complete in itself. The Markandeya Purana is said to be non-sectarian in character and also the oldest of the lot along with of course the Brahma Purana which is also called as the Adipurana. The well-known Vayu Purana is deleted from the list because, originally Vayu and Brahmanda were linked together.

Besides these Mahapuranas proper, there is another class of similar texts later in origin and comparatively poor in quality, called the Upa-puranas or the Minor Puranas. They are also listed as eighteen in number and their list is given in the Kurma, Garuda and Padma Puranas. They can be enumerated as follows :

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|---|--------------------|---|---------------|
| 1 | SANATKUMARA Purana | 5 | MANAVA Purana |
| 2 | NARASIMHA „ | 6 | VARUNA „ |
| 3 | NANDA „ | 7 | KALIKA „ |
| 4 | SIVADHARMA „ | 8 | MAHESVARA „ |

9	DURVASA	Purana	14	SAMBA	Purana
10	NARADIYA	,,	15	SAURA	,,
11	KAPILA	,,	16	PARASARA	,,
12	VAMANA	,,	17	MARICA	,,
13	USANAS	,,	18	BHARGAVA	,,

The Garuda and Kurma Mahapuranas say that these were announced by the Munis or the sages. But the Padma Mahapurana ascribes them to Manu savouring them thereby of by-gone times and thus providing them a superior status.

Every purana in fact asserts that it is of equal measure with the Vedas and therefore these puranas are also sometimes called as the Fifth Veda (Vayu Pu. 1.18). The teachings of the Puranas are often put into the mouths of the chief Gods and thus they are placed beyond captious objections by its author, seemingly at least. The mission of the Puranas is in fact to convey to the ignorant masses slow of understanding, the teachings of the Vedas in an appealing and indirect way.

The Puranas are metrical compositions with occasional passages in prose. They are mostly in the form of dialogues between sages. In the words of F. E. PARGITER, they are "a class of books in sanskrit expounding ancient Indian theology, Cosmogony, Genealogies and accounts of Kings and Rishis, religious belief, worship, observances, and philosophy, personal, social and political ordinances and opinions about all kinds of miscellaneous matters-the whole illustrated and enforced by tales, legends,

old says, anecdotes and fables”.

The puranas are studded with endless mythologies. There may be some inconsistencies and anachronisms here and there as each Purana is constructed as a discourse delivered by some sages of authority to one or more hearers mostly in the form of questions and answers and not always methodically.

In the words of Suta as told by the Sun-God to Manu previously, every purana is said to possess five characteristics, Pancalakshana –

Sargasca pratisargasca vamsa manvantaranica¹

Vamsanucaritam caiva puranam pancalakshanam²

The five characteristics are just the five principle subjects that each purana is supposed to deal with. They are the following:

1 Original creation of the Universe – SARGA

2 Its dissolution and Re-creation –

PRATISARGA

3 The ancient genealogies of the principal gods and patriarchs. – VAMSA

4 The reigns of the Manus, the fourteen world teachers – MANVANTARA

5 Historical accounts of the persons of the great races (the Solar and the Lunar) of the Indo-Aryan kings mentioned in the Genealogies – VAMSANUCARITA

Besides these five characteristic subjects, the puranas set forth in great detail the other four subjects of intimate concern to all human beings,

namely :

- 1 Righteousness (Dharma)
- 2 Wealth (Artha)
- 3 Desires (Kama)
- 4 Final emancipation (Moksha)

The above four (caturvarga) are classed under the Famous values of life and living (the Purusharthas).

The Puranas postulate the three primordial and fundamental factors of Prakriti or Pradhana, Purusha or Spirit and God or Brahma. Sometimes both Prakriti and Purusha are identified with God. Prakriti is said to contain the three famous qualities or Gunas of Satva or Goodness, Rajas or Passion and Tamas or darkness (inertia) in equilibrium. By a strange concatenation of the three primeval fundamental factors, an imbalance is produced amongst the Gunas of prakriti, and a great intellectual principle, the MAHAT. is evolved. This is the first stage of creation. It is then contended that from this Mahat, the first evolute, came the principle of Individuality, AHAMKARA and from Ahamkara, the five subtle elements (Tanmatras) of sound, touch, form, taste and smell, were evolved. These subtle elements became manifest as the five gross elements (pancabhuta or sthulabhuta) of Ether, Air, Light, Water and Prithivi or solid matter. This constituted the second stage of elemental creation (Bhuta Sarga). At the third stage of creation, the five organs of sense (Jnanendriyani), the five

organs of action (Karmendriyani), as also the Mind (Manas) are said to have proceeded from the Intellectual principle. This third stage of evolution is called the Prakriti Sarga.

At the next stage, namely the Fourth stage, it is narrated that all the above principles and elements were amalgamated into an Egg, through the influence of the spirit. Under the spell of Rajas, the quality of passion, the Brahma-Egg or the Egg of Brahma was activated by the SPIRIT and the Universe was thus brought into existence. At the fifth stage, through meditation, it is presumed, the Animal kingdom came into being. At the sixth stage came about all the Gods, at the seventh the whole of mankind, at the eighth the intellectual notions called 'ANUGRAHA' and finally at the ninth there originated Sanathkumara and all other mind-born sons (manasa putras), semi-divine and celibates for ever.

The puranas, without any demur accept the three Great Gods of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva and acknowledge their omnipotence. Apart from the supreme Trinity, the puranas also admit of a heterogeneous theology. All the popular deities of the Vedas find an honoured place. Particularly the Vedic Gods Indra and Agni retain a privileged position.

The forefathers, the pitris, are also accorded pre-eminence in the puranas. Not merely the dead ancestors, but also a class of abstract forefathers,

comprising seven groups are collectively accorded high dignity sometimes. They are sometimes ranked with Gods and their king is Yama. They are particularly associated with the Sraddha ceremonies performed by men in their honour. The sacrifices offered in honour of the pitris always imply mutual aid.

The puranas give detailed directions about the performance of various sacrifices, rites and ceremonies such as the purification rites, the performance of sraddhas in honour of the manes, etc. Information about Images, idolatry and the ways of worship are given in the various puranas such as Matsya, Bhavishya and Varaha. Elaborate instructions about moral behaviour and virtuous customs are given in the encyclopaedic Agni purana. It is invariably emphasised in all the puranas that good deeds always lead one to Svarga after death, whereas bad deeds always entail punishment both here and in the hereafter. List of sins and details of different hells are given. Details of sacred places called the Tirthas, the merits of pilgrimages, religious observances, prayers and spells, giving away of gifts, all these and many more are clearly portrayed in great detail with illustrations and relevant anecdotes.

The concept of Dharma is beautifully portrayed and the various types of Dharma such as the Varna Dharma, Asrama Dharma are graphically described. The purusharthas, the ends of human

endeavour are precisely defined and clearly delineated. There are very interesting and thoughtful discourses in the puranas on all the arts and sciences dealing with human affairs. Disquisitions and dissertations on Music, Drama and Dancing, on poetry, metre and grammar, on medicine, astrology, archery, architecture and even veterinary science, are abundantly found in the Vayu, Agni and Garuda puranas for example. The Agni purana also deals with Rajadharma and the Matsya purana deals with the Artha Sastras. Wise sermons and maxims with particular reference to the Rulers are to be found in the Garuda Purana.

The puranas dilate on Moksha also. Moksha is release from the cycle of births and deaths, and permanent abode in the presence of God. On the one hand the puranas advocate the path of strict asceticism and meditation on the Supreme. On the other hand they also advocate the three famous royal pathways of Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga. The Matsya purana praises the path of works, Karmayoga. The Kurma purana also commends the Karmayoga but says that sincere works with single-minded devotion lead to enlightenment, Jnana. The Vayu, Brahma, and Linga puranas give detailed instructions about jnanayoga, the path of spiritual knowledge. In fact the Vishnu purana is highly laudatory of the yoga of spiritual knowledge. Bhaktiyoga, the Yoga of loving faith and trust in the Almighty, is

beautifully explained and extolled in the Padma purana. The cult of Bhakti is directed usually to Siva and Vishnu and more especially to Krishna, a form of Vishnu.

Heretical views and schools are also alluded to in the puranas. The Brahmanda and Vayu puranas denounce the Buddhists and the Jains. The Kurma purana, for instance openly inveighs against the pancaratras (the followers of Vishnu) and the particular Saivite sects like the Kapalas, the Bhaivaravas, the Pasupatas and the Yamalas.

Like the Puranas compiled by Vyasa Maharshi, there is another variety of collections known as the TANTRAS. These Tantras are the puranas to the Saktas, the worshippers of Sakti. It is indeed presumed by the Saktas, that the Vedas are meant for the Satya Yuga (Krita yuga), the smritis for the Treta yuga, the Puranas of Vyasa for the Dvapara yuga and the Tantras for the Kali yuga. The Tantric texts are open to all persons of all castes as also to members of both the sexes.

Like the puranas the Tantric texts are also said to treat of five subjects (Panca laxanas), namely,

1. The creation of the Universe.
2. The dissolution of the Universe.
3. Worship of Gods and Godesses.
4. Acquisition of supernatural powers.
5. The four modes of union with the Supreme spirit.

In addition to the above five prominent subjects of study, there are innumerable other discourses relating to different faculties.

A few of the famous Tantras are RUDRAYA-MALA, KALIKA, MAHANIRVANA, KULARNAVA, SYAMARASYA, SARADA TILAKA, UDDISYA, KAMADA, KAMAKHYA, etc. Sir John Woodroffe, the famous Tantric scholar has pointed out—"The Sakta followers of the Agama claim that its Tantras (i.e., "books") contain the very core of the Veda..... As men have no longer the capacity, longevity and moral strength required to carry out the vaidika karma-khanda (the ritual section of the Veda), the Tantra sastra prescribes a 'Sadhana' (religious discipline) of its own for the attainment of the common end of all sastras, that is, a happy life on earth, Heaven thereafter, and at length Liberation".

The Agamas are none other than Tantric texts. They are a compendium of vedic Mantras and the Tantras reinforced of course by the yantras also. They are divided into Five main groups (Pancayatana) according to the deities or Personifications deified and worshipped; namely Sakti, Siva, Vishnu, Surya and Ganesa. We thus have the five main schools of Agama namely, the Sakta, the Saiva, the Vaishnava or the Pancaratra, the Saura and the Ganapatya. These main divisions have their sub-divisions also.

The Agamas generally classify their subjects of study into the following four subdivisions :

1. Knowledge or Metaphysics - Jnana.

2. Meditation – Yoga.
3. Instructions for the construction of temples and establishment of images – KRIYA.
4. Rites and rituals – CARYA or Samskaras.

Some of the universal features common to all the Tantric Schools are:

Mantra – Litany – or “Concentrated Recitation of certain seed-sounds and formulae, charms filled with the power of the personification in the form of sound”.

Yantra – “a geometrical diagram being the seat of the spiritual and ritualistic transubstantiation”.

Mudra – “Ritual gestures, a veritable language of the hands and the fingers”.

Nyasa – “Meditative placing of the tips of the fingers and palm of the right hand on the various specified parts of the body accompanied by the intonation of the Mantras”.

Bhuta Suddhi – “Cleansing (Suddhi) of the (five) elements (Bhutas) of which the body is made”.

Kundaliniyoga – “Arousing the divine power within, that is said to be asleep, with drawn from operation, coiled away like a sleeping serpent (Kundalini)”.

Kriya – “Instructions for construction and consecration of temples, altars and images”.

Cara – “Religious rites”.

Siddhi – “achievement of the Ends, such as supernatural powers or bliss”.

Tantric Sadhana depends on the personality of the Sadhaka. All cannot pursue the same Tantric discipline, just as all cannot take up to the Tantric cult itself. It depends on the spiritual character of the devotee and his grading in his capacities. A personality endowed with Satvic qualities cannot be initiated into the same Sadhana as is meant for a man steeped in Tamas. So also, a person noted for his Rajasic qualities is to be given a different Tantric Sadhana. In the vocabulary of the Tantras, three personality - Types are distinguished :

DIVYA - the Divine personality, Godlike and saintly.

VIRA - the heroic personality, active and vigorous.

PASU - the animal-like personality, the average of the common herd of men and women.

The Tantric cults assigned to the Pasu and the Divya are generally advocated. The attitude of the Hero - Vira is neither good nor desirable. It is dangerous as also reprehensible as it advocates realisation by way of the passions. Sri Ramakrishna Parama Hamsa himself abhorred it.

The Tantric schools practically obliterate the ideal of the NIRGUNA BRAHMAN. They shift the accent to the Saguna Brahma ideal. In other words, they emphasise the positive aspect of Maya. The world is regarded as the manifestation of the

dynamic aspect of the Divine and as such it cannot be disregarded, devaluated and discarded. They insist on the sanctity and purity of all things. Even the notorious Five Forbidden things, the Panca Makaras, the Five 'M' s - namely Madya, (wine) Mamsa (meat) Matsya (fish) Mudra (fried or parched grain and Maithuna (sexual intercourse) of Hindu austerity and asceticism, are regarded as holy and essential for the sacramental fare in some of the Tantric rituals. They are not considered as marks of Libertinism and depravity. The Sadhaka (the Tantric student) who makes Bhoga (enjoyment) a way of spiritual yoga (discipline) is acclaimed as a Hero (Vira). The very five forbidden things of the common herd of men and women become the Famous Five Good things (Pancatatva) of the Tantric cult sometimes. In the words of Sir John Woodroffe "The Sadhaka (the Tantric student) is taught not to think that we are one with the Divine in liberation only, but here and now, in every act we do. For in truth all such is Sakti. It is Siva who as Sakti is acting in and through the Sadhaka When this is realised in every natural function, then each exercise thereof ceases to be a mere animal act and becomes a religious rite - a Yajna. Every function is a part of the Divine Action (Sakti) in nature.....When the Vira eats, drinks, or has sexual intercourse, he does so, not with the thought of himself as a separate individual satisfying his own peculiar

limited wants, an animal filching as it were from nature the enjoyment he has, but thinking of himself in such enjoyment as Siva, saying 'Sivoham' 'Bhairavoham' – 'I am Siva, I am Bhairava'.

To the Tantric, the world is not a mere platform of suffering and imperfection where men are destined to enact the tragedies of life and living only. Rather this very world is a mansion of mirth, bliss and beatitude. So also salvation is not a mere impersonal 'Absorption'. It is liberation and supreme Joy in the presence of the Divine. It is a state of eternal ecstatic Love and Bliss. It is said by Ramprasad 'I like eating sugar, but I have no desire to become Sugar'.

The Tantric principles and practices have been in a way incorporated into the cult of Mahayana Buddhism and the worship of the Bodhisattvas.

THE VEDANGAS:

To preserve correctly for ever from any twisting awry or extinction or oblivion and to propagate the revealed literature of the Vedas at all times, a systematic curriculum was formulated by the Post-vedic scholars with the so-called six limbs of the Vedas namely, the VEDANGAS. The Vedangas are a set of auxiliaries to the vedic study and without proficiency in these ancillary subjects of the Vedanga, a proper understanding of the vedas is impossible, it is held. The composition of the Vedic mantras is such that an accent in the wrong place may lead to a quite different

meaning. Correct accents, correct grammar and correct pronunciation, it is these that have been responsible for the correct preservation of the Vedas for generations through the medium of recital only. So also it is the Kalpa Sutras of the Vedanga that have faithfully preserved the form and order of the vedic ceremonies these thousands of years. It is thus that the study of the Vedangas is considered necessary for the proper understanding of the Veda. Hence the Vedangas are said to support the Vedas in the sense that they are 'subjects of instruction in a Vedic school, subserving and aiding the preservation of the Veda'. That is why they are named as 'the Limbs of the Veda'.

The Vedangas proper consist of the following six subjects of study, namely,

1. SIKSHA - Phonetic directory.
2. CHANDAS - Metre.
3. NIRUKTA - Etymology and exposition.
4. VYAKARANA - Grammar.
5. JYOTISHA - Astronomy and Astrology.
6. KALPA - Ceremonial directory.

It is noteworthy that special manuals on these subjects are written in a conspicuously unusual, singularly strange and distinguished SUTRA style. Each subject is embodied in a set of Sutras couched in an extraordinarily simple but mnemonic prose style. These Sutras are sententiously brief,

concise and pointed. They are just aphorisms, brief, pithy sayings. The word 'SUTRA', simply means 'thread, string or clue'. A sutra literature thus strings together all the salient points of a text or a subject, in a coherent and concise way. These Sutras aid the memory to remember them well, but at the same time they become incomprehensible without commentaries and prakaranas. A Guru is therefore absolutely necessary to understand any system of knowledge through their sutras.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE VEDANGA :

i. SIKSHA - PHONETICS :

In early times the Vedas were primarily transmitted by oral tradition only and not in writing. Naturally, phonetic directories were evolved. Siksha thus envisages the laws of correct pronunciation. It is a science of letters, accents, quantity, the right use of the organs of articulation and phonetics generally. The Taittiriya Upanishad enumerates the elements constituting Siksha as,

- a) Varna-individual sounds,
- b) Svata-accent,
- c) Matra-quantity,
- d) Bala - organs of pronunciation,
- e) Saman - delivery,
- f) Santana - euphonic laws.

A pratisakhya is simply a treatise on phonetics as applicable to a group of Sakhas of a particular veda. There are many pratisakhyas attached to

the different Vedas.

ii CHANDAS – METRICS :

The well-known work on CHANDAS or Metre is PINGALA'S CHANDAH-SUTRA. It is a standard work on vedic versification, giving the correct metres for recitation.

iii. NIRUKTA-ETYMOLOGY :

It is the science of the derivation and original signification of the vedic words. It is an Etymologicon of the mantras giving the etymons of the Vedic words. The Nirukta of Yaska is the only famous work which itself states "without this (science) there can be no understanding of the (vedic) Mantras." (I.15).

iv. VYAKARANA-GRAMMAR :

Literally the term Vyakarana means "Analysis". The Samhita texts of the Vedas are reduced to the Pada-patha and vyakarana or the science of grammar is a necessity. It is very useful in knowing the vedic phonetic system - its phonology, accidence and syntax. Of course Panini's grammar is considered the most perfect text. At the same time, Panini was not himself the originator. Panini himself mentions no less than sixty-four predecessors such as Apisali. Kasakritsna, etc.

v. JYOTISHA-ASTRONOMY :

The Vedic rituals and sacrificial ceremonies required an accurate knowledge of the months, the seasons and the year. The Vedanga, Jyotisha, helps the votaries to know and correctly determine for purposes of sacrifices the positions of the Sun and

the Moon at the solstices and of the new and full moon in the circle of the 27 Nakshatras or star-groups of the ZODIAC. This Jyotisha as taught by LAGADHA has 36 verses in the Rigvedic Recension and 43 in the Yajurvedic one. Jyotisha is thus an important limb of the Veda as it helps in formulating the vedic almanac of rituals and sacrifices.

vi. KALPA-CEREMONIAL DIRECTORY :

The Kalpa Sutras are a compendium of aphoristic rules and instructions regulating the performance of vedic rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies. Each Veda has its own kalpas. The Rigveda has three, the Samaveda has also three, the Yajurveda has thirteen and the Atharva Veda has one. These Kalpa Sutras have synchronised and systematised the divergent and diffused vedic rituals and sacrifices in an orderly way with a thoroughness of their own, not ignoring even the least possible details.

The Sutra works on KALPA can be divided into the following three categories.

I. THE SROUTA SUTRAS: They are called 'Srouta' as they are directly based on the Srutis. They have systematised the sacrificial lore of the Brahmanas. Detailed descriptions of the elaborate sacrifices with clear injunctions and correct instructions to perform them are given in these Sutras. The liturgies and litanies connected with the major sacrificial ceremonials such as the Soma, the Raja-

suya, the Asvamedha, etc., are treated in a systematic way. Everything of the Vedic ritual is dealt with in a detailed way.

2. THE SMARTHA SUTRAS: Like the Srouta Sutras that are derived from 'Sruti', these Smartha Sutras owe their origin to the Smritis (the immemorial traditions). These Smartha Sutras are once again classified into two categories namely:

a) THE GRIHYA SUTRAS: These are Sutras or aphorisms that deal with domestic rites and duties of a householder. They deal with the household ceremonies to be performed with the domestic Fire and in the company of his wife by a married man, not only for the good of himself and his family, but also for the general welfare of the whole community as such. The Panca Maha-yajna, the five daily sacrifices to be performed everyday, the sacrifices connected with the recurring seasons, the domestic sacraments (samskaras) that solemnise all the important stages of life in an individual such as birth, initiation, marriage, death, etc., are all enunciated and described. They order with meticulous care the details every person has to go through every day from the time he gets up from bed till he goes to sleep again. They give elaborate instructions for every daily and domestic ritual to be performed. Some of the well-known Grihya sutras are those of Asvalayana (Rigveda), Gobhila (Samaveda), Paraskara, Baudhayana, Apasthambha and Bharadwaja (Yajurveda).

b) **THE DHARMA SUTRAS:** These aphorisms are also called by the other name of Samayacarika Sutras. These are Sutras that deal with conventional morality, with Dharma in the sense of duty, law, customs and traditions. They deal with the Norms or moral standards of living from the standpoint of society or the State, with all the conventional practices, customs and rituals. The Samayacarika Sutras are just a collective name for the various Law Books of the Hindu tradition regulating not only the religious but also the social and the political aspects of life. There are innumerable Dharma Sastras or Law-Books given by different ancient sages of repute at different times. The names of some of the famous Law-givers are the following as mentioned by Yajnavalkya, himself a famous Law-giver:

MANU	DAKSHA
APASTHAMBHA	HARITA
BAUDHAYANA	KATYAYANA
BRIHASPATI	LIKHITA
GAUTAMA	SAMVARTA
NARADA	SANKHA
PARASARA	SATATAPA
VASISHTHA	USANA
VISHNU	VRIHASPATI
ANGIRAS	VYA\$A
ATRI	YAMA

Apart from these famous Law-givers, there are many other minor law-givers also. According

to one authority there are forty-seven ancient sages who have given Laws of Dharma and codes of behaviour to the Hindus. It is further presumed that the Laws of the various epochs are different. It is believed that the law-books of Manu belong to the Krita Yuga, those of Gautama to the Tretayuga, those of Sankha and Likhita to the Dwapara Yuga and those of Parasara to the Kaliyuga. The codes of Parasara are considered the most reliable and authoritative for the Kali Yuga.

However the codes of Manu are considered the most ancient, comprehensive and authoritative. The present available text of Manu-smriti or Manava Dharma Sastra is a metrical work of 2,658 verses, although a few other versions may contain some more. Manu is said to be the progenitor of all mankind and the originator of the Dharmasastras. He is a mythical personage said to be "Svayambhuva". There are several Manus mentioned in the Orthodox literatures. In fact the puranas say that each Kalpa or day of Brahma is divided into fourteen Manvantaras over each one of which a Manu presides. Obviously there are fourteen Manus. 'Manu' means more of a common name than a proper name; it connotes the meaning of a 'world teacher'. It is believed by the orthodox that at the beginning of each Manvantara the Manava Dharma Sastra is revealed to a Manu by the 'Original Manu' presumed to be the Celestial Patriarch of man-kind. At the end of the Manvantara, the codes also fade

away into the original chaos, only to reappear as revealed to the next Manu of the next manvantara by the same original Patriarch. However, the Codes of Manu invariably perpetuate the caste system.

Dharma, etymologically simply means 'what holds together'. Dharma in the Dharma Sastras signifies both individual moral order as also collective social order. Much of the Dharma is also highly ritualistic. Dharma yields merit and Adharma yields de-merit. Merit takes one to Heaven and de-merit takes one to Hell.

Dharma in the Sutras is just an ethical counterpart of the vedic Rita. It signifies not only religious ordinances but also ethical virtues. Different classes of Dharma are also featured.

1. Sadharana Dharma - These are the general self-regarding virtues common to one and all, irrespective of age, caste, creed or avocation. They enunciate the universal virtues like truth-speaking, charity, kindness, self-control and the like. They are obligatory to one and all, at all times.

2. Varna Dharma - These are the duties and virtues appropriate to the several classes of society as promulgated in the smritis. Every man is said to be born into a caste and he is supposed to discharge his obligations thereunder.

3. Asrama Dharma - These constitute the different duties obliged to be performed at the four different stages in the life-time of an individual, namely, Brahmacharya, Garhastya, Vanaprastha and

Sanyasa. In the first stage, the dominant Dharma is to learn at the feet of a Guru the Srutis and the Smritis. At the second stage namely, that of a householder, the predominant Dharma is to perform daily the Five great sacrifices (Panca Maha Yajna) as already averred to namely:

1. Studying the scriptures.
2. Sacrifice to the Gods.
3. Honouring guests.
4. Presenting oblations to ancestors.
5. Offering food to birds and animals.

There are several other Dharmas enumerated, to be abided by as a householder.

At the third stage, it is the Dharma of the retired couple to resort to meditation in the forests.

Even at the last stage, that of the Sanyasin, there are many specific duties (Dharma) to be discharged. A Sanyasin, though he has renounced the world, has to peregrinate and preach. He cannot idle away his time.

There are several other categories of Dharma featured in the Dharmasastras.

Apart from these Dharmasastras there are many other classes of Smritis dealing with the different social sciences. There are the Nitisastras that drive home regular morals and ethical teachings either directly in the form of verses or indirectly through stories and even beast fables. There is also the wellknown Arthasastra of Kutilya, a famous prose work in fifteen books comprising 6,000 units (slokas), on

political science. Like these innumerable other manuals on every branch of social studies can be enumerated.

3. The SULVA SUTRAS: These are the aphorisms that provide rules of measurement, the lay out of sacrificial sites, construction of Fire-altars and such others. SULVA, literally means 'measuring string'.

In this post-vedic period, the general pattern of thinking is predominantly realistic. The minor but later Upanishads such as the Maitri, the Narayaniya and the Svetasvatara, not only underline the reality of the external world, they also emphasise Theism—belief in a personal living God, ever at the service of mankind. They also make prominent the distinction between God, the Individual Soul and the World of which He is the author or the creator. Though the individual soul (of man or of any other) is considered as eternal, it is also taken to be as entirely dependent on God and His grace. Salvation (the goal of life) can not therefore be an impersonal absorption in an Absolute or a Nirguna Brahman. The goal for the soul can at best be either reaching the presence of God or becoming God-like and thus retaining its individuality throughout and for ever.

Anyway, ideas of the personalities of full-fledged Gods, the Tri-murtis of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara are clearly formed and outlined. The Vedic Prajapati now becomes the doyen of the Triad, God Brahma, the reputed ceator.

Narayana, a minor deity of the Vedic times now becomes the great Vishnu, the protector. Rudra, another minor deity of the Vedas now becomes the famous Siva—the auspicious, also the destroyer. These Gods get their wives too, namely, Sarasvati, Laxmi and Parvati respectively. They are also provided with their residencies, conveyances and all other comforts. Though in a way their portfolios are already defined, they are all all-powerful in every way and mostly function in unison.

Although the worship of Brahma is not much in vogue in Hinduism generally, religious services to Siva and Vishnu have become very prominent and widely prevalent too. Thus there came to be in Hinduism the two dominant religions of Saivism and Vaishnavism.

SAIVISM :

This is the religion of the worship of Siva as the Supreme (monotheistic) God. To begin with Siva was an ordinary Vedic deity, a minor nature-God, a Rudra that too of the malignant type—"the howling God that went about spreading devastation with the assistance of Maruts or Storm Gods represented as his sons". Literally 'Rudra' means, 'Howler'. It is only in the later portions of the Veda that He is acclaimed as the Great God, Mahadeva, and invoked as the Auspicious, a SIVA. The concept of Rudra-Siva becomes the object of both fear and love. He is made the Supreme God, particularly in the Atharva-veda. The Svetasvatara Upanishad installs Him at the Zenith. Siva is

Lord of the Mountains-GIRISA as His spouse is the Lady of the Hills-Parvati. The two are always worshipped together as Siva-sakti. The worship of Siva is largely based on the Agamas. Siva quickly condescends graciously to those who approach him with all loving devotion (Bhakti).

VAISHNAVISM :

Like Saivism, Vaishnavism is the creed of the Vaishnavas—the worshippers of Vishnu as the Supreme (Monotheistic God). In the early mantras, Vishnu is represented as one of the Solar deities and reference to his taking three strides (TRI-VIKRAMA) is also made. He is just treated as a minor deity in the early portions of the Rigveda, as an associate of Indra and some times as even his younger brother. In the later liturgical portions of the Vedas, He is often identified with the sacrifice. Literally Vishnu means 'Encompassing'—Gradually Vishnu gains importance as an important God.

Similar to Vishnu, there is an identical concept of Narayana, "the descendent of NARA or the primeval male, i. e., Purusha from whom the whole universe springs into existence according to the Purusha-sukta". Literally the term 'Narayana' means 'the goal or the destination of all beings' or 'the abode or resting place of men'—Rigveda X. 825-6. We come across the name 'Narayana' in the Satapatha Brahmana. In the Taittiriya Aranyaka also we find references to Narayana as the Supreme deity and as Hari. Thus we find finally that Vishnu is declared as the Highest God and

is identified with Narayana, Hari, Vasudeva etc. In other words, parallel to the Rudra-Siva Cult, we find the Vishnu-Narayana cult also coming into prominence.

THE BHAGAVATA CULT:

There also arises during this period the Bhagavata cult. It is the worship of Krishna and his consort Radha. The Bhagavata cult does not make any class or caste distinctions. Many of its preceptors are of different so-called inferior castes including that of the Pancamas also. The twelve Tamil Alvars represent the cream of the Bhagavata cult. According to the Bhagavata religion, it is not birth, but being that makes a man good and noble. It is Bhakti or devotion, purity of heart and love to man and God, that helps man to attain salvation or Moksha-Bhakti needs no education, knowledge or high birth. It just requires a simple and pure heart which any ordinary man can have. The Bhagavata religion is the religion of the Common man, of the masses. The word 'Bhakti' is derived from the sanskrit root 'Bhaj' which means to 'to adore'. Therefore primarily, Bhakti means, 'Adoration'. The allied word 'Bhagavat' means God, 'the Adorable', approached through Bhakti-The term Bhagavata simply means 'a worshipper of the Adorable one'. The best account of Bhakti is contained in the Aphorisms of Sandilya.

All the Bhagavatas agree in rejecting the entire doctrine of Maya with all its consequences. The Supreme deity of the Bhagavatas namely the Bhagavat, is a personal God. The term 'Bhaga' appears in the Vedas as the name of a deity well known as the

bestower of blessings on the supplicants. In due course Bhaga became the God of goodness and grace. In the Vishnu purana it is delineated that Glory (Aisvarya), Righteousness (Dharma), Renown (Yasas), Wealth (Sampath), Knowledge (Jnana) and renunciation (Vaivagya) together constitute Bhaga and He who possesses them is the Bhagavat. The Bhagavata purana mentions Satvatas as the worshippers of the Bhagavat. The Bhagavata cult is therefore also called as the Satvata religion, the espousers of pure nobility and fineness (Satvata). The Bhagavata cult clearly avoids all animal sacrifices and items of Himsa (violence) in the Vedic injunctions. The creed of the Bhagavatas in Monotheism, belief in a single Supreme almighty, all merciful and benevolent. It is therefore also called as the Ekantika religion. As a matter of fact, the different appellations, Ekantika, Satvata, Narayaniya, Pancaratra, and Bhagavata all mean one and the same, namely the Bhagavata cult. The Bhagavata religion believes in a supreme living God Vasudeva, who is merciful and just. He gives his helping hand to his devotees in distress. The God of the Bhagavatas is not far off in a distant Heaven or hard to approach. He is in man, in each and every individual. He who worships God in man has not only understood the greatness of God but also the dignity and worth of man.

God is Antaryamin in all individuals and in all beings. The best way of worshipping Him is just to have faith and trust in Him. Surrender to the will

of God (Prapatti or Sharanagati) is the sure way to get His Bountiful Mercy and Moksha thereby.

God known as the PARA, the Supreme, lives in his own abode of Nityavibhuti (Eternal glory) Vaikunta made of Suddha Sattva with his Shakti (energy) namely Laxmi, a portion of Himself that represents His 'will-to-be'. Thus this Vishnu with Laxmi represents the double aspects of force and matter, Kriya and Bhuti.

This Vishnu manifests himself in various ways. There are the four famous Vyuhās (forms) of his manifestation. The Pancaratra Philosophy gives a chain of manifestations on the analogy of 'one flame proceeding from another flame'. The first Vyuha has of course no anterior emanation. They are the following :

I VASUDEVA : This is the body and person of God himself as the Supreme Personal being with all the six prominent Gunas or Attributes namely :

- a) Jnana—Knowledge.
- b) Aisvarya—Lordship.
- c) Sakti—Potency, ability.
- d) Bala—Strength.
- e) Virya—Virility.
- f) Tejas—Splendour.

The subsequent Vyuhās (manifestations) are named after the brother, the son and the grandson of Vasudeva (lord Krishna) the first Vyuha, each Vyuha having a pair of predominant Gunas.

II SAMKARSHANA : Life and all living beings are represented by this manifestation. It is

characterised chiefly by the two gunas of Jnana and Bala.

III PRADYUMNA: Just as Samkarshana has emanated from Vasudeva, Pradyumna has sprung from Samkarshana. It represents the birth of mind. It has the two prominent characteristics of Aisvarya and Virya. It is through this Pradyumna that the duality of Purusha and Prakriti is said to make its first appearance.

IV ANIRUDDHA: From mind arises self-consciousness, from Pradyumna arises Aniruddha. Manifest matter (Vyakta prakriti) with gross time and souls distinct with their individualities represent this manifestation. The two most important characteristics of Aniruddha are Sakti and Tejas.

There are also the sub-manifestations of these four primary manifestations. There are many other manifestations of God called the Vibhavas and also God's incarnations called the Avataras (descents). God is said to have come down from his abode and lived with mankind in human form (Rama-avatar, Krishna-avatar etc.,) in animal form (Matsya-avatar, Kurma-avatar—God incarnate as Fish, as Tortoise etc.,) and even in mixed form (Narasimha-avatar—God incarnate as Man-lion) just to save them from their enemies and from ignorance.

As already stated the most cherished manifestation of God is as the Antaryamin, the immanent inner controller of every individual. This same God is said to manifest Himself in holy idols as Arcavatara-

hence the worship of Idols by the Hindus not only at home, but also in temples and institutions. The Agamas prescribe the modes of worship. One of the best Agamas is the Pancaratra agama itself.

The Bhagavata cult vouchsafes the individual soul as a part of the Adorable one, of the Bhagavat Himself emitted by Him into an individuality of its own, into a separate conscious existence. Even at the climax of Moksha there is no question of merger, identity or absorption in the Supreme, no question of the individuality being lost in the last resort namely at the source. Emission from the Supreme not only meant the 'birth' of the soul but also its fall in the sense of being involved in the cycle of births and deaths. Yet, it is announced by the Bhagavata religion that a soul can be saved from the Cycle of births and re-births by Bhakti, devotion to God. The Bhagavata creed admits of different classes of souls. There is the class of the NITYAMUKTA, souls saved for ever, from eternity to eternity—a super class of souls always in the heavenly abode and ever at the service of God. Apart from this privileged class of souls, there are the ordinary souls classed under four heads. There is the class of the BADDHA, souls like those of our own tied to the things of this life—Souls bound hard to the cycle of repeated births. There is the class of the MUMUKSHU, those souls in whom the consciousness of salvation is awakened in the form of a strong desire for it, but not yet attained. This represents the class of awakened sinners anxious for release. There

is also the class of KEVALA, souls pure at heart, devoted to the way of salvation through Bhakti and prapatti, worshipful adoration and self-surrender. Finally there are the MUKTAS, souls saved by the Prasada, Grace of God and thus released. These released souls enjoy a perpetual conscious independent existence at the feet of the adorable one-Bhagavat-pada. They have attained Perfect peace and bliss. Their only joy is waiting on God and being at His service (Kaimakarya). These released souls do not become Him. Rather they become LIKE Him and remain so for ever in ever-lasting bliss. The released souls are said to attain Sannidhya (immediate presence of God), Samipya (intimacy with the divine), Salokya (conscious co-existence with the divine), Sarupya or Sadhrmya (likeness to God) and Sayujya (communion with the Divine) also. It is this Bhagavata creed with the Bhakti cult that has inspired the later four noble churches of faith, Satsampradayas, in Hinduism namely:

- 1) The Srisampradaya of Ramanujacharya
- 2) The Brahmasampradaya of Madhvacharya
- 3) The Rudra-Sampradaya of Vishnusvamin
- 4) The Sanakadi Sampradaya of Nimbaditya

All the Smritis believe in two most important doctrines viz.,

The doctrine of Karma

The doctrine of Moksha

The doctrine of Karma :- 'What a man sows, he reaps'. The doctrine of causation is applied to the

sphere of morality and conduct of individuals. Everyman has the freedom of will either to choose right conduct or to choose bad conduct. It is not fatalism in the sense that man has no choice at all but that everything is due to pre-determination or destiny. Man has the freedom to choose. When once a man has chosen a path, whether good or bad, he binds himself and has to eat the fruits of his Karma, sweet or bitter.

The fruits of Karma cannot be exhausted in a single life. Therefore each man has many births, to eat the fruits of his karma leisurely. Hinduism therefore admits of Metem-Psychosis or Re-birth even on moral grounds and on grounds of the doctrine of Karma. The soul has no death. It migrates from body to body. In each embodied existence the constant companion of the soul is its Karma (Merit or demerit earned by one's own efforts). Thus the Hindu view of life gives full scope for moral freedom and freedom of action. It is by this freedom of will that a man earns Karma-merit or demerit. In fact Hinduism lays bare three varieties of Karma viz.,

1) Prarabdha Karma—This is the inherited bag of Karma hanging from every one's nape, Karma earned in the past, collected and stored, karma ready to bear fruit and in fact bearing fruit in terms of actual events. There is in every one's life and present existence a pattern and a mould drawn from previous existence in terms of one's mental dispositions and the major incidents and events of one's biography are determined

and dictated by this Prarabdha Karma. It is generally admitted that this Prarabdha species of karma is necessarily to be gone through, experienced (avasyam anubhoktavyam). It is generally conceded that one's present biography is the harvest of the seeds of this prarabdha Karma sown in the previous birth. It is this prarabdha that makes the soul bound to the cycle of births and re-births. Only Nishkama Karma, the good and honest life of a Jivanmukta may not allow refreshing the prarabdha. The evil seeds of the Prarabdha may be fumigated and destroyed only by the grace of God. So if one is to get rid of the effects of Karma, the predispositions derived from the remote past of remoter existence, one has to surrender completely to the will of God and seek His grace. It is the cessation of this prarabdha karma that gives the green signal for Moksha. So long as the prarabdha karma is there, one is still entangled in the cycle of births and deaths.

2) Samcita-karma :—These are the accrued seeds of destiny, Karma in the granary. Every one by his good or bad intentions and deeds will produce his own karma. They will be yet at the seed stage and are yet to germinate. They are Karma in cold storage. More than anything else, every one goes on fashioning and forming karma every time. These are not lost. They accrue. Only the seeds have not yet begun to sprout and bear fruits; but they are there all right.

3) Agamikarma :—These are the karmic seeds that are yet to be collected and stored in the normal course of

one's life. They are sure to come off of course, because of the basic ignorance of man.

By realising the self within oneself one can burn out all the stocks of the Samcita karma and by regulating one's conduct one can easily keep at bay all the Agami karmas.

MOKSHA :

Hinduism usually recognises four fundamental values of life. They are called the Purusharthas, the ends of life. They are :

1. Artha—Wealth, means of material gains
2. Kama—Pleasures
3. Dharma—Justice and the good virtues
4. Moksha—Release from the cycle of births & deaths

Of these four values, the first two are material and empirical. They are just the means for the last two ideals of Dharma and Moksha. Hinduism does not advocate absolute asceticism. It does not ask its votaries to give up all pleasures and kill the senses. It always advocates restraint. The Indian view of Dharma is of a very high order. A conduct or action according to Indian ethics, should exhibit a golden mean between the two extremes of Pravritti and Nivritti. Pravritti means action with motives and intentions for realising one's desires—Nivritti means renunciation, Sanyasa giving up everything. Hinduism strikes a balance between self-indulgence and self-abnegation. It underlines self-control. Every one should satisfy his impulses and needs. Every one should earn Artha for the sake of realising Kama. For an average Hindu

Karma, activity, is very much emphasised. Activity implies satisfaction of Kama. But kama is divested of the sensual indulgence and when action is done for its own sake and according to one's dharma and on the lines of cosmic dharma it becomes Nishkama Karma. Dharma is the guiding principle of both Artha and Kama. But HINDU Dharma always tends towards Moksha. Moksha is salvation, release primarily from the cycle of births and deaths. The HINDU systems of thought generally abhor existence on this earth in spite of all its charm and enchantment, as it entails the two horrors of birth and death, the terminals of a life span which is itself primarily a running stream of sorrow. Both the orthodox and the heterodox schools generally abhor the cycle of births and deaths. While the orthodox systems point to a God and His holy abode full of happiness and peace as the refuge for the Released souls, the heterodox schools simply point to a blank, a vacuum, a state of Nirvana or at least a type of spiritual aloofness, Kaivalya.

YOGA :

Hinduism emphasises yoga as a means for self-realisation. Yoga is "the art and science of self-integration". Yoga is just attunement of the soul to an ideal, to make it to accord with a goal in view. Patanjali, the famous author of the well-known classic Yoga-sutras defines yoga as the cessation of mental activities as Citta-vritti-Nirodha. Yoga is, to put to yoke, to harness the soul, to join the soul to an ideal. Patanjali's yogic discipline is called the Rajayoga, the Royal

way. It is a eightfold path that leads to self-transcendence and attainment of union with the Eternal and the Supreme. There are also the other forms of yoga such as the Hatha, Laya and Mantra Yogas that lead to the attainment of supernatural powers and bliss even. The Hatha yoga is primarily based on the regulation of breath and such other vital controls. The Laya yoga is primarily concerned with the awakening of the KUNDALINI, Psychic vitality coiled like a snake in stupor at the base of the spine. It is called Laya yoga as it emphasises leaving behind the world of external things and silencing (Laya) of the ancient instincts and impulses in us. The Mantrayoga is primarily concerned with intonations of sacred syllables and formulae as also concentration on their intent and purpose. Unlike the Raja yoga these three forms of yoga underline primarily acquisition of supernatural powers for their own sake. They are most popular with the heterodoxy.

There are also the famous other three yogas namely those of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti that are universally acclaimed and specially mentioned in Bhagavad-gita. Karma-yoga is God-realisation through works. It is attunement of the soul with disinterested action, non-selfish activity. Jnana Yoga is the yoga of meditation through renunciation of action. It is attunement of the soul in accord with mind, with wisdom. Bhakti-yoga is the concern of the heart. It is devotion to God. These three types of yoga are well described in the Bhagavadgita.

THE BHAGAVADGITA

“ THE SONG OF THE LORD ”

The Bhagavadgita, ‘the song of the Blessed’ is a celebrated religious and philosophical Poem of India in eighteen cantos, inserted as an episode in the sixth book of the Mahabharata. It is a part of the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata. It is a Philosophic song in eighteen chapters with seven hundred verses in all. It is not considered as a Sruti or Revelation. It is considered as a Smriti or Tradition.

The Gita is said to be taught on the battlefield of Kurukshetra by God himself in the form and avatar of Krishna to the typical man Arjuna, when the latter was in doubt and dismay. It is more a mandate on Ethics and practical guidance than a system of philosophy. It is one of the earliest ethico-religious works of Hinduism. No wonder the Gita is a very useful guide in the battlefield of every one’s life and living existence. It has given solace, courage and peace for millions in distress and in dilemma. The message of the Gita is universal in appeal irrespective of caste,

creed, race or nationality. The Gita presents the quintessence of all the upanishads. It is in fact called the "Srimad Bhagavadgita Upanishad" as is evident from the Colophon at the end of each chapter for purposes of recital. There is the familiar quotation from the Gita-dhyana—

"sarvopanishado gavo dogdha Gopalanandanah-
partho vatsah sudhir bhokta dugdham Gitamritam
mahat"

"All the upanishads are the Cows, the Blessed Krishna is himself the Milker; Arjuna is the calf and the nectar-like Gita is the excellent milk"—

The Gita is the immortal message of God to man. It is stated at the commencement of the fourth chapter in the Gita (IV-1-3) that the message of the Gita is ancient wisdom preached by the Bhagavan (God) to Vivasvan and by Vivasvan to Manu and by Manu to Ikshvaku.

The Gita though primarily vedantic, is eclectic in character. There is syncretism, a harmonious blending of different philosophical views such as those of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavata religion and the Samkhya creed. To call it therefore as 'an ill-assorted cabinet of primitive philosophic opinions' as done by Hopkins and repeated by Barnett is wrong and uncomplimentary. Rather it is a beautiful and fragrant bouquet (as said by Swami Vivekananda) of different flowers, of different philosophical views and hues. It is a divine nosegay, a posy of different philosophic ideas, grateful and sweet. That is why the Gita is

taken to be one of the three accepted philosophical foundations for the Vedanta by all the three great Acaryas namely, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva.

Though the Gita does not advocate the Vedic ritualism based on a barter deal between Gods and men, it insists that the Vedic sacrifices are to be performed. The cosmic purpose of the vedic sacrifice is still admitted as the Vedas are themselves said to be rooted in God. In Canto 3, it is pointed out that he who enjoys the gifts of nature without performing sacrifices to Gods is truly a thief (*Stena eva sah*). Man depends on rain for food and rains depend on the performance of sacrifices. He who does not help to turn the wheel thus set in motion by the Vedas is a sinner and does dis-service to society. The concepts of Yajna and Tapas are streamlined in the Gita and converted into symbolic sacrifices. Anything done with a spirit of selflessness and dedication to God is a true sacrifice to God.

Many expressions from the Upanishads are profusely quoted in the Gita. The Upanishadic view of cosmism, pantheism, and theism are very clearly emphasised. The Gita is in fact the message of the upanishads made easy of understanding for the common man. The upanishadic doctrine of Atman-Brahman, the conception of purusha and the later idea of Isvara are all incorporated in the Gita. The concepts of the Kshetra and the Kshetrajna, of the Kshara and the Akshara in the Gita are based on the ideas of the upanishads. The description of sacrifice as a form of

Brahman, the methods of Yoga and Yogic realisation, the journey of the Soul in terms of Deva-yana and pitr-yana, and the ideal of salvation (Moksha) are all borrowed from the upanishads. The Gita in short is none other than the upanishads stepped down for purposes of clarity and convenience.

The tenets of the Bhagavata cult are predominant in the Gita. References to Vasudeva are to be found in VII-19 & XI-50. The Gita believes in a personal supreme God, all merciful and ever at the service of mankind as in the Bhagavata religion. Similarly it breathes the spirit of tolerance. Caste distinctions and birth-rights are relaxed. Everyone can have an approach to God and to salvation, be he low-born or high-born, be he ignorant or wise, be he a scavenger or a prince. The doctrines of Sva-dharma (Performance of one's duties for duty's sake) and Bhakti (including Prapatti-love and surrender to the will of God) are directly based on the Bhagavata tenets.

The metaphysics of the Gita has much in common with the philosophies of Samkhya and Yoga. The name of Kapila is of course mentioned in the Gita, though not of Patanjali. The concept of prakriti in Samkhya, the Samkhya psychology as of Buddhi, Ahamkara, manas etc., are all to be found. But unlike Samkhya philosophy which avoids the existence of God, the Gita on the other hand establishes the existence of a personal God. Apart from Purusha and prakriti as in Samkhya the Gita admits of the Purushottama, the Supreme Soul, the Super-Soul unknown

to Samkhya. The theory of Gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas is accepted. 'There is no entity on earth or in Heaven among the devas that is free from the three qualities born of prakriti'-Gita XVIII-40, XIV-5. The Gunas constitute the triple cord of bondage for the soul. Freedom is deliverance from the Gunas. The Gita also speaks of Yoga. When Arjuna, the representative man asks Krishna how to tame the fickle and boisterous mind Krishna advises the prescriptions of Abhyasa (disciplinary measures of Yoga) and Vairagya (Yogic indifference to worldly objects)-Bhagavadgita VI-33 & 34.

But Purusha in the Gita is not an independent entity as in Samkhya. The Gita also does not recognise ultimate distinctness of the individual souls - Gita VII-4 & XIII 20-22. The Idea of the Purusha wrestling itself from the clutches of prakriti is the end and aim. That is the ideal of life in Samkhya. It is called KAIVALYA, Spiritual aloofness. But in the Gita it is different. There is the ideal of separation from Prakriti. But this severance from prakriti is not a negative ideal. It is not an end in itself. It is only a means, a positive means to a higher end, namely Moksha-reaching the presence of God or even Brahma Nirvana, absorption in Brahman. There is thus this important difference between the Gita and the Samkhya.

Samkhya in the Gita connotes knowledge, wisdom and Yoga in the Gita denotes action.

The Gita may be conveniently studied under

two titles namely its metaphysics and its Ethics. The Metaphysics of the Gita may be broadly outlined under the three subdivisions of

1. God, 2. Soul, and 3. Nature.

THE METAPHYSICS OF THE GITA

I. GOD

The Bhagavadgita endorses both the Nirguna Bramha ideal and the Saguna Brahma ideal of the upanishads. Its emphasis is obviously on the Saguna Brahma ideal as the Gita itself is an illustration of it. Lord Krishna, the Lokacharya the preceptor and the enlightener of the masses, the teacher of Arjuna, has declared himself as God incarnate, Saguna Brahman in human form.

Lord Krishna himself declares in chapter 9 that that ought to be known and knowing which one attains immortality is the Nirguna Brahman itself. He says 'Brahman is to be known'. This beginningless Supreme Brahman is said to be neither Sat (being) nor Asat (non-being). He is within and without all beings. He is unmoving as also moving—*acaram, carameva ca*. He is too subtle to be known—*Sukshmatvat tat avijneyam*. He is far away and yet near—*Durastham anti-keva tat*. Though undivided (*avibhaktam ca*) he seems to be divided among all beings. This Brahman to be known is both the sustainer and the destroyer

of the universe. He is the light of all lights-Jyotishamapi tat Jyotih. He is beyond the darkness-Tamasah param. He is seated in the hearts of all-Hridi sarvasya Vishtitam. He is knowledge itself-Jnanam. He is also the object of knowledge-Jneyam. He is to be attained by others through knowledge-Jnanagamyam.

The manifest God, Krishna announces to Arjuna that this is the Sovereign mystery (guhyatamam idam), the sovereign secret, the supreme knowledge of deep sanctity-Rajavidya rajaguhyam pavitram idam uttamam-

"All this is permeated by me in my unmanifest aspect and all beings abide in the idea within me. Therefore really speaking, I am not in them"

"Maya tatamidam sarvam

Jagat avyakta murtina

Mat sthani sarvabhutani

Na ca aham teshu avasthitah". IX-4.

In chapter 12 Arjuna asks a pertinent question as to which of the two is better from the point of view of man, earnest worship of God-the Saguna Brahman or meditation on the imperishable and the unmanifest Absolute. Krishna categorically asserts that those whose thoughts are set on the unmanifested (Nirguna Brahman) have a more difficult journey-Avyaktasakta cetasam tesham kleso adhikatarah-Avyaktahi gatir dukkham. He says that the path of those who meditate on the imperishable (Aksharam), the indefinable (anirdesyam), the unmanifest (avyaktam) is always

besotten with distress and difficulties. In the same breath he says that those who worship the personal God (Saguna Brahman) with faith (Ye mam nitya-yukta upasate) God considers them as the most perfect in Yoga. Thus the worship of the Saguna Brahman, the personal God is extolled in preference to the meditation on the Absolute.

So according to the Gita, the Nirguna and the Saguna concepts of Brahman are none other than the unmanifest and the manifest aspects of Brahman. Though meditation on the unmanifest aspect is not decried, it is ignored and man is asked to worship God, the Saguna Brahman.

WHO IS THIS GOD ?

God is the source of all. In chapter 7 a discourse on God and the nature of the world is given. It is pantheistic. God is all and all is God. God is a living person. His personality has two aspects—His higher nature and His lower nature.

His lower aspect is Nature, prakriti, the material Universe which is described as actually eightfold—Itiyam me bhinna prakritirashtadha—

Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether (the Pancha Bhutas), Mind (Manas), understanding (Buddhi) and the self-sense (Ahamkara).

The other aspect of God is his higher nature namely the Soul, the Jivatma by which the entire lower nature is said to be sustained—yaya idam jagat dharyate.

Thus nature and souls of this universe are taken

to be the two aspects of God, His lower-apara and His higher-para aspects. This is once again exactly the conscious souls (Kshetrajna) and the unconscious nature (Kshetra). The entire universe therefore has evolved from these two-fold aspects of God and is composed of them - clean pantheism.

The entire universe is said to be strung like beads on the thread of God—Mayi sarvam idam protam suture mani-gana iva. There is nothing whatsoever that is higher than God. God is the origin of the Universe, its source as also its climax, namely dissolution—Many expression of God's Immanence are given by Krishna himself.

“I am the taste in the waters,

the light in the moon and the Sun”

“I am the syllable AUM in all the Vedas”

“I am the Sound in ether, manhood in men”

“I am the seed of all existence—Bijam mam sarvabhutanam”

“I am the life principle in all beings—Jivam sarvabhuteshu”.

The three gunas, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas are said to have their source in God; but God is not said to be in them—Te mayi—Na tu aham teshu. Deluded by these three gunas, ordinary souls do not recognise God as the Supreme and the imperishable. It is only the wise who have taken refuge in God that can cross the tides of the three gunas—

Mam eva ye prapadyante

Mayam etam taranti te.

VII-14.

The Soul that realises that all is God comes to the end of his journey and reaches God at last. 'However such great souls are rare'-says God in the Gita VII-19. Veiled by His Yoga-maya (Divine potency) God is not manifest to all. Many cannot realise His higher nature which is changeless and supreme, many cannot realise that God is unborn (Ajam) and imperishable (Avyayam). But those devotees who take refuge in God and strive for deliverance from old-age and death they realise Brahman in all His entirety. Those who know the true nature of Brahman and thus the Truth, they remember Him even at the hour of death and departure.

There is also the theistic note in the Gita. In Chapter 10, there is the discourse on both the Immanence and the Transcendence of God. God is acclaimed as the source of all. To know Him is to know All.

Lord Krishna says 'He who knows Me in reality as without birth and without beginning (ajam anadim ca veti), and as the supreme Lord of the Universe (Loka-mahesvaram), he being undeluded is purged of all sins. In fact, he who knows the glory of God's manifestations and His immense Powers (Vibhutim) he is obviously united with God by unfaltering Yoga. There is no doubt about it-na atra samsayah.

The wise worship God with the full conviction that He is the origin and the source of the entire Universe and that the entire creation proceeds from Him. God blesses the richly devoted with the concentration of understanding, with Buddhi-yoga. Out of com-

passion, God destroys the darkness born of ignorance in the minds of his devotees, by the shining lamp of wisdom.

God is characterised as
—the supreme Brahman-param Brahma
—the Supreme abode-param Dhama
—the most sacred-paramam pavitram
—the eternal divine person-purusham sasvatam divyam
—the unborn-Ajam
—the all-pervading-Vibhum
—the first of the Gods-Adi devam.

In the words of Lord Krishna, God incarnate—
‘I am the self seated in the hearts of all creatures
I am the beginning, the middle and the very end
of all beings’ X-20.

‘I am the creator whose face is turned on all sides—
Dhata’ ham visvatomukhah’ X-33.

‘I am the silence of the secret and the sacred
I am the wisdom of the knowers of wisdom’
Guhyanam maunam

Jnanavatam jnanam. X-38.

‘I am the seed of all existences’

—Sarvabhutanam bijam yad tad aham—

‘There is nothing moving or unmoving on this earth
that can exist without me’ X-39.

‘I support the entire universe
pervading it with a single fraction of myself’
Vishthabhya aham idam kritsnam

Ekamsena sthito jagat X-42.

When Arjuna in all devotion and self-surrender

expresses his wish to see God's real form, the manifest personal Brahman, Lord Krishna bestows on him the supernatural vision by His Grace as otherwise He cannot be viewed by mortal eyes. Arjuna then has the vision. He sees the splendour of the Exalted being surpassing the light of a thousand or myriad Suns. He bows in salutation and speaks out—Chapter eleven.

‘Thou art the imperishable, the Supreme to be realised’
Tvam aksharam param Veditavyam. -18-

‘Thou art the ultimate resting place of the universe’

-Tvam asya visvasya param nidhanam

‘Thou art the undying guardian of the eternal law’

Tvam avyayah sasvatadharmagopta-

‘Thou art the primal person’

Sanatanah tvam purusham

‘Thou art the all-pervading infinite being living in anything and everything both in the being, in the no-being and even anything beyond that—

Ananta devesa jagannivasa

tvam aksharam sadasat tatparam yat -37-

‘You are the knower and also that which is to be known,

You are the supreme goal, the infinite form and the entire universe is pervaded by thee’— -38-

‘I bow to thee of immense might

(ananta viryamitavikramastvam)

in front, from behind and in all directions’ -40-

‘Thou art the father of the world, of the moving and the unmoving,

Thou art its venerable teacher and the object of

worship.

There is none equal to thee;
How can there be any in all the three worlds greater
than thee?’

These words of Arjuna give a firsthand report of God’s being and greatness. God is all love for those who seek His grace. He is like a father to his son, like a friend to a friend, like a lover to his beloved—

Piteva putrasya, sakheva sakhyuh,

Priyah priyaya—

XI-44

In this context Lord Krishna announces to Arjuna that it is only through love and devotion that one can have the vision of God like him—Bhaktya to ananyaya sakya aham evam vidho’rjuna. Such a direct vision of God is not possible by any other means. Not even the Vedas have seen Him so. No amount of austerities, gifts and sacrifices can enable a man to have that vision XI-53-54. In the same chapter in verse 55, Krishna declares that he who works for God’s sake, he who looks upon God as his goal, he who worships Him free from attachment and he who is free from all enmity to all created beings, he does really attain HIS GRACE.

In chapter 4, it is stated that God, unborn, imperishable and the Lord of all beings manifests Himself through his own Yogamaya, divine potency keeping His nature (prakriti) under control. Whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is on the ascendent, for the sake of the upliftment of the righteous and the destruction of the evil-doers and for

the purposes of establishing Dharama, God incarnates and comes into being on earth from age to age (The Avatar of Krishna is itself an illustration). He who knows that God's so-called birth and existence are divine (divyam), he who knows that deeds do not defile God and God has no craving for the fruits of actions and is not bound by works, he who is rid of passions, fear and anger, who is deeply immersed in God and is purified by the penance of Wisdom and has sought refuge in God the almighty and the Supreme, he has no rebirth-punarjanma na iti.

God is said to have brought about the four-fold order of society classifying men according to their pre-natal dispositions and deeds. Yet God is the immortal Lord (Avyayam) and a non-doer (Akartaram).

God says—chapt. 9 verse 10 'It is under my supervision that nature (prakriti) procreates all these, the moving and the unmoving'—Mayadhyakshena prakritih suyate sacaracaram (IX-10) The Great Brahma is considered to be the womb of the universe and God is the father who casts the seed—Tasham Brahma mahad yonir, aham bijapradah pita XIV-4. That means that everything of the world is brought about by prakriti and that God is the father only. In chapt. 15, Krishna while making a classification of the universe into the three categories of the world, Souls and God, makes mention of two types of purushas—namely, the perishable and the imperishable

—Dvau imau purushau loke ksharah ca aksharah eva ca—The perishable are the bodies of all beings

(Ksharah sarvani bhutani) and the imperishable is the soul within all, the Jivatma (kutastho akshara ucyate) He then mentions that other than these two, there is the highest spirit called the supreme self (paramatma iti udahritah).

This paramatman is the Lord, Isvarah, who is eternal (avyayah-un-dying), who has entered the three worlds and has been sustaining them XV. 17.

Krishna says—

‘As I surpass the perishable and am above the imperishable, I am vouchsafed as the supreme person in the world and celebrated in the Veda’

Yasmat Ksharam atitoham

Aksharadapi ca uttamah

Ato’smi loke vede ca

prathitah purushottamah XV - 18.

That person, who undeluded knows this supreme God, knows thereby all and worships Him with all his heart XV - 19.

In XIV - 27, Krishna Says

‘I am the dwelling place of Brahman,
of the immortal and the imperishable,
of the eternal Dharma and of absolute and
unending happiness’—

In Chapt. 9 Lord Krishna, the God incarnate says, “they worship me through Jnanayoga as the one, as the distinct and as manifold in form - Ekatvena pri-thaktvena bahudha Visvatomukham” (verse 15) - He says ‘I am the vedic ritual, the sacrifice, the ancestral oblation, the sacred formula, the clarified butter, the

sacred fire, the act of offering oblations, the father, mother, grandsire, the knowable, the knower and the knowing, the syllable AUM, the Rik, Sama and Yajur, the Supreme Goal, the supporter, the witness, the abode, the refuge, the origin, the End, the resting house for all beings in dissolution, the imperishable seed, immortality and death, being and non-being, I AM ALL'.

In chapt. 7 God says that there are four different types of virtuous men who worship Him—chaturvidha bhajanti mam—They are

- a) The man in distress
- b) the seeker of knowledge
- c) the seeker of wealth
- d) the Man of wisdom.

Of these four, the dearest to God is the ENLIGHTENED who is deeply devoted to Him.

Tesham jnani nityayukta

Ekabhaktir visishyate

Priyo hi jnanino 'ty artham

Aham sa ca mama priyah -VII-17

Such a noble devoted sage resorts to God alone as the highest goal—

Asthitah sa hi yuktatma

Mam eva uttamam gatim -VII-18

Incidentally Krishna tells Arjuna that the faith of the embodied souls who offer sacrifices neglecting the ordinances of scriptures is of three kinds—

Chapter 17

- a) Goodmen worship the many minor deities,

the Gods in Plural-yajante devam sattvika
 b) The passionate worship the demigods and
 the demons-Yaksha Rakshasamsi Rajasah
 c) the others worship the spirits and the
 ghosts-pretam bhutaganamsca anye yajante
 tamasa janah.

But the worshippers of Gods go to Gods, of manes go to manes and of spirits to spirits only. They don't reach the supreme Brahman and attain bliss. Even the knowers of the three vedas who drink the soma juice go to Heaven only and enjoy the pleasures thereof. But afterwards, they return.

But the wise man should be guided by the scriptures, says Krishna both for what he is to do and for what he is not to do.

Tasmad sastram pramanam te

Karya akarya vyavasthitan

Jnatva sastravidhanoktam

Karma kartum iha arhasi Chapt. XVI-24

Therefore those who rightly meditate on the supreme God, they definitely reach Him.

'Those who meditate on Me, reach Me

Those who sacrifice to me come to me'

Yanti madyajino pi mam IX-25

'Whosoever offers me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, that offer of the pure heart through love I accept'-

says Lord Krishna— IX-26

'Whatever you do, do it as an offering to me'-

Tat kurushva madarpanam IX-27

‘I am the same in all beings. None is hateful to me; none dear to me. Whoever loves me, in him I stay’.

IX-29

‘Even the worst sinner if he worships me with understanding devotion, he becomes righteous because of his right resolve—swiftly he obtains lasting peace’

IX 30-31

With one’s mind firmly set in the yoga of renunciation (dedicating all actions to God) one will be freed from the bonds of KARMA. Irrespective of caste, qualifications or classifications, whosoever seeks shelter in God in all humility and devotion, he is saved, for God has declared—‘Na me bhaktah pranasyati—My devotee never perishes’.

IX-31

MAN’S APPROACH TO GOD :

In Chapt. 12 Lord Krishna analyses and elucidates the different modes of approach to God.

- i) Those who are completely devoted to God and have dedicated all their deeds to God, they undoubtedly dwell in HIM, being completely rid of birth and death—
Sarvani Karmani mayi samnyasya matphara ananyayogena mam dhyanta upasate.
- ii) If unable to be devoted, they can reach Him by understanding and concentration—
Abhyasa yogena—
- iii) If unable even for that, they can seek God by deeds, by service (Karmani Kurvan

matkarmaparamo bhava) mentally writing
off all the fruits of actions—
sarvakarma phalatyagam.

Krishna then gives a comparative estimate of
these three modes of approach to Him.

Better indeed is knowledge than concentration-
sreyo hi jnanam abhyasat. It means that a knowledge
and LOVE of God is better than concentration and
meditation on the unmanifest Absolute.

Better than knowledge is meditation-Jnanat
dhyanam visishyate—

Better than meditation is the renunciation of
the fruits of action-Dhyanat Karmaphalatyagah.

Krishna finally announces—Tyagat santir anan-
taram—on renunciation immediately peace follows.
Who is the person that is really liked and loved by
God?

He is the true devotee—

Who has no illwill towards any body on earth,
Who is free from self-sense and Egoism,
Who is friendly and compassionate to all,
Who is indifferent both to pleasures and pains
Who is self-controlled and has dedicated all his
mind and Soul to God (mayi arpita mano-
buddhih)

Who has renounced both good and evil and is
completely dedicated and devoted to God—

‘Such a person is dear to me’—so says God in the
form and person of Lord Krishna.

XII-13-17.

“He who is alike both to friend and foe, good

and evil repute and whose supreme aim is
God and thus follows the immortal wisdom—
such persons are extremely dear to me—
Bhaktaste ativa me priyah” XII-17-20.

God is considered the supreme self both imma-
nent and transcendent, who pervades the universe,
supports and supervises all beings and yet is transcen-
dent and unaffected. There is the duet of both pan-
theism and theism in the Gita.

Good is termed as both the source (origin) and
end of the world.

“Know that all beings have their birth in this
I am the origin of all this world and
its dissolution as well” VII-6

I am the origin of all; from me all (the whole
creation) Proceeds. Knowing this, the wise
worship me, endowed with conviction” X-8

The same God is identified with death also—

“I am the ‘inflamed’ Time, KALA, the destroyer
of the worlds. Even without thee (Arjuna and his
action) all these warriors arrayed in the opposing camp
will not survive” XI-32

The origin of beings and the source of their do-
ings, their primary inspiration all rest in God.

“Discrimination, true wisdom, sobriety, the
sense of forgiveness, truth, control over the senses and
the mind, joy and sorrow, existence and non-existence
(evolution and dissolution), fear and fearlessness, non-
violence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, chastity,
fame and ill-fame, these diverse feelings of creatures

emanate from ME alone".

X 4 & 5

"The Lord dwells in the heart of all beings who are mounted on the automaton of this body causing them to revolve according to their roles"—XVII-6r. It is God that punishes the Souls or rewards them according to their deeds. The creatures, the Souls revolve like marionettes in a puppet show.

God plays with the universe not for His own sake, but for the sake of the universe alone. By Himself, He has no wish to fulfil, no ends to gain.

God says

"There is nothing for me in the three worlds to do, nor is there anything unattained for Me and yet worth attaining; still I continue to work"

III-22.

"If I cease to work, these worlds will perish. I would be the author of confusion and of destruction of these people"

III-24.

"Whenever evil is on the increase in the universe and justice at the lowest ebb, God who is yet the imperishable and the eternal, recreates Himself-assumes new phenomenal forms, just to destroy the evil, resuscitate the good and establish the right"

IV-7.

Krishna says,

"For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of the evil-doers and for the establishment of righteousness on sure foundations, I am born from age to age".

IV-8.

Thus the God of the Gita is a personal being,

a conscious eternal and almighty being, omniscient and omnipresent, the great master of the universe without doubt and without a beginning. X-3.

(2) SOUL

Lord Krishna declares that the Individual Soul or Jivatma is a chip of old block, a fragment of His own self-Mamaivamsah. It is a chip of divinity, a fragment of God himself, an eternal portion of the Supreme-XV 7. Though the individual Soul according to the Gita does not lead a separate existence from the Supreme from all eternity, yet this much is certain, it has become severed as a part from the Divine, from the Supreme, from God.

Ref: XV 7. XVI-18/XVII-6.

The Purusha or Soul of the Gita is therefore not an independent entity as in Samkhya philosophy. Also, the Gita does not recognise the ultimate distinctness amongst the individual souls.

Thus divine in origin, the individual Souls have entered bodies made of matter. The Soul has become eternal in the world of life having drawn unto itself from Nature (Prakriti-matter) the five senses and also the sixth, namely Mind. XIII. 20-22. Thus indirectly it is God Himself that is lodged in the hearts of all-Sarvasya caaham hridi sannivishto-He is the warmth of life in all living beings; He is the respiration and digestion too.

It is Prakriti that is the cause for the creation

of the body and the senses including the mind also. Purusha, the Soul is just the cause of the experience of pleasure and pain-Purushah sukhadukhanam bhoktritve hetuh. That means the Soul seated in matter enjoys the objects of the nature of the three guṇas born of prakriti, matter (This indicates that the blissful nature of the Soul is stained by joy and sorrow, on account of its identification with the body, the objects of nature); yet the spirit while dwelling in the body is above the triple nature of prakriti. It is transcendent. Verse 22 (Chapt. XIII) declares that the Soul is just the witness (of pleasure and pain), the supreme Lord (Mahesvarah) and the overself.

This body of man, the city of nine gates is designated as the field-Kshetra. One who knows this is called the knower of the field, KSHETRAJNA. God is also called the Kshetrajna, the jivatma, in all the Kshetras-Kshetrajnām ca api mam viddhi sarva Kshetreshu, Bharata-XIII 2. In stanzas 5 and 6 Chapt. XIII the factors mental and material that together constitute the field, the Kshetra are given. The five great elements (Earth, water, fire, Air and ether), the Ego (Ahamkara), the Intellect (Buddhi), the unmanifested primordial matter (avyaktam), the ten organs (five of sense and the five motor organs), the mind, the five objects of senses (Indriyagocarah), desires and aversions, pleasures and pains, the Aggregate (the body, the organism) consciousness (Chetana) and firmness of purpose, all these in brief together form the Kshetra-Etat kshetram samasena savikaram

udahritam-XIII-6. (Thus Kshetra in the Gita is none other than the contents of experience, the twentyfour principles of the samkhya system).

Everyone should understand, says Krishna (Chapt. XIII) that everything of this world, moving or unmoving has come out of the union of the field and the knower of the field-Kshetra-Kshetrajna samyogat-It is because of this association of soul and matter (in the form of the body) that life and activity have been brought into the Universe. Naturally the Lord is present in all. He who thus sees the Lord present equally everywhere (Saman tishthantam), he really sees. He really sees who regards that all actions are done only by NATURE, prakriti and that the Self is not the doer-yah pasyati tatha atmanam akartaram sah pasyati. The Supreme Soul, Paramatman, being without beginning though dwelling in the body (sarirasthopi), neither acts nor gets contaminated (nakaroti, na lipyate) like the all-pervasive ether (sarvagatam akasam). Just as the sun illumines this whole world, so also the Atman illumines the whole Kshetra (field). He attains to the Supreme who by his eyes of wisdom perceives the distinction between the field (Kshetra) and the knower of the field (Kshetrajna) and also deliverance from Prakriti. Though the Soul is cashiered and caged in matter, matter is incapable of affecting any change in the souls themselves. So it is the duty of one and all to get the bonds of prakriti snapped and pave the way for the release and return of the soul to its original abode, namely God.

Bhagavan Krishna tells Arjuna that the soul that pervades this whole universe is indestructible—*Avinasi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidam tatam* (Chapt. II). It is only the body that is perishable. The Gita juxtaposes the soul over against the body. The Soul is neither hurt nor destroyed. To say that the Soul is born or that it dies, is foolish. No soul can kill another; no soul can be killed by another because souls have no death. —*Nayam hanti, na hanyate—Na jayate mriyate va*. The body is just a cloak for the soul. Just as a person puts off worn-out garments and puts on others, so also does the embodied Soul eject the worn-out bodies and take on to new abodes. II-21. The death of him who is born is certain—*Jatasya hi dhrivo mrityuh*. So also the rebirth of him who is dead is inevitable.—*Ḍhrivam janma mritasya ca*. To grieve over such inevitable events is stupid. The wise men do not grieve either over the dead or the living. Just as different stages of the body are attributed to the Soul such as boyhood, youth and oldage, so also another body, a rebirth is equally attributed to the Soul. Only those souls that are enlightened and that have the grace of God, that are capable of treating pleasure and pain alike and that are not tormented by the contacts between the senses and their objects, are eligible for immortality. Thus the Soul, the dweller in the body of everyone is eternal (*nityam*) and can never be slain (*avadyam*). It wails not over the human foibles or sufferings and death. It never laments over the events which affect merely the perishable

body. The Soul is impervious to matter and remains unaffected by all the influences and acts of matter. The Souls are unmanifest before they are born-avyakta adiini. They again become unmanifest when they leave the body-avyakta nidhanani. They are manifest only when they are in contact with a body, in the intermediate stage between birth and death. II-28. This is the wisdom (Samkhya as Gita calls it) that Krishna imparts to Arjuna to begin with. The Wise do not grieve either over the dead or over the living-Gatasun agatasumsca nanusocanti panditah-II-11. So the final advice goes-"Treat alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat-Sukha dukhe same kritva, labha alabhau jaya ajayau"-II-38. They are all material, ephemeral and perishable. In this way is brought about the juxtaposition of the SELF and the non-self. In this way the immunity and the immutability of the spirit is brought into relief over against the changing spectacles of prakriti, the mutability of matter.

3. NATURE

In Chapt. 15 of the Bhagavadgita, the Universe is compared to the peepul tree (as in the upanishads) having its roots above and shoots below. Its leaves are compared to the Vedas. The branches of this tree in the form of the different species of living beings, its tender leaves in the form of sense enjoyments and its roots in the shape of egoism and desires that bind the

soul, are spread all around.

(The wise is said to cut down this peepul tree with the strong sword of detachment).

It must be remembered in this context that the Gita lays stress on the cosmic conception of the Absolute rather than the Acosmic. The Gita establishes the theistic view. While in the upanishads the single and solitary absolute is itself viewed under the threefold aspects of Brahman, Atman and the World, the Gita separates the three and makes the last two, namely the Atman (the individual souls) and the world dependent on the first namely Brahman, God, which is indubitably acclaimed as the Highest and the Independent.

The physical universe is therefore traced not to the Brahman as in the upanishads, but to prakriti or matter. God just provides the seed, the impregnating vitality to prakriti. But it is prakriti, that is out and out the material cause of the universe. "It is under my supervision that prakriti brings forth all these things moving and unmoving and by this means the world revolves" IX-10. God guides the destiny of the world and only that much. He is entirely uninvolved in the affairs of the world. Every transaction of the world is finally ascribed to matter and its modes *only-prakriteh kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvasah* XII-27. The Lord neither determines the doership (agency) nor the doings of beings. Nor does he associate or conjugate the works with their fruits. It is nature that works out these V-14. The same idea is

categorically expressed in XIII-20 also—

Karya karana kartritve

Hetuh prakritir ucyate—

It is he who visualises that all actions are done by nature (Prakriti) and that likewise that the self is not the Doer, that verily sees—XIII-29.

The Gita significantly points out that matter is in no sense created by God, but that it exists from eternity—Krishna Tells Arjuna “Know that prakriti (Nature) and Purusha (Soul) are both beginningless and know also that the forms and modes of the world are all born of prakriti (prakriti sambhavan)”—XIII-19. This matter is however subject to incessant change. But all its mutations are just transitory. Matter may influence the Soul—in fact it does in the case of the unenlightened. But its influences, especially those of pleasure and pain are equally ephemeral. They may come and go. They need not command the attention of a wise man. Man need not regulate his conduct by them. II-14.

So as in Samkhya philosophy, it is out of primitive or primeval matter that the universe is evolved and into it again it returns. God is thoroughly unaffected by this cyclic process of evolution and dissolution, of emergence from and reabsorption in matter, in prakriti.

“This multitude of existence being born again and again under the compulsion of prakriti is dissolved at the commencement of Brahma’s night and again issues forth into being at the commencement of his

day”.

VIII-19.

“At the coming of (Bramha’s) day all manifested things emanate from the unmanifest and at the coming of (Bramha’s) night they merge in the same known as the unmanifest”.

VIII-18.

So also the three gunas of Prakriti play the same role as in Samkhya. It is by their influence and impact that the free soul is cashiered or enchained. In chapter 14, it is very clearly pointed out how the three gunas of Sattva (goodness), Rajas (Passion) and Tamas (inertia or dullness) firmly tie up the imperishable soul to the body

—Nibhadnanti dehe dehinam avyayam

—Goodness is said to bind the soul by affinity to happiness and wisdom. Passion binds it through attachment to activity and its fruits. Dullness born of ignorance ties it up through error.

Goodness prevails, overpowering passion and dullness. Passion prevails overpowering goodness and dullness. Even so, dullness prevails overpowering goodness and passion.

The mark of goodness prevailing, is the light of knowledge streaming forth in all the nine gates of the body. The mark of passion dominating is craving and restless activity. The mark of dullness prevailing is stupor, inactivity and indifference. The result of goodness is pure and unsullied wisdom, of passion pain and of dullness error and folly.

When a person realises that the natures of men are controlled by these three modes of prakriti only

and when he come to know that God is beyond these three modes (Gunebhyasca param vetti), "then he attains to My being—madbhavam sah adhigacchati", so says Lord Krishna. When a person understands that every embodied soul is conditioned by these three modes and when he also realises what is beyond these three modes namely, God, he will then sit like a witness, UNMOVED by these threefold Gunas. Such a person makes no difference between a clod of earth, a stone or a nugget of gold. Sorrow and joy, censure and praise, they all mean the same to him. He then remains thus firmly established in God. Honour and ignominy, friends and foes, he treats them alike. He will have given up all propensities towards deeds. He will have taken himself out of the three gunas and gone above them. He will have then qualified himself for becoming Brahman—BRAHMABHUYAYA KALPATE.

Thus the three Gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas constitute the triple cord of bondage for the soul. The theory of the Gunas is accepted by the Gita XVIII-40.

"There is no existence either here on earth or again among the celestials in Heaven that is free from the three modes or Gunas born of prakriti or nature"—

THE ETHICS OF THE GITA

In the Gita, Samkhya is the yoga of knowledge. Yoga is the Yoga of action. It is Karma Yoga. In the Gita Samkhya lays stress on knowledge and renunciation of desire. Yoga lays stress on action.

The question is raised—How is one who has the Samkhya knowledge that the Soul is imperishable and indestructible to act?

Lord Krishna then speaks of two courses of sadhana, spiritual discipline as enunciated by Him previously—namely the path of knowledge, Jnana Yoga and the Path of works, Karma Yoga.

Jnanayogena Samkhyanam

Karmayogena Yoginam.

In the case of the Samkhyayogi, Sadhana proceeds along the path of knowledge. In the case of the Karmayogi, sadhana proceeds along the path of works.

In chapter V verse 4 Krishna says that to view that Samkhyayoga and Karmayoga yield different or divergent results is foolish. Both yield the same supreme bliss. Only the ways of pursuit are different. The goal is the same—Ekam samkhyam ca yogam ca yah pasyati, sa pasyati. Krishna further points out that of the two yogas (ways of pursuit), Karmayoga, the way of action is superior to Karma samnyasa or Jnanayoga, the way of renunciation or the path of

knowledge-Tayastu Karmasanyasat Karmayogo visishyate-V2. Without the positive Karmayoga, Samkhya Yoga, the path of knowledge (renunciation of doership in relation to all activities of the senses, the body and the mind) is very difficult to attain, says Krishna.

Lord Krishna says no man can ever think of Naishkarmyam (freedom from action or inaction) without entering upon action itself (na karmana anarambhan). God states that by the very nature of human beings, they cannot but be doing something or other. A man who overtly restrains all activity, but is deeply brooding over objects of the senses covertly, inwardly, is a hypocrite (mithyacara) indeed. On the other hand, he who has controlled his senses, he truly excels (sa visishyate). It is strictly enjoined in the Gita that everyone should perform his allotted work. Desisting from action no man can retain his body even. Inaction is suicidal. Action is better than inaction-Niyatam kuru Karma tvam, Karma jyaho hy akarmaanah V-8.

But man should do his work in a spirit of detachment and as a sacrifice-Mukta Sangah Samacara. Doing work without the strings of attachment, man attains the supreme-Asakto hi acaran Karma param apnoti purushah-III-19. Even God cannot abstain from His work as otherwise the world would fall into ruin and God himself would be responsible for disorder and destruction-III-22-24. Krishna says in III-25, just as the foolish act with strong attachments,

the wise should act with a spirit of detachment just for the sake of maintaining the world-order. Vedic sacrifices are to be performed for the sake of maintaining the Rita, the cosmic order. Man should help in keeping the wheel going, set in motion by the Vedas. At the same time Krishna decries the performance of Vedic rituals that lead only to the enjoyment of pleasures and power by individuals. The Gita does not advocate the Karmakhaṇḍa of the Vedas based on Ishtapurtam, fulfilment of ordinary mundane desires. The Veda-vadarataḥ, those who rejoice in the letter of the Veda, they deeply wallow in desires and pleasures of the world. Krishna advises Arjuna (II-45), not to attach much importance to that aspect of the Vedas that deals with the three gunas or modes of prakṛiti and their evolutes in the form of worldly enjoyments and also the means of attaining such enjoyments. The Vedas in this sense are meant for the Kamatmanah (the empirical hedonists), who have a desire for returns and recompense either in a temporary heaven or in a subsequent embodied life-Kamatmanah, Svargapara Jnanakarmaphalapradam, Kriyavisheshabhutam, Bhogaisvaryagatim prati-II-43. He asks him to rise above the pairs of opposites like pleasures and pains and be firmly established in the eternal existence, (Nityasattvastho) namely of God-Traigunyahavishaya veda, nistraigunyo bhava Arjuna-Be rid of the association of the three gunas of prakṛiti, the hall mark of the vedas. The Gita asks men to renounce all selfish desires and dedicate their entire living as a sacrifice to

God. The same idea is expressed in the Mundaka I-2-10. Isa 9-12 and Katha II-5 Upanishads.

The Gospel of action, Karma marga or Karma-yoga in the Gita is Nishkama Karma-disinterested action. It is a golden mean between pravritti, selfish activity on the one side and Nivritti, absence of activity, Naishkarmya on the other side. Action and inaction—renunciation of action are both well balanced and blended in a happy compromise. The Gita denounces 'Renunciation of Action' outright, and upholds 'Renunciation in action'. Krishna says "Do your duties sincerely and never bother about the results. Do your duties for duty's sake. He who works (does his duties) worships me". Honest work is worship. This is called "Anasakti Yoga" by Gandhiji. It is the wisdom of the Yoga, the wisdom of action. Krishna calls it the Buddhi Yoga.

Krishna says 'your responsibility is to do your duty—Karmanyeva adhikaraste—but never to the fruits of your work there of. Let not the fruit of action be your object—Ma karma phala hetur bhur—Nor let your attachment be to inaction'—II-47. "Do your duties fixed in yoga, relinquishing attachment (Sangamtya-ktva). Treat alike Siddhi and Asiddhi, success and failure. Evenness of mind (equanimity of temper) is called yoga—Samatvam yogamucyate" II-48. Krishna thus enjoins Arjuna to seek refuge in Buddhiyoga. He says, action with a selfish motive is invariably inferior to Buddhiyoga, Anasaktiyoga, Nishkamakarma. Those who seek for the fruits of their actions are the most

vulgar and wretched-Kripanah phalahetavah-II-49.

Krishna defines Yoga in very simple terms as "Skill in action". He says mysterious are the ways of action-Gahana karmano gatih-IV-17. Three things are to be known about action.

- i. The truth about actions to be performed—
Karmanah.
- ii. The truth about actions not to be performed—
vikarmanah.
- iii. The truth about inactions-Akarmanah.

He is wise and a yogi who has accomplished all actions, who sees action in inaction and inaction in action. He whose undertakings are all devoid of desires and thoughts of the world, whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom (Jnanagnidagdhakarmanam), who has completely given up attachments to actions and their fruits, who is ever content within himself (nityatripto) and who is not dependent on anything of this world (nirasrayah), such a person is always satisfied with himself and though he may be engaged in actions always, he truly DOES NOTHING AT ALL.

The Gita points out with emphasis that the self is not the DOER. Only a fool in delusion declares himself to be the DOER. All actions are being done by the modes of Prakriti—prakriteh kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvasah. It is the BUDDHI, one of the 24 cosmic principles evolved from prakriti that is either bound or released, not the purusha or the soul. Purusha, the soul is inactive, passive, a witness only. The

self or Soul is definitely superior to Buddhi. Buddhi is the driver of the chariot of the body drawn by the horses of the senses which are controlled by the reins of the mind (Manas). If this Buddhi is enlightened by the consciousness of the self, if the self is rightly reflected in Buddhi and if the mind or the manas instead of being united to the senses, is properly guided by Buddhi, that is the Right Buddhi yoga, quite effective to procure release.

Every sense of attachment and aversion is rooted in sense objects. The enemy of man is craving (desires) and wrath—Kama esha, Krodha esha, born of passion (Rajoguna samudbhavah)—III-37. Just as fire is enveloped by smoke, just as a mirror is covered by dust or an embryo by the amnion, so also wisdom is enveloped by desires. Krishna enjoins Arjuna to control the senses first and then kill the wicked desire that obscures both Jnana and Vijnana, both transcendental and empirical knowledge. The senses themselves may be great; but greater than them, is the Mind or Manas, and greater than that is the Buddhi, intelligence. But greater than the intelligence is He—yo buddeh parastah tu sah—"Knowing that Supreme God, smite the enemy of Desire in you—Jahi satrum kamarupam durasadam"—says Krishna III-43.

Thus the wise man who has crossed the mire of delusion and attained Buddhiyoga becomes completely indifferent to what has been heard and yet to be heard about this world and the next II-52. He gets

an insight into true yoga. To such a person the Vedic rituals are useless. "Of what use is a pond in a place flooded with waters all around?" asks Krishna. Endowed with Equanimity and renouncing the fruits of actions, a Karma yogi becomes free from the shackles of birth and death and attains the blissful supreme state II-51.

In the concluding chapter of the Gita it is clearly stated that it is physically impossible for anybody to abstain from all activity altogether. But he who gives up the fruits of action, he is truly a Tyagi, a relinquisher

Yastu karmaphalatyagi

Sa tyagi iti abhidhiyate

so renunciation is to be practised not towards work, but to the fruits of work. Renunciation, Samnyasa means giving up of works prompted by desire-kamyam karmanam nyasam. Relinquishment, Tyagam is just the abandonment of the fruits of all works-Sarva-karma phalatyagam.

In the Gita it is once again clearly stated in the last chapter that there are 5 factors needed for the accomplishment of actions, such as the agent, the instruments etc., in terms of the Samkhya doctrine. But the most important of the five is the blessings of God called DAIVAM, providence. So Krishna says that anybody who thinks that he is entirely responsible himself for whatever he does, he verily does not see.

XVIII-6

The best way of worshipping God, (the person from whom all beings arise and by whom all this Universe is pervaded) says Krishna, is for everyone to do his duty best. Every one born has his allotted duties to be performed, determined by one's nature (Svabhava) and one's station in society (Svadharmā) — There are the different classes of people by birth and by profession. Each has his apportioned work according to his post. That is his Sva-dharma. However defective it may be and though not to one's liking or expectations, one should never give up one's Sva-dharma says, Krishna. Sva-dharma however imperfectly carried out, is invariably desirable and better to oneself than paradharma (conduct or profession alien to oneself) however satisfactorily one may be able to carry it out. As we cannot do away with fire merely because it is usually clouded by smoke, so also we cannot walk over our svadharmā merely because it is not to our liking or profitable. XVIII-48. No man can incur a sin when he is doing a duty in conformity with his inborn or inherent nature (svadharmā).

Finally the question is raised in the final chapter of the Gita as to who is the true Karma-yogi that is qualified for absolute perfection. He who has given up all desires (Vigatasprīhah), who has conquered his own self (jitatma), who has attained Naishkarmya-siddhim (attained perfection by surrendering all fruits of his actions to God), he who is endowed with a clear understanding casting off all attractions and aversions of the

senses, who has complete control over his body, mind and the senses and who is always absorbed in meditation (dhyānāyogaparonityam), he who has acquired inward peace and poise by getting rid of the self-sense (ahamkāra), pride, lust, and such others, such a person is worthy of **becoming one with Brahman**. Such a person neither grieves nor desires—na socati, na kankshati. Krishna declares, 'He who knows the truth, he forthwith enters into Me' XVIII-55. Such a Karma-yogi who has taken complete shelter in God, although he is still in harness doing every one of his duties, he attains to the highest state of Divine Bliss, the Grace of God that is eternal and imperishable—Sasvatam padam avyayam XVIII-56.

Thus Krishna enjoins on his devotees to have Buddhiyoga, to mentally surrender all actions to God and fix all thoughts on God and God alone.

THE STHITAPRAJNA AND HIS CHARACTERISTICS:

In the second chapter of the Gita, a sthitaprajna is defined and described. He is a person of stable intelligence, a sthitaprajna, who has abandoned all cravings and is happy within himself—atmany eva atmana tushtah 11.55. He who remains unperturbed amidst sorrows (dukheshu anudvigna manah) and whose thirst for pleasures has completely disappeared (sukheshu vigatasprihah) in whom passion, fear and rage have disappeared (vitaraga bhayakrodhah), is called

a sage of settled intelligence—sthitadhih. He who is unattached to everything (sarvatra anabhisnehah), who neither rejoices in the pleasant and the good nor loathes the unpleasant and the evil, such a person has his mind well settled—tasya prajna pratishthita—11-57. A sthitaprajna withdraws from the objects of the senses like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs. His senses will be under firm control.

On the contrary, a man always dwelling on sense objects, gets attachment to the senses. From attachment springs desires. From desires (unfulfilled) springs anger. From anger arises infatuation, from infatuation confusion and bewilderment, from confusion loss of reason and from loss of reason, perdition.

11-62-63

But a person who has a disciplined mind (bereft of raga and dvesha, love and hate) though enjoying the sense objects is free from attachment and aversion. When he attains such a state of purity of heart, there is an end to sorrows for him.

He who has not disciplined his mind and controlled his senses, has no power of concentration, no bhavana. Absence of bhavana means no peace, no santi. He who has no peace of mind how can he have happiness? Asantasya kutah sukham? 11-66.

When the mind runs after the roving senses, it carries away with it the understanding also, even as a gale carries away a ship on the waters. So it is only he who has withdrawn his senses from their objects of

pursuit that has his mind well set.

What is night and darkness to all existences it is day and sunshine for the self-controlled. That time when all beings actually keep awake, is the night to the seer as he is on the reverse gear of the senses. The man who hankers after sense pleasures (kamakami) has no peace, as a sthitaprajna always remains calm in spite of insurging pleasures. Even when all the waters rush into the ocean, the ocean remains calm on all its fringes. So also a sthitaprajna 11-70. He has abandoned all desires, is free from attachment, egotism and thirst for enjoyment; he has attained peace. Such a God — realised soul is always in divine transcendence — Brahmi sthitah. He has attained Brahma nirvana, Brahma Bliss. Thus a sthitaprajna is none other than a jivanmukta of the later Advaita Vedanta, a soul realised of Brahman while yet in the mortal coil of a corporeal body.

JNANAMARGA - THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH;

“Nahi Jnanena sadrisam

Pavitram iha vidyate” IV-38

There is nothing sacred, similar to knowledge. Lord Krishna says “for him whose delight is in the self or Atman alone, there exists no work to be done—tasya karyam na vidyate” III-17. The Jnanamarga is the path of absolute and outright renunciation of action and resorting to pure wisdom, Jnana. At the same time Krishna points out that wisdom is the outcome of works,

the resultant of disinterested action, of Karmayoga. It is precisely stated in chapter 5 that without Karma yoga, Samkhya yoga, the pathway of knowledge (Renunciation of doership in relation to all the activities of the senses, the body and the mind) is very difficult to attain. Karmayoga, Buddhiyoga is said to be the only preface and preamble to Jananayoga. The Karmayogi, though performing actions is immune and impervious to activity as he has subdued his senses, conquered his mind and has identified himself with the self of all other beings.

He who is firmly established in the knowledge of God (Jnanavasthita cetasaḥ) who views the sacrifice as Brahman, the ladle as Brahman, the oblation as Brahman, even the act of pouring into the fire as Brahman and himself the sacrificer as also Brahman, sees all existence without exception in the self itself, such a person will never again fall into confusion. He will cross over all sins by the raft of Knowledge IV-36. Just as fire reduces the fuel to ashes, even so the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes—*Jñānagnih sarva karmāṇi bhasmasat kurute tatha*. Having fully controlled his senses, being devoted to spiritual practice and full of faith, he will have attained purity of heart through karma yoga. He will realise everything in his own self. Having attained knowledge he attains peace and supreme bliss — *Jñānam labdhva param santim adigacchati* IV-39. He on the other hand who doubts through lack of discrimination and

faith, he is ruined. There is no happiness for him either in this world or in the here-after—*Sam-sayatma vinasyati IV-40*. He who has his doubts dispelled by wisdom, who has cut asunder his doubt within his heart by the sword of wisdom, who has dedicated all his deeds to God in the true spirit of *Karmayoga*, he is truly saved because works do not bind him. Though he acts, he remains untouched by sin as the lotus leaf by water — *lipyate na sa papena padmapatram iva ambhasi—V-10*. He does his works without any sense of attachment simply for the sake of self-purification (*atmasuddhaye*). Dedicating all the fruits of actions to God he attains peace in the shape of God-realisation. He therefore does nothing himself in a sense and gets nothing done by others. He rests happily in God, mentally relegating all his actions to his body, the city of nine gates. Nature, *prakriti* does everything in his opinion. He has destroyed the ignorance within himself, and the sun of wisdom within him shines forth. He has realised the supreme within and there is no return to *samsarā* *V-17*.

Such men of wisdom are established in Brahman —*Brahmani te sthitah*. They see Brahman everywhere and in everything. To them all are equal, the same, one and only one, whether a brahmin learned and cultured, a cow, an elephant a dog or even an outcaste —*panditah sama darsinah*. While yet living, they are established in the eternal, because they have the **RIGHT VIEW**. Such a *Jivanmukta* is unattached to

external things, pleasures or pains because he is inwardly identified with Brahman V. 20-21. He has eternal bliss. He has no contact with the pleasures of the senses that have both a beginning and an end.

The Sthitaprajna is happy within himself, enjoys the delight of his own inner self under the warmth of INNER LIGHT (antar jyotih). Such a Sankhya yogi will have attained BRAHMA NIRVANAM, identity within himself of Atman and Brahman. V-24.

Such a holy man of wisdom whose doubts are dispelled, whose sins are destroyed, whose mind is disciplined, does always good to all creatures and attains to the Beatitude of God (Brahma Nirvanam). Desires and anger have no hold on him because he has conquered his mind and thus has obtained the knowledge of the self (viditatmanam).

Such a man of wisdom who knows that God himself is the sacrifice and the austerities, the Lord of all the worlds and the friend of all beings, he is given to concentration, meditation and thereby to peace and Bliss.

Shutting out all sense contacts, fixing the vision between the eyebrows, controlling the inhalations and exhalations in even tides through the nostrils, he disciplines the senses, the mind and the understanding. He has cast away all desires, fear and anger too. He is really free and thereby he is freed.

Thus the truth of Yoga is the yoga of meditation. Renunciation and action are one. He is truly a

sanyasin who does his duties and discharges his obligations without in the least expecting the fruits of his actions. He is both a Samkhya yogi and a Karma yogi. He is no yogi who has merely renounced the sacred fire and given up all activities.

No man can be a yogi if he has not renounced the thoughts of the world. For an ordinary yogi who desires to rise to the heights of Karma yoga (in the form of equanimity) actions should be without motives. One must cease to have any attachments to the objects of the senses and to the thoughts of the world.

One's own self is both a friend and a foe to oneself. He who has conquered his lower self (comprising the senses, the body and the manas) by his higher self, he is wise. He who has allowed his lower self to dominate over his higher self, he is useless. One should therefore lift oneself up by one's own efforts. One should not degrade oneself. VI 5-6.

He in whom the knowledge of the supreme spirit is firmly established, who is completely controlled within himself, who is perfectly unperturbed by pairs of opposites such as cold and heat, joy and sorrow, honour and ignominy, whose mind is seated both in Jnana (knowledge of the Nirguna Brahman) and Vijnana (knowledge of manifest divinity), who is the same under any varied circumstances, and to whom a clod of earth, a piece of stone or a nugget of gold makes no difference, such a person is truly a God—realised Soul.

Such a yogi treats friends and foes, the virtuous and the sinners all alike. Such a yogi freed from all possessions and passions lives in seclusion and is always engaged in meditation. Such a Yogi controlling the functions of the mind and the body, practises yoga for self-purification. Thus under complete self-control and free from yearning for the pleasures and enjoyments of the world, he concentrates on God and thus establishes himself in Yoga.

Like the flame of a lamp protected from wind, his subdued mind is well sheltered in God. His soul rejoices in God and his Supreme Bliss—Atmana atman pasyan tushyati. He realises God through subtle reason and his soul thus rejoices in God. His mind thus established, he moves not from truth. That is true yoga free from all contacts of pain.

Completely giving up all desires, restraining the senses and subduing the mind, the yogi gradually attains tranquility. Having thus established the mind in God through steadfast reason and meditation, he obtains perfect calm and identifies himself with Brahman. To such a person supreme happiness comes of its own accord and as a matter of course.

Such a Jnanayogin who is himself in identity with Brahman sees the entire Universe within himself and himself in everything—

Sarvabhutastham atmanam

Sarvabhutanica atmani

Ikshate yogayuktatama

Sarvatra samadarsanah. VI — 29

Krishna 'says such a yogi who sees ME (God) present in all beings and all beings present in ME (Yomam pasyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi pasyati), dwells in me' — VI — 30. 'He who looks on all as one on the analogy of his own self—yah atmaupamyena sarvatra saman pasyati—and looks upon the pleasure and pain of all with a similar eye', such a yogi is Supreme.

Finally Krishna proclaims—"Of all Yogins, he who worships me with his inner self full of faith (Madgatena antaratma sraddhavan yo mam bhajate), he is the most attuned to me (Yuktatma). The lover of God is the dearest to God VI—47. This takes us on to the third pathway of salvation, the Gospel of Bhakti.

BHAKTI MARGA: THE GOSPEL OF LOVE.

This is the path of devotion - 'He who love ME truly worships me' says God. Of the three roads to God, this is the shortest and straightest. The only qualification for the journeyman is intense faith, trust and love in God. This is the public thoroughfare open to all. It requires no money, no knowledge and no efforts. The only requirement is a simple heart.

God is LOVE, Sarangatavatsala. He who surrenders to the will of God (the Saranagata) is the greatest lover of God. Nothing is so powerful as love and nothing is as quick and efficient as love. To love

God is therefore to live with God.

In chap. 18, as a final advice, Lord Krishna gives the message to man in the form of Arjuna—

“Fix thy mind on ME,

Be devoted to ME,

Dedicate everything to ME,

Surrender completely to ME” XVIII-65:

‘If you so come to me, you are dear to me; I shall promise you complete PEACE and absolute salvation.’ God gives the promise to man, that if he abandons all duties and goes to Him and Him alone for shelter, he will be rid of all worries and evils.

“Sarva dharman parityajya

Mam ekam Saranam Vraja,

Aham tvā sarvapapebhyo

Moksha ishyami ma sucah” XVIII-66.

Krishna advises his devotees to have Buddhiyoga, to mentally surrender all actions to God and to fix all thoughts on God and God alone. Man is advised to flee to God and seek shelter in Him. God who abides in the hearts of all beings (Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese tishthati). It is by the GRACE of God that man attains Supreme Bliss and eternal peace.

“Tam eva saranam gaccha

Sarva bhavena bharata

Tat prasadat param santim

Sthanam prapsyasi sasvatam XVIII-62.

Krishna tells Arjuna that it is only through Love and devotion that one can have the mystical vision of God

— ‘I am not available to anybody like this except the devoted’ Bhaktya to ananyaya sakya aham evam vidho’rjuna’ — God is all love for those who seek His Grace and succour. He is like a father to his son, like a friend to a friend, like a lover to his beloved—piteva putrasya, sakheva sakhyuh, priyah pariyaya—XI-44.

The concepts of Bhakti (Love and devotion to God) and prapatti (absolute surrender to the will of God and His Grace) take for granted the fatherhood of God as the supreme person, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, the acme and sublimation of all the cherished values on earth such as Truth, Beauty and goodness and also as the repository of all mercy, kindness and benevolence, always beaming out with His Grace. This God is very sensitive to the cry of a sincere soul and very sentimental too in his Grace. He is a good shepherd too. The errant souls, He weans them back to the fold. “Even if a man of loathsome behaviour worships ME with the Excellence of exclusive devotion, he must be esteemed as righteous as after all he has finally determined on the right resolution’ says Krishna. A saved sinner is surely resurrected and obtains lasting peace—‘Name Bhaktah pranasyati—My Devotee shall never perish’ announces Krishna—IX-30-31.’ “I am equally present in all beings. None is hateful to me, none dear to me. He who devoutly worships me, he abides in ME and I stand revealed to him”—God hates none and is keen to help all whether of the lowly born or of the vilest conduct, if only they

approach Him and seek shelter in Him. "Those who seek refuge in ME, they attain to the highest" — IX-32. Even if a man thinks of God for the first time at the final hour of death and departure from the body, he is assured of His Grace and salvation — God says "He attains ME — Madbhavam yati — na atra samsayah. There is no doubt about this" — VIII-5. (Incidentally it is mentioned in VIII-6 that whatever form a man thinks of at the time of death, that he becomes). He who concentrates on God with all Yogic restraint and utters the Syllable AUM remembering Him (God) as he departs, he surely reaches the highest goal.

The entire poem of the Bhagavadgita is an anthem of Bhakti. What God wants from man is his love to Him, his surrender to Him and his service to Him. It is only from the Love of God that the knowledge of God arises. Unless man has the love of God, he can never know God and His greatness and grace. "Through devotion he becomes aware of ME, takes measure and having known ME in truth, he enters into ME" XVIII — 55. He who works for God's sake, he who looks upon God as his goal, he who worships Him free from attachment and he who is free from all enmity to all created beings, he does really attain His Grace. XI-55 He reaches the end of the journey. He has no return, no rebirth and death. He dwells in God, completely rid of birth and death.

From the level of Brahman downwards all worlds are subject to rebirth and return. A disciplined yogi,

always thinking of God easily reaches Him. On reaching God there cannot be any return for the Soul.

Avyakto' akshara iti uktah

Tam ahuh paramam gatim

yam prapya na nivartante

Tad dhama paramam mama

VIII-21

That supreme person in whom all existences abide and by whom all this is pervaded can be gained by unswerving devotion. He cannot be approached by any means other than Bhakti (Love and devotion).

Purushah sa parah partha

Bhaktya labhyah tu ananyaya

VIII-22

THE ROADS TAKEN BY THE DEPARTING SOULS

Reference is made to the two pathways the Souls take after the death of the body, the one by which departing they return and the other by which departing they don't return.

Avrittim and Anavrittim—the same as referred to in the Upanishads as the Dhumamarga and the Archira marga. These two paths are also called sukla-krishne gatih—The Sukla gatih, 'the white road' is marked by the brilliance of fire (agnirjyotih). It is the road for the good souls that have no return. The Krishnagati, 'the black road' is marked by the Smokes of darkness (dhumoratrih). It is the road for the ordinary souls that traverse frequently back and forth. Both the roads are said to be eternal.

If a yogi is aware of these two paths, he does not get deluded. Knowing the secret he transcends the scriptures, the sacrifices, the rewards promised in the scriptures, the performance of austerities and charities, becomes established in yoga and attains param santi, absolute bliss and eternal Peace.

HOW TO GO BY THE WHITE ROAD?

The Gita recognises the three fundamental aspects of the human personality, namely cognition, affection and conation, thought, feeling and will (action), the intellectual, emotional and practical moods of men representing the head, heart and hands, and suggests the famous three yogas namely, those of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma. By any one of these it is said man can prepare himself to go by the white road to salvation.

Karmayoga underlines the performance of one's duties without the least regards for the fruits. It is service with the spirit of dedication to God. Jnana yoga is Brahmanirvana, knowing the identity within oneself of Atman and Brahman. It is beholding the self is the self by the self itself through meditation. Bhaktiyoga is surrender to the will of God through Love and devotion.

He who loves God sincerely, begins to know God and having known that God is all, he dedicates everything to God. He develops the spirit of renuncia-

tion in action and does service both to man and God. He in the ideal man of the Gita, the sthitaprajna. He is the master of Buddhi yoga according to the Gita.

As opposed to the sthitaprajna, the prototype of sattvic traits, of divine nature, there are the men of the demoniac type, of the Asuri type, who do not know the distinction between pravritti, right activity and Nivritti, the right cessation of activity. They often say that the world is altogether false and without any foundation (asatyam and apratishtitam), that there is no God (anisvaram) and that it is not at all the result of any causal sequence and consequences. They invariably hold the wrong view and are full of hypocrisy and excessive pride. Bound by hundreds of desires, deeply immersed in anger and lust, they amass wealth by foul means, just to cater to their sensual indulgences. Lord Krishna says 'these malicious people absorbed in self-conceit, power and pride, wallowing in anger and lust, they insult ME who is dwelling in them and also other bodies'. XVI-18. God says HE hurls them into the wombs of the vulgar in births and deaths. He incidentally mentions that the gateway to hell (leading to the ruin of the soul) is threefold Lust, Anger and Greed.

The wise man who avoids these three pathways to darkness (tamo-dvarah) reaches the highest state (tato yati param gatim). But he who ignores the injunctions laid down by the scriptures (sastravidhim) and is carried away by his desires, he will have neither

attainment (Siddhi) nor happiness (Sukham) nor the highest goal (param gati).

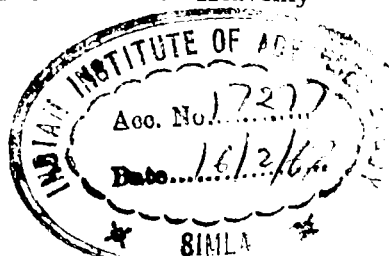
THE IDEAL OF MOKSHA (Salvation) IN THE GITA

As already stated, the Gita admits of both the acosmic and the cosmic conceptions of Brahman as in the upanishads. The emphasis of the Gita is of course on cosmism. The context of the Mahabharata and the message of the Gita themselves provide ample circumstantial evidence towards that end. At the same time Acosmism and the ideal of salvation in terms of Acosmism that smack of spiritual Aloofness—the Kaivalya of Samkhya, are not altogether given up. Particularly on the lines of Jnanayoga, the gospel of truth and the path of enlightenment, Moksha is said to be Brahmanirvana, being absorbed in Brahman, Brahmisthiti, being in Brahman, Brahmabhava, being Brahman, etc.

The Goal of the journey for the Soul according to Acosmism is absorption and obliteration in the Nirguna Brahman, in the Absolute. But the Gita is not very clear on this point. The ideal condition for the soul is simply described in connotative terms such as Nistraigunya (estrangement from the three gunas of prakriti), perfection (Siddhi), Supreme perfection (para siddhi), Santi (quietitude), absolute peace (param santim) the supreme goal (parama gati), the blissful seat (padam anamayam), the eternal indestructible abode (sasvatam padam avyayam) etc., etc.

But the Gita is out and out theistic. Both the Immanence and Transcendence of God are clearly brought about. God is defined as Saguna Brahman in the form of Krishna himself as an Avatar, as an Incarnation. All His magnificent qualities are described by Arjuna as seen by him in the mystic vision. The ideal of the soul is just to reach the presence of God the Supreme Person, the father of the Universe and stay there for ever in peaceful bliss. There is no return for the soul, when once the end of the journey is reached namely God and His Abode—"Nivasasyasi mayyeva-You dwell in me alone"-that is the wish and promise of God. That means the individuality of the Soul is maintained in the ultimate state. The freed soul is in constant union with God-Nitya yukta. Not that the individual soul in the exalted state becomes God himself, but that it just attains sameness of essence with God. That is the meaning of the later Vedantic epithet of "Sarupya" as given by Ramanuja and Madhva. In the immediate vicinity of God (Sannidhya and Samipya as the theistic Vedantins say), the Soul maintains its conscious individuality, though in constant contact with God (Sayujya as the vedantins say).

Thus salvation, Moksha in the Gita simply means return of the soul once for all to its original abode, namely the presence of God in His Heavenly Abode.



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