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Notes

Hinduism

"It is not Hinduism which I certainly prize above an other religion, but the religion that transcends Hinduism which changes one's very nature, binds one indissolubly to the truth within and ever purifics."

-M.K. Gandhi

Concept of Hinduism

Hinduism is an ancient Arya-dharma of Hindus. When the Persian invaders came to the north-west of India they found the river 'Sindhu', on whose banks descendants of the Aryan Rishis (saints) used to live In Persian the sound of 'S' is pronounced 'H'. Instead of the river Sindhu they called it as 'Hindu'. Afterwards these people who lived on the banks of the river Sindhu, were known as Hindus, and their land was called Hindustan and their religion as Hinduism.

Philosophy of Hinduism

God: Monotheism

From the philosophical standpoint, Hinduism is non-dualistic, and from the religious standpoint monotheistic. The Hindu philosophy asserts the essential non-duality of God, soul and universe, the apparent distinctions being created by names and forms only. But as we believe in ultimate reality so all these apparent distinctions are due to our ignorance.

Although Hinduism accepts large numbers of familiar divinities, in reality it regards them as diverse manifestations of the one God. The Hindu Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva represents the three aspects of Godhead which control the process of creation, preservation and destruction, respectively.

However, Hindu monotheism does not discard the various deities of the different faiths and cults but includes them as the manifestations of the One.

God of Hindus has been described as omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, infinite, all merciful and impersonally personal. His spirit pervades the whole universe. He is beyond all forms and names. He is the soul of our souls, in Him we live, through Him we exist, and without Him there cannot be anything (Upanishad). We worship different deities to concentrate our mind and to have their divine nature with us. The different idols are the symbols of the Divine energy or of the attributes of God, which become hard to grasp without some outward form. Vedanta does not teach the worship of many gods, but of one God who is called by many names and appears in any form in accordance with the desires of the worshippers. Thousands of names are given to that supreme Being who is nameless and formless. He is not extra-cosmic, but intra-cosmic, and is immanent as well as transcendent. He appears as with form to a dualist and without form to a non-dualist. He is one, yet His aspects are many. He is personal, impersonal, and beyond both.

Sanatana Dharma

Hinduism is considered as the Sanatana (eternal) Dharma. It is Eternal because God is only real and He is Eternal. This ultimate Reality which is all pervading is the efficient and material cause of the universe. The human soul is divine and

the entire universe is a manifestation of the Supreme Spirit. God is within us, but due to our ignorance every man is having his religion. Therefore, the religion of man is called the Manava Dharma. This Manava Dharma is Sanatana Dharma or Eternal religion. Being a Hindu one can remain away from his religion but he cannot leave the Manava Dharma.

This Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism does not believe in a certain set of dogmas or creeds but it believes in the attainment of God consciousness through spiritual unfoldment. It is being and becoming God. It is being and becoming the Hinduism is Sanatana because, the God being the central pivot of religion, is eternal.

Soul in Hinduism

Hinduism does not impose blind faith on anyone. It does not shut out inquiry ; on the other hand, it stimulates inquiry absolutely free from prejudice and prepossessions. Religion of Vedanta may be called the science of the soul. As modern science does not deal with dogmas and does not insist upon belief in the authority of any person or book, but depends entirely upon correct observation and experience of the facts of nature to discover the laws which govern the phenomena of the universe, Hinduism or Vedanta does not deal with dogmas or creeds but explains, through logic and reason, the true nature of the soul. It is stated in the Upanishad that "This Atman should be heard about, reflected upon and under stood". This science of soul discusses such questions as whether or not the soul can exist independently of the body, whether or not it existed before the present birth. Is it free or bound ? Thus it is concerned about the immortality of soul, freedom of will and bondage, law of karma etc. Vedanta philosophy admits the existence of a multitude of individual souls, called Jivatmas, and distinguishes these from the Supreme Soul. and form.

The Upanishads speak of two souls, namely the real soul and apparent soul. The real soul is not attached to the world. It is without body and form, beyond pain and pleasure, whereas the apparent soul is attached to the world. It is with body It experiences pain and pleasure as a result of its own actions, good or bad. When the apparent soul realises its oneness of the two souls, its grief or bondage passes away. This oneness of the two souls has been stated by such Vedic statements as that thou art ; 'This self is Brahman'; 'I am He.

Hinduism admits the reality of the Jiva or the embodied individual in the relative state. It holds that after death the soul assumes a new body and that this rebirth is governed by the law of karma. The doctrine of rebirth, based upon the law of cause and effect, is the most plausible of all the speculations regarding the nature of the soul and its actions after death. The human soul undergoes many a cycle of birth and death according to its deeds. According to Vedas, man in his life has to suffer the consequences of the actions of his previous life.

Hinduism divides the karma into (a) those which have not yet begun to bear fruits (ararabdha karma) and which have already begun to bear fruit (prarabdha karma). Prarabdha karma is again subdivided into two classes-(a) sanchita karma i.e. karma accumulated from past lives, and (b) kriyamana or sanchiyamana karma i.e. karmas that are being gathered in this life. A soul is born again and again high or low, depending upon the merit or demerit of its action. Only liberated soul does not take any physical form.

The embodiment of the self is apparent and not real.

Therefore its birth and death are also apparent only. After the attainment of the self knowledge, the jivatma realises him self to be Brahman, infinite and all pervading. A knower of atman is called jivanmukta. He is free from bondage and sufferings. Death has no terror for a free soul, because a mere change of body is like a change of garments. A free soul while living in the body, may experience disease, old age, or decay; may feel hunger, thirst and grief, but having realised that these are the characteristics of the body, the mind or the senses, he does not take them seriously and so is not over whelmed by them. A free soul lives, thinks and works under the spell of immortality.

Scriptures in Hinduism

Of all the living religions, Hinduism is the most ancient. It was not founded by any individual prophet and is not composed of the teachings of any particular group. The scriptures are the fountainheads of Hinduism. Hindu scriptures can be classified under six heads : (1) Shrutis, (2) Smritis, (3) Itihasas, (4) Puranas, (5) Agamas, and (6) Darshanas.

"Shrutis' literally mean that which is heard. The great sages heard and experienced the eternal truths and recorded their experiences for the benefit of people. These constitute the four Vedas. The truth of the Vedas are revelations. They are the most authoritative sources of religion.

The 'Smritis' literally mean that which is remembered. They stand next in importance to Shrutis. Smritis are founded on the teachings of the Vedas. They explain and elucidate religious obligations. They form parts of the code of laws which guide the individuals, families and communities in their daily conduct, their manners and customs.

The Itihasa (histories) are the two well known epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. They contain living stories of absorbing interest through which the fundamental teachings of Hinduism are impressed upon the minds of the common people. The philosophical essences are presented through analogies and parables.

The Puranas are of the same class as Itihasas. They were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. The aim of Puranas is to give a concrete form to the teachings of the Vedas, by means of myths, stories, legends and the lives of saints and kings through allegories. The present religion in concrete form. There are eighteen Puranas of which the Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana are the most popular.

An other class of popular scriptures is Agamas. Though they do not derive their authority from the Vedas they are not antagonistic to their teachings. They are theological treatises and manuals of worship. The three chief sects, Sshivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism base their doctrines and dogmas on the Agamas.

There are six Darshanas. Darshana literally means light or vision. All these Shad-darshanas are (i) Nyaya, (ii) Vaisheshika, (iii) Samkhya, (iv) Yoga, (v) Mimamsa, (vi) Vedanta. Each Darshana prescribes a way of looking at truth. They are treated as the way of life and form of life.

Mainly Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad-gita and Shad darshanas are the fundamental scriptures and great storehouse of Hindu philosophy.

The Philosophy of Vedas

Hindu thought and philosophy from the period of the Rig Veda till our own times has adhered to the view that "ananta vai vedah endless are the Vedas. In the words of Wilson, an eminent Western scholar "The Vedas give us abundant information respecting all that is more interesting in the contemplation of antiquity"

There are four Vedas viz. Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. Prof. Max Muller says, the Rig Veda is the most ancient book in the world. Again each Veda consists of three parts known as (1) Mantras. (2) Brahmanas. (3) Upanishads. Out of four Vedas Rig Veda is chief among them. The Vedas have some philosophical interpretations, viz. :

(1) Natural Aspect : Vedic hymns, prayers to different gods, are the repositories of primitive religion. Some of the rituals (karma) of Veda are connected with the nature worship. The main Gods of the Rig Veda were the great powers of nature that affect human welfare. The Atharva-veda, appears to be a collection of primitive charms and magic formulas. In the Rig Veda people can make sacrifice to gods for the high degree of perfection. It provides music, dance, drink (soma), favourite food (including flesh) to the deity.

The Vedic Aryans worshipped many gods, viz., Indra, Agni, Soma and others. The three gods again were multiplied into thirty three. Agni is the fire God. It is this fire or light without which creation is not possible. More than two hundred hymns are dedicated to him. Offerings to fire implies removal of evil influences. This Agni lights our way, warms our bodies and hearts, cooks our foods, protects us from enemies, gives us vision and insight. Indra is the most important God of the Rig-veda. He is the king of all gods.

He appears primarily as the god of rain. About one fourth of hymns of the Rig Veda are addressed to Indra. One hundred and fourteen hymns are dedicated to Soma. Soma is personified as a deity of power and valour. All primitive people used to take this soma drink and worship this deity.

(ii) Ritual aspect: This is a practical aspects of Vedas and Hindu religion. The aim of the religious side of the Vedic ritual is to enlist the goodwill of divine powers by prayers and sacrifices, so as to fulfil the wish of the worshipper. In the Rig Veda Samhita some hymns are definitely intended for the destruction of rivals, agricultural operations, and sacrificial chants to Agni and Soma. The Atharva-veda is the chief source of our knowledge of popular magic, hypnotism, black magic and for the safety of life, etc. In the Atharva-veda Samhita there are some marriage-hymns; hymns and verses connected with the ritual of the dead, hymns dealing with the soma sacrifice, etc. A few hymns of the Atharva-veda with theosophy and cosmogonic contents often serve practical ritual aims. The Sama-veda and the Yajurveda Samhitas may well be called 'liturgical or ritual' samhitas because the songs, the mantras, and the sacred hymns are arranged here in the order of their employment at the sacrifice and because each one of them is assigned to a special category of priests. The samhitas of the Yajur Veda contain liturgical stanzas and formulas are preserved in two main branches called krishna (black) and shukla (white). The worship of each god has some specific rituals.

(iii) The monistic aspect: Various theories have been put forward in modern times by scholars regarding the problem of Gods in the Vedas. It is held that in the Veda, there is a progression from a multitude of Gods to a single God and then to a unity of the world (polytheism to monotheism and then to monism) Max Muller who made an attempt to study the nature of Gods in Vedas, could not find an appropriate term that would fit into the nature of God. In the Vedas there are many gods and practically every one of them is described as the 'one God and the 'Supreme God' when that god is worshipped. Max Muller invented a Greek term to designate this doctrine of 'one God what has now become well known as 'Henotheism'.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy holds the view that the Vedic Gods allegorically represent the characteristics of an ultimate God.

The different gods and goddesses of the Vedic hymns are the different facets of the one god who has sometimes been called the nature of monism or one real God.

The Vedic philosophy does not stop even at monotheism. This tendency towards the one culminates in monism. There are hymns in the Vedas which allude to monism e.g: "Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti"

(iv) Spiritual aspect : Faith in the Vedas must not be misconstrued as dogmatism. Religions are serviceable only so far as they are spiritual. In Vedas there are intuitive experiences of the great seers in the light of religion. The study of the Rig-veda is indispensable for any adequate account of Indian thought. Sri Aurobindo is of the opinion that the Vedas are replete with suggestions of secret doctrines and mystic philosophies. To him the Vedic gods and goddesses are the symbols of psychological process. Sun, for example, symbolises intellect, while Fire and Soma represent determination or will and feeling respectively. Generally the Jnana Kanda represents the spiritual aspect of Vedas.

(v) Moral aspect: In Rig Veda the conception of Rita is of great significance. This universal moral system is termed 'Rita' in the Vedas, Apurva' in Mimamsa and Adrishta in Nyaya vaisheshika. Gods like Mitra and Varuna not only bring about nature's ordered course, but also maintain moral order in the universe. The Rita of Vedas provides us with a standard of morality. It is the satya or the truth of things.

Virtue is conformity to the law of God, which includes the love of man. The Vedas assume a very close and intimate relationship between man and gods. The life of man has to be led under the very eye of God. Consistency is the central feature of good life. The good man of Vedas does not alter his ways. Kindness and hospitality are considered as great virtues. In short, Vedas' ultimate aim is the general good of the mankind.

Philosophy of the Upanishads

The central theme of the Upanishads is the search for what is true. Dr. Radhakrishnan says, Upanishads means knowledge which destroys error and enables one to approach the truth. Shankara points out "True knowledge of Brahman is called Upanishad".

The seers of Upanishads wanted to realise knowledge (para-vidya) through their religious experience. Our senses donot give as real knowledge. The mind always moves among dualities. The search for the one in many is the natural urge of human beings. The Mundaka Upanishad says 'what is that by knowing which everything else can be known'?

The seers of Upanishadic philosophy pursued the problem of metaphysics throughout their life. They enquired into the ultimate Reality from different standpoints and persisted in their enquiry till the Reality was fully known. According to Prof. R.D. Ranade, the metaphysical problem of the Upanishad was "Cosmo-theo-psychological problem".

According to the Upanishads, the ultimate reality is Brahman. Brahman is infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient and self-consciousness. It is the self of all, Brahman is the subtle essence pervading the whole living and non-living world. According to Maitri Upanishad, "That from which all these living things have been born, in which they live and lastly into which they will be merged, that is Brahman." In the Brihad- aranyaka Upanishad it is stated that the sun, the moon, heaven, carthdays, nights, months and years, seas and rivers etc. follow their own course due to the order of Brahma. So also in the discussion between Yajnavalkya and Vidagdha Sakalya, it was concluded after much reasoning that Brahman alone is the God of universe.

The Brahman is infinite. It is transcendent as well as immanent. In the Shvetashvatara Upanishad God has been described as immanent and transcendent in the same verse : "God is standing silently in heaven like a tree and yet the whole universe is filled by Him". In the Kena Upanishad (1-2-8) the Self has been called "the ear of cars, the mind of minds, the speech of speeches and the life of lives". The Taittiriya Upanishad (11-3) says "That from which the mind returns along with speech and cannot attain it, that is the ultimate reality. The highest Brahman which is ananda, is just atman as realised in the turiya state".

Aspects of the Upanishads

(1) Epistemological aspect: This method observes the philosophical aspect of knowledge in the Upanishads. It is mainly concerned with the self-knowledge

(Atma-Jnana). By this self knowledge, one can realise Brahman. Brahman which is supreme is indefinable. In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad Brahman is mentioned "Unseen but seeing, unheard but hearing, unperceived but perceiving, unknown but knowing". Our intellectual capacities are not adequate for the comprehension of Brahman. The Kena Upanishad (11-3) says "It is unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know". However, sages have realised Brahman and obtained self knowledge through the intuition.

The ultimate Reality in the subjective aspect is known as intellectual self (prajna) and the intuitive self (turiya.) One can realise Brahman only in the intuitive stage.

(ii) Philosophical aspect : Bloomfield, in his work The Religion of the Vedas writes that "There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the Upanishads. Sankhya-Yoga, Nyaya vaisheshika, Vedanta etc. all derive their basic tenets from the Upanishads". As Prof. Ranade points out "Upanishads contain no one system of philosophy, but systems of philosophising one over another like Alps over Alps."

Most of the Yoga philosophy is found in the Svetasvatara Upanishad. In this Upanishad one finds the description of asana, pratyahara and pranayam and dhyana. The God of Yoga has been described in the Kathopanishad. The categories, five elements and time, mind, soul and liberation are mentioned in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad. So also the quality of "Akasha" and "Puritat" are mentioned in the Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishad respectively.

Shankara developed his monistic philosophy on the basis of the Upanishads. The Brahman in Advaita Vedanta is similar to the Upanishadic Brahman. Shankara's doctrine of Maya also has its roots in the Upanishads.

(iii) Synthetic aspect: In the Upanishads different views are given regarding Brahman, atman and soul. Sometimes the views are contrary and contradictory to one another. It may be considered in the terms of Hegel as thesis, antithesis and synthesis. As for instance, it is stated that Brahman is saguna and nirguna, para and apara, transcendent and immanent. The various aspects of the dialectical process are replaced by the synthetic method. In the fourth chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajnavalkya synthesises the several standpoints

explained by King Janak. Such kind of synthesis is found also in Chandogya, and Prashna Upanishads.

(iv) Spiritual aspect: The Upanishads are profoundly concerned with spiritual aspect of life. Only after self-realisation one can achieve the spiritual knowledge. In order to realise the self the concentration of mind by restraining the senses from the external objects is to be cultivated. Soul is the inner dweller, it cannot be realised by running after worldly desires and objects. The self cannot be realised either by speech or by intellect or by hearing many things (Kathopanishad, 1-2-20) but it can be realised by truth, austerity, real knowledge and the life of celibacy (Mundaka Upanishad-111-1.5). Besides devotion, initiation from the teacher, and meditation are necessary for self-realisation. When the enquirer realises the self as identical with Brahman, the Absolute, that is the last stage of self realisation. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and in the Chandogyopanishad it has been said that one must identify the With the Absolute. It is clear that the spiritual aspect of Upanishads insists on a transformation of the whole nature of man.

(v) Moral and Cultural aspect: The Upanishads work as a practical guide to our moral and cultural life. The Taittiriya Upanishad deals with the five sheaths (kosha) viz: physical sheath, vital sheath, mental sheath, consciousness sheath and bliss sheath, which are considered as moral and scientific approaches to the transformation (rupantara) of self. The moral purpose appears to be more explicit in the Upanishads than in the Vedas. The ultimate end according to the Upanishads is the realisation of the Soul. The law of karma and the highest freedom of life in Upanishads are the counterparts of the moral world. God consciousness is bound to be transmuted into good. Morality, according to the Upanishads, expresses the true nature of things.

(vi) Optimistic aspect: Upanishads aim at an integral life. In the Ishopanishad it is mentioned that "full is that, and full is this. When from the full, Out of the full comes the full. the full is taken, the full itself remains." The Brihadaranyaka says, "Lead me from the unreal to darkness to light! the Real. Lead me from Lead me from death to immortality".

The Philosophy of Bhagavad-gita

The Bhagavad-gita, presents a synthesis of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti. Although it is a scripture of Hinduism but in fact it is accepted by all religions of the world. This sacred book is very popular among the Hindus and forms a part of Bhishma-parva of the Mahabharata. The message of the Bhagavad-gita is universal in its scope. It is the philosophical basis of popular Hinduism.

According to William Von Humboldt, Gita is "the most beautiful, perhaps the only philosophical song existing in any known tongue".

LokamanyaTilak calls it the most luminous and priceless gem which gives peace to afflicted souls and makes us masters of spiritual wisdom.

Mahatma Gandhi calls it the universal mother whose door is wide open to anyone who knocks.

Mahamana Malaviya sees in it a unique synthesis of the highest knowledge, the purest love and the most luminous action.

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan "the Gita appeals to us not only by its force of thought and majesty of vision, but also by its devotion and sweetness of spiritual emotion."

Warren Hastings states: "I hesitate not to pronounce the 'Gita'a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction almost unequalled among all well known religions of mankind..."

The central teaching of the Gita can be beautifully summarized in this sentence of Annie Besant : "It is meant to lift the aspirant from the lower levels of renunciation where objects are renounced, to the loftier heights where desires are dead, and where the yogi dwells in calm and ceaseless contemplation, while the body and mind are actively employed in discharging the duties that fall to his lot in Life."

Synthesis of Action, Knowledge and Devotion

Bhagavad Gita accepts God as the ultimate cause and ground of sustenance of this universe. Ishvara, and 'Brahman are some of the epithets used to describe Him. However, it is to be noted that Sri Krishna often identifies himself with God and freely uses the words I' or 'me' to denote Him. He has two prakritis or nature-the para prakriti and the apara prakriti. The former comprises the jivas or living beings and the latter consists of the three gunas-sattva, rajas and tamas. The jivas are described as His part or amsha. However, they are really the atman, birthless, death less and eternal. They wear and discard the bodies as a

man wears good clothes and discards the ones worn out. The bodies are called kshetras or the field since the fruits of actions are reaped through them. The jivas who are essentially the atman, get themselves identified with the kshetras through ignorance and hence suffer the agonies of birth, disease, old age and death.

Three paths of Gita can be described as follows: First is the path of knowledge. Gita helps man to know himself, to know his real nature i.e. to know his soul, the atman. Secondly, the part of action, the teaching of the Gita is nishkama karma, which means to work for the well-being and the peace of his society, without the desire of results. Thirdly, in the path of devotion, one develops intense love and longing towards jivas or God. One can lead a spiritual life in which all the three jnana, karma and bhakti have their rightful place. The Gita treats yoga or spiritual life as organic whole involving the discipline of our will, Karma Yoga; discipline of our emotions, Bhakti yoga; discipline of our intellect by Jnana Yoga. These three disciplines can not be compartmentalized or isolated from each other.

There is an element of bhakti in Karma-yoga. A karma yogi always feels that he is a servant of God. Without bhakti, it is impossible to perform any action. A Karma yogi considers God as the Doer and himself as only an instrument in the hands of God. He surrenders all actions, their agency and their results to God. For him work is worship. Bhakti is the essence of Karma-Yoga.

Bhakti is an unconditional devotion towards God. The Gita says that true devotion is always balanced by Karma yoga on one side and Jnana-yoga on the other, i.e. true Bhakti is always accompanied by moral awareness on one side and detachment and discrimination on the other. Bhakti is never blind. It is intelligent love of God. Just as there is an element of Bhakti in Karma-Yoga, there is an element of Jnana in Bhakti.

According to Gita, Jnana also includes the cultivation and practice of various virtues of head and heart which lead an aspirant to Jnana. In the path of knowledge the aspirant has to realize that the world is illusory and Brahman alone is real. Brahman is the real knowledge which is called Atman and therefore the atma Jnanam. By this atma Jnana one gets devotion. The Jnana-yoga is the reasoned exposition of philosophical doctrine.

Puranic Aspect of Hinduism (extra reading material)

The Ramayana, Mahabharata and the other Puranas constitute the epics of Hindu religion. For over two thousand years, the Ramayana and Mahabharata have been influencing deeply the religious, moral and literary thought of India. In fact Swami Vivekananda has declared that the Ramayana and Mahabharata are the two encyclopedias of the ancient Aryan life. Vedas are treated as the original source of all epics.

The two great epics are neither the creations of poetical imagination, nor pure myth or allegory. But, in fact, fiction and allegory are undoubtedly closely interwoven in these two epics. The Ramayana of Valmiki is essentially an epitome of virtue. Its hero, Rama, the model of virtue, the man of perfection, is made the incarnation of Vishnu, who took form on earth for the repression of wrong and rehabilitation of virtue.

Rama is called Purushottama, having all the noble and virtuous qualities. Rama stands for duty, self-sacrifice, compassion, protection, heroism, and justice. It is a dharma shastra, a sacred text teaching righteousness. It propounds the principles of eternal law or Sanatana Dharma and presents the ideals of good conduct.

The Ramayana brings out the strength and weakness of the Aryan character. The superiority of the Aryans lay in the sternness of their character, their spirit of sacrifice, supreme regard for truth, love and adventure and perseverance. Rama is the embodiment of the high ideals of Hindu life. In him is presented the strange combination of a faithful and dutiful son, an affectionate brother, a loving husband, a stern, relentless warrior, and an ideal king. Lakshmana and Bharata represent ideal brothers while Sita is a dutiful wife.

The Mahabharata of Vyas is so comprehensive in its scope that there is a popular saying that what is not in the Mahabharata is not to be found in the land of the Bharatas. It is an epic par excellence. Mahabharata refers to the six systems of the Hindu philosophy and their conflict. It is an authoritative book on law, morality, and social and political philosophy, laying down rules for the attainment of dharma, artha, and kama, called trivarga. It also shows the way

toliberation expounding the highest religious philosophy of India, and inculcating reverence for Narayana, the supreme spirit.

Systems of Hindu Philosophy

Hindu philosophers developed six principal systems of philosophy, viz Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta.

The Vaisheshika philosophy of Kanad traces the origin of the universe to the combination of atoms and molecules. It maintains that these atoms and molecules were not created by God, but were co-eternal with Him. The power which combines two atoms and makes aggregates of atoms, comes from God, who is personal. He possesses knowledge, desires and will and God is the Lord of all phenomena. According to this system of philosophy, time, space, self and mind are eternal substances of nature. The summum bonum consists of moksha or release from re-birth and thus from bondage or suffering.

Next is the Nyaya philosophy of Gautama. Its object is the true knowledge of nature, soul and God, and the attainment of ultimate freedom.

The Samkhya system of Kapila considers the rational consideration of self and not self, purusha and prakriti or eternal energy, Kapila denied the existence of Creator, but admitted the existence of the individual soul as an eternal, infinite and immortal entity. His philosophy narrates the qualities e.g.. sattva, rajas and tamas, in case of evolution. Its summum bonum is release from bondage, suffering and rebirth. Moksha is gained ultimately only by knowledge.

The Yoga philosophy of Patanjali devotes itself to the higher psychology of the human mind, and explains the science of concentration and meditation, the science of breath, clair voyance, telepathy, and various other psychic powers and shows the way by which one can attain to God-consciousness (samadhi). There is no Yogic system of philosophy in the world so complete as that of Patanjali. Devotion to God and practical discipline of Chitta Vritti nirodha are emphasized as essential aids to obtaining moksha.

The Purva-Mimamsa is an orthodox school of philosophy of Jaimini, which examines the various injunctions of the ritualistic portion of Vedas (karmakanda). It points out the highest duty of man to follow these injunctions as strictly as possible. This system may be called the philosophy of karma or ritualistic work. It explains the authoritative sources of knowledge, the relation between word and thought.

Lastly the system of Vedanta, which is commonly known as Advaita Vedanta of Shankaracharya, is confined to the study of Vedas and Upanishads. Vedanta implies literally end of knowledge or the end of Vedas. This is the most popular philosophy of India today. The monistic Advaita-vedanta philosophy guides us above all knowable objects of perception, and directs our soul towards the eternal, absolute Being, where we find the solution to all problems.

According to Advaita-vedanta, only Brahman is real and the world is unreal. Brahman must be one and not many. From one, many have come into existence, and the individual souls are the absolute Brahman. From this absolute Brahman the phenomenal universe rises and in the end returns into Brahman, and this view is maintained by the monistic religion of Vedanta.

In dualistic phase of Vedanta, Ramanuja said that world, God (Brahman) and souls are real. Our ignorance is the cause of bondage and suffering, it can be avoided by true knowledge which is known as Brahma-Jnana. Moksha is a state of bliss, where the self identifies itself with Brahman.

Hinduism in the Modern Times

Although Hinduism is the most ancient religion it has always been renewing itself under various situations. This perpetual reformation took place whenever there was external or internal danger to Hinduism. Some of the religious reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and others have renewed and reverberate Hinduism from time to time. Here an attempt is made to discuss some of the religious movements and reformations that have taken place in Hinduism.

Brahmo Samaj

While India was under the British rule Christian missionarics started spreading their religion among the Hindus.Hindu religion and faith were highly shaken and shocked. Brahmo Samaj was inaugurated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century Raja Ram Mohan Roy represented the new spirit of Hinduism with its thirst for science, love of rationalism and free humanism. The Brahmo Samaj sought to root out

polytheistic practices from Hinduism, and thus restore the faith in the 'Eternal and Formless God' who is the creator and preserver of the universe.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy rejected the doctrine of divinity of Jesus but was much impressed by his ethical teachings. Among the basic tenets of Hinduism he rejected the doctrine of transmigration of souls, child marriage, enforced widowhood and untouchability. He attacked idol worship which degraded the monism or one God theory of Hinduism. He proclaimed that Hindu scriptures enjoy faith in one supreme being only. The important texts and translations relating to the Vedanta and the Upanishads were published by Raja Ram Mohan Roy who distributed their copies among the people for their religious and social reformation.

A large number of branches of Brahma Samaj were opened in India and Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen joined this movement. Debendranath Tagore sought to purify Hinduism by getting rid of its superstitions, blind beliefs, etc. Afterwards the Brahma Samaj was divided into (a) Adi (6) the Nava Vidhan, (c) the Sadharana Brahma Samaj.

The Arya-Samaj

The Arya-samaj was founded on 10th April, 1875 at Benares by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. conservative and aggressive than It was more con Brahma Samaj. Swami Dayananda Saraswati accused Brahma Samaj of having de parted too much from ancient Hindu tradition and of imitating Christianity. The Arya-samaj takes its stand on the bed-rock of the Vedas and criticises not only Christianity and Islam but also certain aspects of Western science. SwamiDayananda believed that the Vedas are infallible and exhaustible reservoir of all knowledge. One must know how to understand and interpret the Vedas which contain all information, philosophical, technical and scientific. Its slogan, 'Back to Vedas' was inspired with true urge to bring about national unity and to kindle national pride and consciousness of Hindus to revive and reform Hinduism.

The principles of Arya-samaj formulated by Dayananda himself, run as follows:

1. The first (efficient) cause of all knowledge and all that is known through knowledge is Parameshvara Supreme Lord.

2. Ishvara (God) is existent, intelligent and blissful (sat chidananda). He is formless, omnipotent, just, merciful, unborn, endless, unchangeable, beginningless, unequalled, the support of all the master of all, omnipresent, immanent, unchanging, immortal, fearless, eternal and holy, and the maker of all.

3. The Vedas are the scriptures of true knowledge. It is the first duty of the Aryas to read them, teach them, recite them, and hear them being read by others.

4. One should always be ready to accept truth and give up untruth.

5. Everything should be done according to the dictates of Dharma i.e. after due reflection over right and wrong.

6. The primary object of Arya-samaj is to do good to the whole world, that is, to look after its physical, social and spiritual welfare.

7. One's dealing with all should be regulated by love and justice, in accordance with the dictates of Dharma.

8. One should promote Vidya (knowledge of subject and object) and dispel Avidya (illusion).

9. One should not be content with one's own welfare alone, but welfare all.

10. One should consider oneself under restriction to follow altruistic ruling of society, while in following rules of individual welfare one should be free.

Swami Dayananda believed in one God and stated that idolatry has no sanction in the Vedas. To him the truth is God, such was also the belief of Gandhiji. The truth alone triumphs ultimately and secures for its aspirants dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Devotion to truth becomes unerring source of power and greatness. The Arya-samaj postulates true knowledge, love and justice for physical, spiritual and social welfare of mankind. Swamiji said that doing good to the whole world is the primary object of Arya-samaj. He mainly emphasised that one should always be ready to accept truth and give up untruth. In the socio-religious reformation Swami Dayananda advocated no image worship, no ancestor worship, no caste system, no animal sacrifices, no avatars, no pilgrimages, no child marriage, widow marriage and untouchability.

The Ramakrishna Mission

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa appeared before the Hindu society with a phenomenal life of intense spirituality, a remarkably broad and synthetic vision of Hinduism, and extraordinarily simple and illuminating exposition of all the ideas and ideals of Hindu theology.

Mahatma Gandhi said that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. He presents an example of a bright and living faith of Hinduism. According to Sri Ramakrishna the religions of the world viz, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam etc. are not contradictory or antagonistic, but they are the various phases of the one eternal religion. In Sri Ramakrishna's words, there are 'as many paths as there are faiths'. Sri Ramakrishna is the embodiment of truth, renunciation and purity.

Sri Ramakrishna is considered as the living present of Hinduism. He had many spiritual aspirants and disciples. Swami Vivekananda was most extraordinary and outstanding among all. According to Swami Vivekananda, when the descendants of the Aryans failed to appreciate the spirit of the Vedanta and Upanishads and reduced India, the fair land of religion, to a scene of almost informal confusion by breaking up piecemeal the one eternal religion of the Vedas (Sanatana Dharma) Sri Ramakrishna appeared to demonstrate what the true Religion of the Aryan race is. He came, Swami Vivekananda said, as the

reconciliation of all aspects and ideals of religious thought and worship, and his life was the "reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch makers in religion".

Vivekananda urged his countrymen to make Vedanta philosophy practical and to preach it all over the world as the only solution to today's global problems.

Swami Vivekananda believed that Hindu spirituality was Supreme for it alone proclaimed the great Advaita in truth and the means by which it could be realised. Being a revivalist and a reformer, Swamiji sought to incorporate the modern spirit of social and economic equality in Indian society. He preached his gospel of activism and social service. He asserted that a truly religious man must be prepared to sacrifice his personal salvation in order to serve the common people among whom God Himself resides. The objects of the Rama Krishna Mission are as follows:

- (a) To impart and promote the study of the Vedanta and its principles as propounded by Sri Ramakrishna and practically illustrated by his own life, and of comparative theology in its widest form.
- (b) To impart and promote the study of the arts, science and industries.
- (c) To train teachers in all branches of above mentioned knowledge and enable them to reach the masses.
- (d) To carry on educational work among the masses.
- (e) To establish maintain, carry on and assist schools, colleges, universities, orphanages, workshops, laboratories, hospitals, dispensaries, houses for the infirm, the invalid and the afflicted, famine-relief works, and other educational and charitable works and institutions of a live nature.

() To print and publish and sell or distribute, gratuitously or otherwise, journals, periodicals, books or leaflets that the association may think desirable for the promotion of its objects.

(g) To carry on any other work which may seem to the Association capable of being conveniently carried on, in connection with and calculated directly or indirectly to promote any of the before mentioned objects.

Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan have been other stalwarts, philosophers and intellectuals who tried to reform Hinduism.

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